

The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation

Sermon Series by Peter Hiett

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Collected Transcripts

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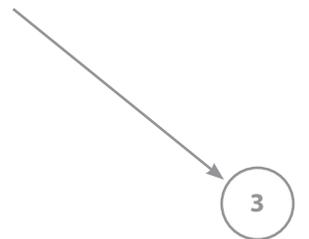
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1

Apocalypse Now

Apocalypse Now

Revelation 1:1-3

September 10, 2017

#1 in our series "The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation"

Peter Hiatt

Message

Twenty-five years ago, at our high school youth group in Danville CA, I introduced a study on the letters to the seven churches in the book of the Revelation. I began talking about how confusing these times are in which we live—hurricanes, wars, and debauchery. I said, "Wouldn't it be great to have a chronology of what will happen in the future; wouldn't it be great to have a map? Then I introduced The Revelation.

I told them I had been doing some amazing research and began talking about the issue of the harmonic convergence in the seven bowls of wrath. I showed them two graphs, which systematically plotted the convergence in the hermeneutical systems of the apocalyptic vision as it relates to the socio-political, geo-syncretic issues of our day, which all clearly pointed to the year in which they would appear on the world scene: 1991.

I then revealed to them the remarkable, numeric acuity so prevalent in the last eleven chapters of the Revelation. On the overhead, we began to fill in the blanks that would reveal the name of the antichrist, all according to numeric, acuitive construction.

Before our very eyes the name took shape: Saksuork Mij.

(Now, of course, I just made all this stuff up, but they were totally buying it!

And these kids were smart kids—but they were buying it!)

(It actually scared me. I remember thinking, "*Wow, is it this easy to mislead people? Are we really that desperate for a map?*")

I said, "I just don't know what this name means: Saksuork Mij.

...What if we reversed polarity and I turned the overhead over."

S A K S U O R K M I J

↓
"Reversed Polarity"
↓

J I M K R O U S K A S

All at once, it became clear. The name was not Saksuork Mij; it was Jim Krouskas! And Jim Krouskas, our new high school intern, was sitting in the back row! The staff all screamed; kids

started looking at me like, “Hey . . . you made up that harmonic numeric acuity stuff, didn’t you?”

We ran to the back of the room, grabbed Jim, and dragged him up front. We ripped off his shirt, and sure enough! He was wearing some satanic, heavy metal T-shirt under his other shirt. We ripped off five or six heavy metal rock and roll T-shirts until Jim was standing in front of 150 confused high schoolers. He was standing there bare-chested. But Jim’s chest wasn’t really bare . . . it was covered with thick, black, curly, Greek hair.

I yelled to Matt Skinner, our high school director, “Let’s look for the mark!” (I’d seen the movie *The Omen*.) And fortunately, we just happened to have an electric hair trimmer plugged into the wall behind Jim.

As Jim struggled, and staff members held him fast, we began shaving off Jim’s chest hair . . . and sure enough, right there on the left side of his chest was a huge, black number 6. It had been hidden by all his chest hair. We gasped and shaved more, from the left to the right, revealing another number 6 . . . I said, “Oh, Jim, I’m so disappointed... how will I explain to the parents that we hired the antichrist to be our new intern?” Then we shaved the other side of Jim’s chest, revealing the number . . . 5. I looked twice . . . and said, “Oh man . . . Jim, it’s 665. I’m so sorry. . . I miscalculated . . . I was off by one.”

Now, was I off by one, or more than one? Did I miscalculate or entirely misunderstand?

Whatever the case, I wasn’t the first to get it wrong . . .

Remember a couple of years ago—all the hubbub from John Hagee about the blood moons, the imminent return of Christ and how sometimes Barak Obama looked kinda like the antichrist?

[Image of Obama pictured as the Antichrist with a pitchfork]

A couple decades ago, there were a slough of books about Saddam Hussein and the End Times? You could get them really cheap right after the 2nd Persian Gulf War.

[Image of the book *The Rise of Babylon* by Charles H. Dyer]

Before that, it was Gorbachov. It’s that freaky birthmark!

[Image of Gorbachov and his “freaky” birth mark]

I also remember that the name Ronald Wilson Reagan somehow adds up to 666. His address was even 666.

[Image of Ronald Regan and his street address]

Before that, folks were convinced it was Hitler.

During the Revolutionary War, many Americans were convinced that the antichrist was King George the Third.

For most of Protestant history, the Pope was thought to be the antichrist. (Folks like John Calvin, John Wesley, and Martin Luther all thought it was the Pope. So Luther, for instance, expected the world to end within his century.)

The church father Hippolytus taught the world would end in 500 A.D.

People were going nuts around 1000 A.D., even more than they did in 2000 A.D.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have set dates of end times events for 1874, 1878, 1881, 1910, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975, and 1984.

When I was in high school, *The Late Great Planet Earth* was the rage.

I have another book on my shelf by the same author.

It's entitled *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon*.

It's full of frightening statistics on the U.S.S.R. and how they fulfill Bible prophecy.

In 1988 Edgar Whisenant sold over 3 million copies of *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Could Be in 1988*. (1988 was one forty-year generation after Israel became a nation in 1948.) By late December 1988 book sales had dropped.

In 1989 Whisenant came out with *89 Reasons Christ Could Return in 1989*. (People didn't buy as many that time around.)

Pat Robertson has predicted the end of the world a few times. April 29th 2007 was his last prediction.

The cumulative batting average of all these chronologists throughout history appears to be about 0.000.

A couple of decades ago, a fellow named David Koresh taught a class on the Revelation—he obviously did some miscalculating, with tragic results . . . including eighty dead Branch Davidians in Waco Texas.

Did he miscalculate . . . or entirely misunderstand?

An old friend really into End Times prophecy called me one day and said something like: "*The woman will ride the beast tonight over the skies of Jerusalem!*" Well, all things are possible with God . . . except, maybe, for what He says *isn't* possible.

Acts 1:7 The resurrected Jesus says, "*It's not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.*"

In Matthew 24 Jesus says, “Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” Jesus does say something about discerning seasons just before that, but then He seems to say “Now is the season, so always be ready.” “Keep your lamps burning, foolish virgins.”

Why are we so concerned to get the day and the hour?

My old friend sent me one of her prophecy newsletters. It quoted the Revelation about famines and earthquakes, and then, the rest of the newsletter had to do with canning fruit, food storage, and nutritional concerns during the Tribulation.

Is that what Revelation is about? Why we’ll be “blessed” if we read it? We’ll get the chronology so we’ll be prepared for the last days with canned goods, secret hideouts, and shotguns?

Is it a map?



This is a map, that came in a book that someone gave me. It's a map of space and time during the end times, supposedly based on the Revelation.

Actually, you could make a good argument that the modern nation state of Israel, along with 9-11, and a whole bunch of wars in the Middle East, wouldn't even have happened except that some folks in the 19th century made this map and figured that Israel needed to exist in order for Jesus to come back, so we could all get raptured before the world annihilated itself in war . . .

Well . . . that's a long story . . .

But, is that what the Revelation is about? manipulating global politics or sitting on a stash of food, holding a shotgun to protect yourself from starving people or maybe getting yourself raptured so you won't have to suffer tribulation . . . like Jesus, who said, “In this world you will have tribulation”?

In the *Left Behind* series, the great post rapture Jewish Bible scholar Tsion Ben Judah sits in a safe house unlocking the chronology of the Revelation, then printing it on the internet so that the

one billion tribulation saints can be prepared for the coming woes . . . and be prepared for the glorious appearing—when Jesus will return on a white horse, and all eyes will see Him.

I think I read most of those *Left Behind* books. They're definitely engaging, but they paint a really weird picture, considering that in Revelation 6:10 the Martyrs cry "*How long oh Lord?*" . . . Stupid martyrs. If they just read the *Left Behind* books they'd know exactly how long.

In Rev. 16:15 Jesus says very clearly, "*Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake . . .*"

Vernard Eller writes:

Is it plausible that an author who includes such a statement at two points in his book could be writing the very same book for the purpose of telling us when the day was to come: like, "Jesus wants to come like a thief, but here are the data you need to calculate the time of His coming"?

That's something to think about. But I'm telling you: I don't think I ever held the attention of the youth group like I did when I told those teenagers I knew who the antichrist was and when the world would end!

And I'm just like them . . . I want to plan my future.

Cause . . . if I don't, who will?

And besides, it's hard to keep oil in your lamp twenty-four hours a day!

I like control and so I need knowledge, in order to protect myself to save my life...

I need to know when, where, and to whom . . . I want a chronology.

I want the map.

Clip 1 from *Time Bandits*.

Six dwarfs are in a bedroom. They are running from a large looming light and as they run the room seemingly lengthens. They cry out: "He's found us! He's found us!" A little boy (Kevin) looks back and forth and then follows the little men running from the bright light. He asks, "Who is that?"

The large light takes on the shape of a face and says, "Return what you have stolen from me. Return. Return the map. It will bring you great danger. Stop now." The dwarfs and the boy continue to run further and further from the light.

The room keeps extending as they run. Finally, the room stops extending, a wall falls away, and the dwarfs and Kevin fall down, down, down into darkness.

That's Kevin and the six dwarfs in the movie *Time Bandits*. They're running from the Supreme Being because they stole the map to space and time. The Supreme Being says, "*Stop now, it will bring you great danger.*"

That reminds me of what God said to Adam and Eve, “*The day you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will die.*” I bet they were looking for the map. I think we’d all like the map . . .

Well, there are four traditional views regarding the chronology of The Revelation:

1. Preterist. Preterists believe that most of it happened in 70 AD or before . . . So . . . *Holy Moly!* Are we “left behind”?

No. Not according to the Preterists. They say all the imagery and events described in Revelation were easily understandable and applicable to the people to whom John sent the vision. It was about them and not a “rapture” two-thousand years later. Most critical Bible scholars today hold to this view.

And it does seem awfully clear to me, having carefully examined the texts, that when Jesus said the stuff about discerning seasons, and when he said, “*this generation will not pass away until all these things take place,*” He was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD—one generation after His ministry.

It was right after He said those things about seasons that He went on to say, “*But of that day and that hour, no one knows.*”

2. Historist. Historists believe that Revelation is an elaborate map of all church history. They’re the ones who usually pegged the Pope as the antichrist. It was a very popular view during the Reformation. Its adherents were folks like Wycliffe, Knox, Tyndale, Zwingli, Melancthon, Calvin, Luther, Isaac Newton, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, Charles Spurgeon, Matthew Henry . . . *all* the heavyweights.

Very few ascribe to Historism anymore: some had this “day in the Revelation equals a year” scheme, and ran out of time. But even worse for Historism: the Pope has turned into a pretty nice guy.

3. Futurist. Futurists believe that everything in Revelation after the first three chapters refers to events that will happen in the future.

This is the most popular view today among Evangelicals. It’s the view of the *Left Behind* series; it’s the view you’ll find on the shelf at Wal-Mart, in the *National Enquirer*, and in most Hollywood movies... See?

It makes for great Science Fiction and historical movies about bloodthirsty popes with 666 stamped on their head are just not in vogue.

Understandably, the Catholic Church really advocated this Futurist view during the Reformation. Most Protestants shunned the view until about 150 years ago.

There are different types of Futurists. The most popular today are the Dispensationalists who argue the Church won’t even be around for most of Revelation because we’ll be raptured.

Of course, this view (along with the Historist view) implies that most of the Revelation has nothing to do with the people to whom the book was first sent . . . or even to the followers of Christ who get raptured in Chapter 4.

4. Idealist or Spiritualist. Idealists or Spiritualists argue that John didn't intend or believe that his book had anything to do with particular historical events but that, instead, it is a visionary expression of timeless truths. This view was popular among the early church fathers.

All that, to say that the precise who, when, and where of Revelation is pretty hard to nail down. But then again, maybe not . . . Let's read . . .

Revelation 1:1 "*The Revelation...*" [the word in Greek is *apocolupsis* (It's where we get our English word: Apocalypse.) Apocalypse literally means "unveiling."

[*apo*—"out of" + *kalupto*—"hide, cover, veil"]

Revelation 1:1 "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ...*"

Notice it doesn't say, "*The Revelation of the antichrist*" or "*The Revelation of the map of the End Times.*" But: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*"—that's probably meant to be the title of the book.

It can mean that Jesus is the one doing the unveiling.
Or even better, Jesus is the one that's being unveiled.

It must mean both:

- Jesus is the Word of God that reveals everything.
- And the Word of God through whom all is created and sustained.
He's the thing behind everything else.

Revelation 1:1-3

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time [kairos] is near [eggus, "at hand"].

"Blessed are those who read, hear, and keep" (not just a few Bible scholars).

In the early church most people were probably illiterate, so they would gather to read and hear The Revelation in one sitting. I hope you do that soon: just sit down and read . . . just read . . . and hear!

"Blessed are those who hear and keep" . . . That could be us!

"Blessed" . . . Why? "For the time is near." Literally: "The time is at hand." *Eggus* is the adverb; *eggizo* is the verb; both from *agkale*, which means the crook of the arm.

In the King James Version “The time is at hand.” It means at hand. It’s something you can reach out and grab with your arm. Jesus came preaching, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” “*The time is at hand.*” Whose hand? I guess whoever reads and hears and takes to heart the prophecy. They read . . . we read . . . it must mean the time has been *at hand* for 2000 years!

1. For those early Christians in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—the seven churches to whom the letter of Revelation was sent—the time *was* at hand. Well, where was the antichrist? I don’t know, but John tells us in 2 John 7 that the antichrist was already in the world.

2. But now, this also means that for Martin Luther (and his Historist friends who read Revelation) the time *was* at hand.

“Am I saying that the Pope was the antichrist?” No, not necessarily . . . however, according to John, the spirit of the antichrist is in the world and has been, and “every spirit that does not confess Jesus (which means “God is Salvation) is the antichrist” (1 John 4:2-3).

That’s wild because maybe you’ve met the antichrist; it means imitation Christ. The time is at hand.

3. And check this out: For every believer in the future who reads and hears, the time is at hand.

4. And it means for us right now, that if we read and hear, the time is at hand. And I’m not just talking metaphorically. The Time, the Kingdom, and the End, really is at hand... in space and time—our time.

You might ask, “So, when is Jesus coming? I know He is coming on a white horse at the end of the age, and ‘all eyes will see Him?’” Yes! You will see that! But if I take Scripture seriously, I have to acknowledge that . . .

- Jesus has come—again and again— throughout Scripture and in the Revelation.
- He may come to the church in Ephesus and remove their lampstand (2:5).
- He may come to Pergamum to war against the Nicolaitans (2:16).
- If Sardis won’t wake up, He may come on them like a thief (3:3).
- He said to suffering Philadelphia, “*Hold fast . . . I am coming soon*” (3:11). Do you think He meant 1988? Maybe Philadelphia, Pennsylvania? How depressing for the suffering saints in ancient Philadelphia!
- He said to those in Laodicea, “*If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him...*” (3:20) (He comes for each of us...).
- He told His disciples, “*I will come again and will take you to myself.*”
I think Jesus comes to get each of His beloved individually at death.
Like He said to that thief on the cross, “*Today you will be with me in Paradise.*”
- In Matt. 26, to the religious leaders, Jesus declares, “*From now on you will see the Son of Man... coming on the clouds of heaven.*”

Revelation 3:3, we read: “The time—*kairos*—is at hand:”
It is like Jesus “was, is, and is to come.”

Not *chronos*, but *kairos*...

...in Biblical Greek there are two words for “time” (writes Guy Chevreau): the first is *chronos*; English words like chronometer and chronology are derived from its root. *Chronos* is clock time, calendar time: 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock; January, February, March . . . all marching right along. The second Greek word, *kairos* is special time. Those who are mothers know the difference between *chronos* and *kairos*. About nine months or so into a pregnancy—*chronos* time—many soon-to-be mothers shake their husband by the shoulder and say . . . “It’s time!” He opens a bleary eye, looks at the clock, and says, “It’s 3:17 in the morning; go back to sleep!” She’s on *kairos* time, he’s talking *chronos*. So he gets shaken again: “IT’S TIME!!!” And this time he gets it. “IT’S TIME!!!!”

All reality is now pregnant with “the time,” with “eternity.”
All *chronos* is pregnant with *kairos*.
All times are pregnant with *Logos*, the meaning, the plot.

The Revelation isn’t just about seven little churches in the Preterist past . . .
Or just some series of events in the Middle Ages involving the Pope . . .
Or just some ten-nation European Confederacy in the future . . .
Or just some spiritual ideals...
Actually, I think it may be about *all* those things,
But no matter what it’s about *you!*

The *who* is Jesus and you; The *where* is here; The *when* is now.

Their eyes got big in youth group twenty-five years ago, because they thought the Revelation was about *them*, *when* and *where* they were, for the time was at hand, and Jesus was coming soon. I guarantee that it will be within one generation—one lifetime.

Well, your eyes should get big too because The Revelation is about you and when and where you are. The time is at hand, and Jesus is coming soon.
Jesus is coming, but you don’t need a map . . . you need a revelation—an apocalypse!

If you think Jesus is a thief, of course, you want a map because you have to protect yourself from thieves. But Jesus didn’t say “I am a thief.” He said, “I’m coming *like* a thief... Keep your lamps burning all you virgins... don’t be foolish be wise.”

See? Maybe wisdom isn’t a map. Maybe Wisdom is a Person or hope in a Person. Maybe what we need to know is not when it is that He’s coming...but just who it is, that is coming. Maybe we don’t need the revelation of a map, but the revelation of Jesus—who is not a thief, but the lover, and owner, of your soul. He can’t steal it. It belongs to Him.

Whatever the case, “The time is at hand.” The time is at hand, and it has been at hand for 2000 years. You might say, “Well the Revelation sure seems like a map!” Does it... really? When

was the last time you read it—or did you just see the movie? You may say, “Well, it seems that a lot of bad stuff will happen. Have you watched the news? Bad stuff *is* happening. If it *is* a map, it’s a really weird map.

You know the stars fall, and the sky rolls up, in chapter 6—that’s one-quarter of the way to the end of the book. “The End” comes several times throughout the book. Time is weird in the Revelation . . . and Time is weird in the Bible. Not only is “a day as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day,” Bible time doesn’t always seem to travel in a straight line.

Many Old Testament prophecies, seem to refer to something in the time of the prophets, but also refer to events in the time and life of Jesus . . . They’re like timeless realities, but not irrelevant to our time—but touching time in many places and times at once . . .

In Revelation 12, we read about Christmas and the ascension of Christ
In Revelation 13:8 John writes, “*The lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.*” That’s way before Christmas or 30 AD.

In John’s Gospel Jesus says, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” Not “*I was,*” but “*I am.*” God tells Moses His name is “*I am that I am.*” Rev. 1:8, 21:6, and 22:13, Jesus says just what God Almighty says,

“*I am . . . the alpha and the omega...*”

That’s “*the beginning and the end, the one who is, was, and is to come.*”

See? People like us who believe in the Word of God know that the distinction between past, present, and future is a stubbornly persistent illusion.

At Niels Bohr’s funeral Albert Einstein said, “People like us who believe in physics know the distinction between past, present, and future is a stubbornly persistent illusion.” Even physics has demonstrated that time is relative to the speed of light, and that at the speed of light everything is perfectly present . . . complete “am-ness;” was, is, and is to come are all present in an eternal Now.

At the speed of light there is no *chronology*; just eternity—a *kairology*, if you will.

“God is Light” and in the beginning, God said, “*Let there be light.*” He is beyond time, but His eternal *kairos* is pressing in on our temporal *chronos*. “*He is the light that enlightens all men,*” writes John.

He entered our time in Jesus, the Light of the world, that we might have eternal life. Eternal life is knowing Jesus. And we can know Him *now!*

Now is not in our chronology. As soon as we observe it, it’s no longer *now*. Now is the point eternity touches time. *Now*, the present moment, is when we step out of time, reflect on time, and ask, “Does my time have meaning? Does my *chronos* have *kairos*?—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness . . . eternal meaning?”

And Jesus the Light of the world gives us meaning, which is Himself.

The Revelation reveals Jesus, the eternal Way, Truth, and Life that transforms all our time.

So when you're tempted to cheat on your wife or chase after fame and fortune like we do in America, and like they did in the city of Thyatira, you might see reality as it truly is. You just might see an ancient harlot drunk with the blood of the saints . . . And you'll see a slaughtered lamb standing on a throne and you'll call out, "Help me, Jesus. I need you Jesus"—not instructions: "I need *you*."

Or when your life is falling apart—poverty, suffering, and tears—like the church in Smyrna . . . the Preterist Futurist debate won't help much. But read about the New Jerusalem, streets of gold, and the One on the throne who says, "I make all things new" . . . and that might help. Hope might help. He might help.

If they put a knife to your throat saying, "*Renounce your faith or die*," like they did in Pergamum, theories of the numeric acuity of the seven bowls won't help. But faith in the Rider on the white horse, who is called Faithful and True, who died and lives forevermore . . . that might make a difference.

And now, I'm not just talking psychology, I'm talking physics, I'm talking about the *real* world—eternal world—invading this one. Seventeen years ago, I preached through the Revelation for the first time wondering if any of it would be relevant.

During that time, planes flew into the world trade center and the towers fell. God didn't hate the people in the towers, but the towers represented world trade, which the revelation seems to describe as a great harlot, who is loved by the kings of the earth for her pleasures, and yet deeply resented for her power.

When it happened I could almost see the Great Harlot who rides the beast, and the Kings of the Earth who fornicate with her, and almost hear the angel crying, "Come out of her my people."

The next day, we had a service at church and preached the Word. After the service a friend wrote to me asking, "Did you see him? I kept seeing a rider on a white horse. He was riding in our little congregation"—riding as we sang and prayed.

During that time, One woman saw a Giant Eagle like the one in Revelation 12, it was screeching at us and saying, "My banner over you is love."

During that time, I spent countless hours praying for a woman who had been bought and sold as a harlot, but Jesus revealed to be His Bride.

One morning during that time, my wife had a vision of a lake of fire that turned into a sea of glass and produced a woman made of solid gold.

I don't think any of those things were meant to be a prediction of the date of Jesus' return. But I think all of those things were part of the revelation of Jesus, that Jesus is here, the time is at hand, and Jesus wins.

When Bernard Travaieille was a young seminarian he used to play basketball with other seminarians at a nearby public school after class. The janitor was an elderly black man with white hair, who would patiently wait for them to finish their game before he'd clean up the gymnasium. Invariably he would read his Bible as he waited.

One day Bernard inquired of the man, asking, "What are you reading?"

The old man didn't simply respond, "The Bible."

Instead, he answered, "The Book of Revelation."

A little surprised, Bernard replied, "The Book of Revelation? Do you understand it?"

"Oh yes," the man assured him. "I understand it."

"You understand the Book of Revelation! What does it mean?"

Very quietly that old janitor answered, "It means that my Jesus is gonna win."

It means Jesus is gonna win, has won, and is always winning. Jesus is the Word of God who creates and sustains all things. God in Christ Jesus is in absolute control...

He even lets us steal the map and make a mess of things.

He even lets us take the fruit from the tree, just so we could see how insanely good He truly is.

In the movie *Time Bandits*, they steal the map, but can't follow the map, and so make everything a mess ending up in the pit controlled by satan.

The Supreme Being appears, destroys evil, turns death into life and tells them about the map.

Clip 2 from *Time Bandits*

[A frightening being appears before the dwarfs. He looks angry and about to do something awful. The dwarfs cower in fear. A bright light flashes and he appears to explode and disappear. Only a statue is left behind. Then bright shining light with a face suddenly appears. The dwarfs back up quickly looking for a way out. One cries out, "Oh no! He found us." The dwarfs struggle trying to decide what to do but recognizing there's no way out they bow. The light continues to approach them and then morphs into a man.]

Supreme Being: *Oh! I hate having to appear like that; it really is the most tiresome, noisy manifestation. So, rather what I would've expected of one I suppose.*

Dwarf 1: *Oh great one. Oh supreme being. Oh creator of all the universe without whom we'd be naught but scowered beatles...*

Supreme Being: (Interrupting) *Oh dreadful... Dead? No excuse for laying off work.* [The Supreme Being raises a dwarf from the dead.]

Dwarf 1: *I'd like to explain something. We didn't mean to steal the map. We didn't mean to run away.*

Supreme Being: *What do you mean you didn't mean to steal the map?*

Dwarf 1: *It just . . . sort of . . .*

Supreme Being: *Well, of course you didn't mean to steal it. I gave it to you; you silly man.*

Dwarf 2: *Do you mean you knew what was happening to us all the time?*

Supreme Being: *Well of course. I am the Supreme Being. I'm not entirely dim.*

Dwarf 1: *Oh no sir. We weren't suggesting that sir. It's just . . .*

Supreme Being: *I let you borrow my map.* [The Supreme Being takes the map out of the hands of the dwarf and shakes the dust off of it.] *Now, I want every bit of evil put in here.* [The Supreme Being points to a red mailbox.] *Right away.* [The dwarfs haul away the large red mailbox filled with evil.] *Come on then, back to creation. We must not waste any time. They'll think I've lost control again and put it all down to evolution.*

I love that movie. Even stealing the map was part of the plan. Even taking fruit from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, was part of God's plan to reveal the glory of the tree of life, and the One who is Life, and who hangs on the tree for the love of you. Even sin, especially sin, is used to reveal the wonder of God's Grace.

When God finally reveals Himself, He's not an elderly English Gentleman, He's the Lamb who is slain for the sin of the world from the foundation of the World. He's Jesus the Christ and Him crucified. And everything has happened, that everyone would see Him and fall in love with Him—that is have faith, hope, and love in and through Him. That's what God is creating now—His heart beating in you.

And you, believer, you know Him—even now.

You know that He's not a thief—we're the thieves.

You know Him, even now . . .that's the Good News.

Not that you have a map. You have Jesus, and Jesus has you.

The way is not a map that belongs to you. The way is Jesus, and you belong to Him.

Two weeks ago, Susan and I moved my, soon to be ninety-year-old, mother to New Mexico to live with my sister Lydia. The weeks before the move were pretty stressful for Mom: She got scammed by a con artist. She was preparing to leave the home she'd lived in for twenty years—the last thirteen years by herself—and on top of everything else, she gets tons of junk mail from Christian organizations wanting her to give money to their cause because they say the end is coming and she should be stressed!

One night she called me (or I called her)—I can't remember—but she was in a terrible panic. I asked what she was worried about. And she gave me a litany of troubles, mostly to do with the world scene, the liberals, and the Muslims, and the earthquakes, hurricanes and all sorts of storms—political, ethical, and social... and then she said, "It's so bad. Peter don't you think it's the end times?"

And I said, "Well Mom, you lived through the depression, World War II, the Nazi's, the Cold War, segregation . . . I mean, dang, that was pretty bad . . . at least as bad as anything today . . . so I don't know... But Mom, so what if it's the end times? You are 89, almost 90... It *is* the End Times. How long do you expect to live? It's the end times... but Mom, that's not bad news it's the Good News."

"Mom you know that Jesus is in total control of this whole thing—You know that."

"But more than know that, You know Him. And soon you'll see Him."

"You'll see him... and Mom you know Him..."

"Mom you know, that you love Him and you know that He loves you..."

"And you know Dad is already with Him, and soon we'll all be with Him."

"Mom, wouldn't it be great if this actually were the end times?"

"I don't know if it is... but wouldn't it be great if it was?"

"Wouldn't it be great if it was the time of the end because Jesus, our Jesus, is the End."

She was quiet for a moment... and then she said, "Oh Peter, that's right! Thanks so much for reminding me. I needed that. Goodbye."

Revelation Chapter One, verse One: "*The Revelation of Jesus*"

Literally "*The Apocalypse (the unveiling) of Jesus*"

This is the Apocalypse Now [Peter walks over to the communion table and removes a sheet that was covering up the communion bread and wine.] You expected that, didn't you?

Communion

On the night that the Way was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying this is my body given to you; take and eat and do this in remembrance of me. And in the same way, after supper, He took the cup and said this is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you and do it in remembrance of me. In the morning he took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins, drink of it all of you." In the morning, as He hung on the tree, His flesh ripped and He delivered up His spirit. Scripture says that as His flesh ripped, the veil in the temple separating the glory of God from the eyes of men also ripped—from the top to

the bottom. It was the unveiling. It was the Apocalypse . . . And [Peter points to the communion table] this is the Apocalypse now.

Never run from the End. Always run *to* the End, for the End is Jesus.
Blessed are you, who hear it and keep it.

Prayer

Lord God, open the eyes of our hearts that we would see you, that we would see what is true and adore you even now. Thank you that we just did that during communion and so we say what you tell us to say at the end of The Revelation and that is “Come Lord Jesus. Come Lord Jesus.” Forgive us Lord Jesus for being afraid of your coming. We invite your coming. It’s in your name we pray, Amen.

Benediction

If there was ever an apocalyptic fervor in the history of the world it would’ve been during the time that Jesus came. The Jews were really worked up about the end of the world and the coming of the Messiah. They were waiting for a king to deliver them from the oppression of Rome. And Jesus came. Do you remember what He said? He came preaching: “Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand.”

I used to think that repent meant: “Try HARDER!” But that’s not what it means. It means: “Have a new mind. Have a new way of thinking.” Repent. The Kingdom of Heaven is *at hand*. Everyone was at war and blaming each other, and He said, “Repent the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” That’s my prayer for us—that we would come to believe the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and we would cry out: “Come Lord Jesus. Come.”

In His name, believe the Gospel.

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 version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

2

To Dream and Stop Dreaming

To Dream & Stop Dreaming (Revelation 1)

Revelation 1:1-20

#2 in our series The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation

September 17, 2017

Peter Hiett

All images by Peter Hiett.

Prayer

Lord God, it's the time in our service to proclaim the Gospel, to preach. It's such a weird thing to be a preacher because I can really do nothing so Lord, we ask that your Holy Spirit would enhabit all of us. Lord God, we pray that you would impart meaning to my heart, our hearts, to everyone who hears or reads this message. You can do things that no person can do so would you open our hearts now. Help us to believe. I'm not sure we can really understand, at least now, but through your Spirit you can help us to believe. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This is our second sermon in The Revelation.

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near [at hand].

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of [the] kings on earth. [That's incredible. Is John dreaming?]

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom [or as in some versions "made us kings and priests"], priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds [not "will be," but "is"], and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation [notice John was in the tribulation] and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze,

refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. —Revelation 1:1-20

Do you *actually* believe He had seven stars in His hand?
Do you *actually* believe that a *lampstand* could also be a church, not just *like* a church?
. . . and a sword could *actually* come from a man's mouth
. . . and Jesus *is* the ruler of the kings on earth?

Or is this a metaphor . . . or maybe just a dream?

Is the Revelation a hallucination or just a dream? (John is exiled on a desert island.)
Some would argue that all belief in the supernatural is just that—a dream.

One morning in the paper I read an article on people's belief in the paranormal—that is, belief in things that we can't comprehend and isolate in a lab. They interviewed a professor Baker, who said:

Modern Americans aren't so different than primitive humans who thought that when lightning struck it was God throwing thunderbolts. So many things about the world and nature are absolutely mysterious to them. The desire to find supernatural explanations for natural events is still with us, and will be until more people get good basic scientific educations.

See? The professor thinks that science explains thunder, and lightning, and light, and wonder . . . and me.

The article went on to say how important it was for superstitious people and religious people to get a good basic scientific education. I absolutely love science. And I have a "scientific education." It's the study of what can be learned through the scientific method.

The scientific method verifies hypotheses, related to cause and effect, that can be tested by repetition in a controlled environment. It studies this world of space and time.

Many of you know Mark Reinke. When I was a teenager, he was the older cool guy that would come and speak at the youth group. One day he shared that he had conclusively disproved the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ using the latest, cutting-edge, scientific methodology:

- He obtained several laboratory mice from Colorado State University.

- He then established a controlled environment, which simulated the ancient city of Jerusalem around about 30 AD.
- He then took some of the laboratory mice and swore them into the ancient office of the Roman Praetorian Guard. He designated one of the mice the Herod mouse, another Caiaphus mouse, and another Pontius Pilate the mouse.
- Another group of mice, he carefully circumcised according to the ancient stipulations of the Torah.
- He dressed many of these mice in little robes simulating the garb of Pharisees.
- He took twelve of these mice and fed them a diet of bread and wine.
- And then, He took one very special mouse and nailed it to a tree. This mouse had been previously designated as the “Jesus Mouse.”
- Upon death, he took the Jesus Mouse to a small, paper-mâché tomb, laid the body inside, and rolled a great stone—relative to a mouse—over the entrance to the tomb.

Early on the morning of the third day, Mark returned with great anticipation and some spices. The stone had not been rolled away. And the Jesus Mouse was still dead. I’m sorry to shatter your faith, but there you have it!

Now you may say, “Wait a minute . . . that’s *stupid*.” Well, it is! But it’s no more stupid than any of the “scientific arguments” that have been advanced in the twentieth century against the existence of the supernatural or God. They are stupid, and yet we’ve swallowed them hook, line, and sinker.

Even Christians—have come to believe that the only things that are truly real are things that can be demonstrated with the scientific method that is, hypotheses that can be tested in a controlled environment.

Satan took Jesus to the top of the temple and said, “Let’s run a little test. Let’s test a hypothesis. ‘If you’re the Son God throw yourself down, and we will see if angels come and bear you up.’” And Jesus said, “Thou shalt not put the Lord your God to the test!”

Since the “enlightenment” in the 18th-century folks have argued that the only things you *can* believe are things you can put to the test. Of course, you can’t put that belief to the test and yet people believe that belief. And Satan likes that, for that belief means we cannot believe in God. Deuteronomy 6:16 says, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test!”

Why?

Well, I suppose it’s because it is a wee bit arrogant to assume that God is like a rat. It’s arrogant and rather stupid, for if God were to submit to our test and act like a rat, we wouldn’t believe that God was in fact God.

What would we do? We’d probably crucify Him. And if He rose from the dead, we probably still wouldn’t believe because an empty tomb is no longer a controlled environment.

GK Chesterton wrote:

As an explanation of the world, materialism has a sort of insane simplicity. It has just the quality of the madman's argument; we have at once the sense of it covering everything and the sense of it leaving everything out....[the materialist] understands everything, and everything does not seem worth understanding.

So, we modern people believe in billions of facts, but none have any meaning. That's because meaning, itself, can't be proven by the scientific method. Nothing truly good beautiful reasonable and right can be proved by the scientific method, for Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Reason and Righteousness can't be proven by the scientific method. Each of them is like an uncaused cause—necessary beingness—realities that cannot be proven but only encountered and believed.

Even the scientific method can't be proven by the scientific method but only *believed*. It can't be proven—only believed in—like religion. I think most real scientists know this . . . And if they don't, they haven't been paying attention . . . to science.

In the last century, scientists have said some rather incredible things. They discovered the universe had a beginning—a big bang. They now argue that about fourteen billion years ago the universe just like sprang into existence—fourteen Billion years from our perspective, but six days from another perspective—like the perspective of a Creator.

But even weirder, there is no natural law at the *point* of the Big Bang; all space and time, and likewise all cause and effect, sprang into existence at that *point*, which means that all nature has a supernatural explanation . . . Dr. Baker.

All causes have an uncaused cause. No space, no time, no science, beyond, before, outside of the Big Bang... then what? Well . . . maybe not what, but perhaps, who. And check this out: Science has demonstrated that at the subatomic level the quantum state of *all matter* mysteriously depends, in some strange way, on a person who consciously observes it—not a *what*, but a *who*.

It's as if matter doesn't really matter, but you do.

It's as if matter is the dream, and you're the dreamer.

It's as if you are an imperfect image of the perfect Creator, who creates all things with His logos, His reason, His thoughts, His Word.

It's as if He dreams you into existence, and He's inviting you to dream Him into you're existence too . . .

Well, science itself has shown that space and time are something like a dream. Almost a hundred years ago, Albert Einstein said, "*Reality is an illusion albeit a very persistent one.*" He also said, "*Imagination is more important than knowledge.*" As if, faith is the foundation of all fact.

See? Physicists are saying things like, “Dreams are more solid than matter!” As if all of physics is somehow a dream—this world is your dream.

That’s an enticing thought, and a terrifying thought.

- Enticing, for then you are like God...
- And terrifying, for then there is no God—a very lonely you—and no one else but you . . . a lonely dreamer.

Well just, what if, what if, what if... your world is a dream? You might say, “It doesn’t seem like a dream.” Well, do you remember how you got here? How you and your world started? See? Maybe you’re dreaming.

Clip 1 from *Inception*

Cobb: *When we’re asleep, our mind can do almost anything...*
Ariadne: *Such as?*
Cobb: *Well, imagine you are designing a building. Right? You consciously create each aspect. Time feels like it’s almost creating itself if you know what I mean.*
Ariadne: *Yeah. Yeah. . . like discovering.*
Cobb: *Only one asperation right?*
Cobb: *Now, in a dream, our mind continuously does this. I mean we create and perceive our world simultaneously. [Cobb draws a diagram] Our mind does this so well that we don’t even know it’s happening. Dreams . . . they feel real while we’re in them, right? It’s only when we wake up that we realize something was actually strange. Let me ask you a question: You never really remember the beginning of a dream do you? You always end up right in the middle of what’s going on.*
Ariadne: *I guess . . . Yeah.*
Cobb: *So how did we end up here?*
Ariadne: *Well, we just cam from the . . . uh . . . (confused)*
Cobb: *Think about it Ariadne, how did you get here? Where are you right now?*
Ariadne: *(Looking around bewildered) We’re dreaming?*
Cobb: *You’re actually in the middle of the workshop, right now. This is your first lesson in shared dreaming. [The table that Ariadne and Cobb are sitting at begins to shake. A newstand explodes and then the reality around them begins to crumble to pieces as Ariadne realizes she is in a dream. Ariadne watches in wonder as “reality” crumbles around her.]*
Ariadne: *If it’s just a dream then why are you with...?*
Cobb: *It’s never really “just” a dream is it? A face full of glass hurts like hell when you’re in it. It feels real.*
[Ariadne gasps for air as she recovers from her dream and tries to make sense of what she has just experienced.]

Well, that’s just a movie. But maybe you are dreaming, and if so, I wonder how you could know? And if you *are* dreaming, then waking from *this* dream would be downright

apocalyptic. I mean we don't think of it that way when we're fully awake, for the dream world seems unreal in light of the real, but it does seem rather real while we're still dreaming.

Think about it: The sky rolls up, the stars fall from the sky, everything in the dream world vanishes . . . as you wake from a dream.

If you wake a person too quickly from a dream, you can give them a heart attack.

Did you notice that here at the start of the Revelation, John fell down as though dead until Jesus touched him and said, "Fear not"? So, maybe John wasn't dreaming, but waking up from a dream. Well, the loving thing to do when waking a person from a dream is to wake them up slowly.

In the movie, Leonardo DiCaprio had entered Ellen Page's dreams with some weird new technology... but did you notice: He told her what was coming: "*Stay calm... an apocalypse is coming.*"

You do that for your kids; you whisper in their ear, "Sweetheart . . . Hey, buddy . . . you're having a bad dream. Wake up. It's a bad dream, but I'm not a bad dream."

To the dreamer in his dream, there is a gradual realization that the whisper in his ear can't be explained by the dream. For a while, however, it's like the whisper is a part of the dream—an incongruent part of the dream.

So how do you know that you're dreaming?

Well, have you ever had a dream in which you were dreaming something, and that something that dream in your dream was more real than the dream—something you couldn't dream into submission in your dream? Have you ever dreamed that you had to go to the bathroom, and woken up to realize that you were? It happens . . . especially when you're a kid.

Have you ever dreamt that you were dreaming, but the dream in your dream was actually a person in the waking world trying to wake you up?

"When a man dreams his own dream, he is the sport of his dream; when Another gives it him, that Other is able to fulfil it..." wrote George MacDonald.

When we are awakened from a dream, the thing that wakes us is a reality that won't fit in our dream. My dreams can all be explained by *me*: I'm the *sport* of my dreams; I'm the *center* of my dreams; I'm the *source* of my dreams.

So, yes!—some of them are very *weird*, but they all have their source in me;

they all emanate from me. It's all about *me*. But when someone or something wakes me, my mind can't make that reality from the outside waking world *fit* into the interior reality of my own dream world—I can't make the truth fit into my world of illusion.

So, even though it's truth and reason, at first I experience it as confusion and perhaps . . . even suffering . . . I suffer reality as I'm waking from my illusions.

But if the someone who loves me is waking me from my dreams—like I said—they will first try to enter my dreams like a whisper: "*Peter, it's time to get up. I love you and I made waffles.*"

So this is my question:

Are there things in this world that don't fit in this world?
That can't be explained by this world or by you?
Paradoxes, mysteries, things you can't comprehend?

Maybe they are *real*, and this entire world is the dream.

Maybe it's somebody whispering in your ear: "*Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and I will give you light.*"

That's Ephesians 5:14, and maybe the Word of God whispering in your ear. "*Stay calm. You are about to experience an apocalypse. But, I made waffles, roast lamb, red wine, and a feast you can barely even begin to imagine.*"

About those people who believe God is actually somehow behind thunder, Professor Baker said, "So many things about the world and nature are absolutely mysterious to them."

Maybe that's because *they* are waking up! And Professor Baker is entirely enchanted by his own dreams: No mystery . . . No paradox . . . No meaning . . . No Truth . . . No Beauty . . . No Wonder. No . . . body else . . . but Him. . . because He's asleep.

John records in his gospel that at one point in Jesus' ministry, after He prayed, "Father glorify your name," a voice boomed from the sky: "I have glorified it and I will glorify it again." Some standing there said it thundered. Others said, "That was *more* than a thunder!" So...Who was dreaming . . . and who was awake?

What I am saying is, maybe Jesus really *did* appear to John.

Maybe Jesus really *did* have a sharp, two-edged sword coming out of his mouth.

Maybe this little seemingly inconsequential church of ours really *is* a lampstand.

Maybe the time is at hand and the Kingdom *is* at hand.

Maybe it's not just a metaphor, but this entire world is the metaphor.

Maybe the Revelation is not just a metaphor and the mystery, paradox, and wonder in those statements don't mean that they're less real than this world, but that they're more real than this world.

In 1884 a preacher and schoolmaster named Edwin Abbott published a book called *Flatland: A Romance in Many Dimensions*.

I never read the book, but I did see the movie. Schoolteachers still use it to explain geometry, but Edwin Abbott didn't just write it to help people understand geometry, but believe in God.

The book is about a land called "Flatland," an entirely two-dimensional world. Flatlanders can only perceive and experience two dimensions. But one of the beings in Flatland has a revelation of the third dimension. For a few moments, he is lifted out of Flatland and can see three dimensions! When he goes back to Flatland and tries to explain what he saw, everybody thinks he's just dreaming.

Now, every few years I've included this in a sermon, and I would include it in every sermon if I could. But we especially need it for the Revelation.

So, pay attention.

If we were Flatlanders, our world would look like this [Peter holds up a large poster board with shapes drawn on it]. We would only be able to perceive two dimensions: squares, circles, rectangles—objects in two dimensions.

Now, let's suppose that a three-dimensional object entered our world and passed through it [Peter picks up a basketball and slowly moves it towards the posterboard] like this sphere that's also called a basketball.

If this sphere passed through our world, what would we Flatlanders see?



A circle!

What would we call it? I think we might call it a miracle. Why? Because all at once a point appeared in our world, then it grew into a circle, then it shrunk back to a point, and then it was gone.

But now let's suppose there are three-dimensional objects intersecting and staying in Flatland all the time—spheres, cubes, cylinders . . . Do you see what that would mean? It would mean Flatlanders would be surrounded by miracles all the time. But they wouldn't see it that way . . . except, of course, for the one who had the revelation.

The one that received the revelation would say things like, "*That's not just any old square; that's a cube!* And you're not just a square but a cube." And everyone would say, "You're nuts, You're dreaming."

We might say, "Hey look a church" and he would say, "It's a lampstand."

We might say, "Those worshipers sure are singing loud." And he might say, "*The Great harlot has fallen, and I see the New Jerusalem coming down.*"

We might say, "Hey look Donald Trump is reading the Bible... imagine that." And He would say, "*Behold a white horse, and he that sits upon it, is faithful and true. In righteousness he judges and makes war...His name: the Word of God ... and look birds of the air are coming to eat the flesh of the kings.*" We'd say... "*Um whatever*" and whisper to each other, "*He's nuts. He's dreaming.*"

We might say, "Hey look a poor baby in a manger."
And he would start singing with the angels.

We might say, "Hey look a naked criminal nailed to a tree."
And he would bow in adoration before the Lamb of God standing on his throne.

We might say, "Hey look, Jr. high kids handing our sandwiches to beggars down at the park."
And he'd join them, thrilled that he too, could serve the King of Kings.

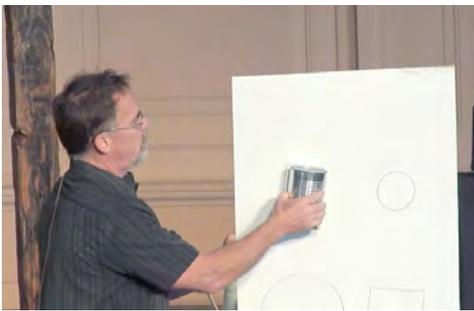
We might say, "I'm dying."
And he would say, "No! No! No! At last, you're waking up."

His world would be full of miracle and meaning.
He couldn't explain it to us, but he would proclaim it to us.
A paradox.

If a cylinder intersects Flatland, this way, what would Flatlanders see? A circle.



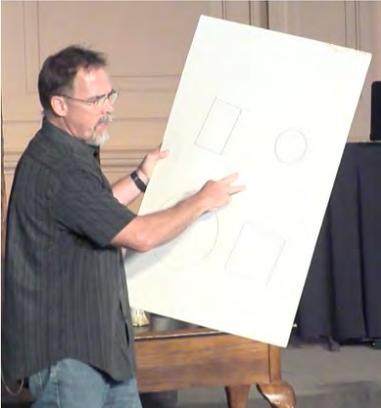
And now, if the same cylinder intersected Flatland this way, what would Flatlanders see?



A rectangle.

What *is* a cylinder? It's an infinite number of circles that are an infinite number of rectangles. Flatlanders would say, "No way! Inconceivable! Incomprehensible!" And the guy who had the revelation would say, "I can't explain it, but it's true!" That's a Paradox.

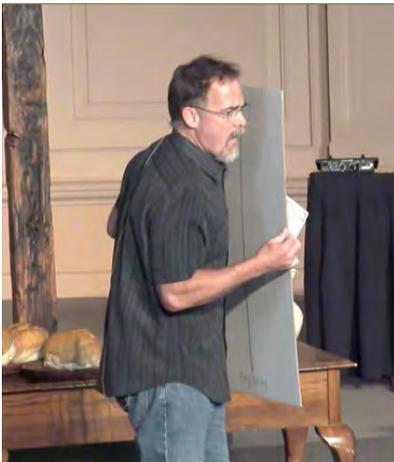
What if I took three fingers and stuck them through Flatland; I spoke to Flatland and said, "Behold, all three are one. And all three are me. I am Trinity."



Flatlanders would say, “No way!”
But I might say something like... *Yahweh*.

Did you know that the Bible says you were chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world? And yet you must freely choose, for you’ve been chosen to choose in freedom. That’s a bit of a paradox for the three-and-a-half dimensions of my brain. But it’s *true*.

In fact, let’s suppose that time is one of the dimensions of Flatland. Einstein said we live in spacetime, really four dimensions. I say three-and-a-half because we can only travel in one direction and physicists are confused about that. Well, imagine time is one of the dimensions in Flatland. If I took Flatland and held it just like this . . .



. . . an inch away from my being . . . and I spoke to Flatland saying, “Behold, Flatland! The kingdom of Peter is at hand! My time is near!”

Would that be true? Yes... at every point of time in Flatland.

Imagine if Flatland were a plane that intersected my body and someone said, “In Peter, we live move and have our being. He is not far from each one of us.” That would be true, even though Flatlanders might say, “There’s no such thing as Peter.”

Imagine if I somehow entered Flatland, and along about 33 AD I stood before the Sanhedrin and said, “From this day forward you will see the son of man coming on the clouds of Heaven... and every eye will see me.” And then I slammed myself into Flatland. My coming (*parousia* in Greek) would be *one* event in reality, but experienced at all these separate points in Flatland: 33 AD, 70 AD as Jerusalem falls, Feb. 18th, 1546—the day Martin Luther died, March 8th, 2004—the day my dad died, and some date in the future—the day I die or you die.

Jesus is the End, and He comes for each of us at death, which will be “within one generation of right now—One Apocalypse at a million points in history . . . such that we’ll all be caught up in the air to meet Him together (1 Thess. 4:17).

The Apocalypse: *“He is coming on the clouds of Heaven and all eyes will see him.”*
And you will see him and the sky will roll up and the stars will fall...*“He is coming on the clouds of heaven...”*

But wouldn’t it be nice if He came now—like a whisper in your soul or a kiss on the cheek...Well, maybe He is. Do you ever encounter things in our world that cannot be explained by our world and don’t submit to scientific analysis in these three-and-a-half dimensions?

Paradox, Mystery, Unexplained Phenomenon?
How about, Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Life, Love or Reason?
How about your wife?

Jesus said, “I am the Truth.” That means the Truth *is* Jesus.
Perhaps every time you long for Truth, you’re hearing Truth whisper in your soul:
“Wouldn’t you like to wake up?”

Jesus said “God alone is Good.” If your sandwich is good, maybe God is whispering through your sandwich: *“This is just a taste. Wouldn’t you like to wake up... and meet me?”*

God is Love, and so real Love is God. So when your wife gives you a kiss,
God is also giving you a kiss, and beginning to wake you up.

Sometimes we say: Where’s God? I need a sign!
Do you suffer? If you suffer, you suffer the loss of control.
A dream is all under your control.
So when you suffer the loss of control, perhaps someone is waking you up.

I’m trying to say that we need to stop taking these three-and-a-half dimensions so seriously—stop taking this world so seriously.

When I was a child, I had a hard time distinguishing my dream world from my waking world. So, for instance, I once had a dream of a Chinese tornado dressed in a kimono with a pointed hat, and it utterly terrified me.

This week, I dreamed that I was in a North Korean prison and the guard decided to trim my eyebrows because they were just too bushy. I was about to die, but I realized, “This is absurd. It’s just a dream.” And I didn’t take it seriously.

The older I get, and the more I listen to the whispers from the waking world, the more I sense that this world is absurd . . . And so I need to take these three-and-a-half dimensions less seriously. I'm about to wake up.

Ironically, it's Evangelical Christians who often take space and time so *seriously!* We've been so busy trying to make sense of the Bible in three dimensions that we forgot that it testifies to the one who made all the dimensions.

So, we worry about the Great Tribulation and when it will be, and if we're prepared with canned goods and shotguns, but we don't ask "*What does it mean?*" We don't notice that Jesus said, "*In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world.*"

The Suffering Servant has overcome the world—not people with canned goods, shot guns, and strong militants. Love in flesh has overcome the world. The Slaughtered Lamb has overcome the world. The Way, the Truth, and the Life have overcome the three and one-half dimensions of this fallen world. The meaning of God has overcome this meaningless existence.

Jesus is what God means.
Jesus is the Meaning.

Right here in Revelatino chapter one, Jesus reveals the meaning of the stars. And right here in chapter one, Jesus reveals the meaning of the lampstands. "John, I'll tell you what the lampstands are—y'all are a lampstand. Lampstands shine light and I'm the Light."

We are going to have to trust Jesus to reveal His meaning in the rest of the book . . . and in the rest of space and time . . . and in the rest of our space and time—without Him—at best you're just a square. Without Love and Truth living in you, you have no depth.

Jesus is God's dream given to you. You must dream God's dreams, in order to stop dreaming. And one day you'll see they *aren't* just dreams; they're reality.

So, how can we know *anything* is truly real? Only through divine revelation. And when it happens it looks like worship.

Did you notice that John was "in the spirit on the Lord's day"? The Lord's day probably refers to Sunday, the first day of the week. Well, John was in the spirit on the Lord's day *when* he received the revelation—"...*when* he received the revelation" ...he was "in the spirit." So, *receiving* the revelation was not *being* in the spirit. So what *was* being in the spirit? I think it was worship!

Science was born out of worship and I truly love science. But worship is the opposite of the scientific method: It's not conquest; it's submission.

There is an epistemology of technology; it's the scientific method: It's great for knowing things confined to a three-dimensional world.

And there is an epistemology of worship...

You can know things by taking knowledge of Life—like fruit from a tree.

Or you can know because you've been known by Life and Jesus is the Life.

In an experiment, a scientist tests things to comprehend those things.

In worship, God tests us and He comprehends us. He knows us and gives us life.

Worship God in Christ Jesus and surrender to the dreams that He gives you.

Worship is allowing Jesus to be your vision. Worship is the revelation of Jesus.

Have you ever felt love in worship? John wrote, "*He who loves is born of God and knows God.*" That's more than you know and you are far more than you know (not just a square—but a cube).

As we've worshipped, have you hoped for God's glory? Scripture claims that "*Christ in you is the hope of glory.*" So, the hope of Glory—in you—is Christ in you, preparing you, to wake up.

Have you ever sensed a little faith in you? Paul prayed that "*Christ would dwell in our hearts through faith.*" Faith is much, much more than you now know. And unless you have the faith of Christ you can't wake up, for without Faith waking up would give you a heart attack, reduce you to dust and ashes, and God would have to start over again!

Faith, Hope, and Love—you've encountered all three and they are one. And so I hope you see that you don't have to have experiences like John on the island of Patmos. Just worship! And pay attention to what dreams may come.

And God has already given us a dream—the book of Revelation. It only seems like a dream because this world is a dream. I should say this *fallen* world is a dream. And that's what John means in The Revelation when he refers to the world—not the trees, bushes and such, but the systems in which we live. This fallen world is a dream—it's our dream.

I think the devil tempted us with a dream: "*You can take fruit from the tree of knowledge and make yourself in the image of God.*" He tempted us with a dream of control; control is our dream. And so we took the life of the Good from the tree in the Garden of Eden. Just as we took the life of Christ from the tree in the Garden of Calvary.

- We dreamed that we were God, and God was a rat— a lab rat.
- We dreamed that the Good was simply a thing to be taken and consumed.
- We dreamed that the Truth could be twisted and used for our own ends.
- We dreamed that the Life was our own private possession—our Life.
- We dreamed that we were God and crucified God; we crucified the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Light, the Love, the Good, the Reason.

We forgot how we got here in the first place . . .
For we dreamed the dream that we are our own creators.
We dreamed an evil dream, crucified Christ, and everything died...
BUT . . . death is just our dream, and now the Life is waking us up.
And this is how He does it...

Communion

[Peter walks to the communion table and begins to prepare the bread and wine.] On that night, He took the bread and broke it saying this is my body given to you. Take and eat. Put it in you. And on that same night, 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. Put it in you.

Faith, Hope, and Love in you, are Christ rising in you, and gently waking you up.

He has let us dream for a time and for His own reasons, but now He has entered our dreams and He is waking us up. We've each dreamed that we were God and God was dead. But all along God has been dreaming us. We're not the dreamer, but the dream. You are God's dream . . . dreaming your own dreams for a time, for He has let you. . .
But an Apocalypse is coming. From the perspective of our self-centered dreams it looks like this:

Clip 2 from *Inception*

[The "reality" surrounding Ariadne and Cobb crumbles to pieces.]

From the perspective of *reality* it looks more like this:

[Image from the movie *Snow White* (The prince awakens Snow White with a kiss)]

And this is Apocalypse Now. [Peter points to the communion table.]

Benediction

So sin is reaming the dream of your own sovereignty—that you are your own creator. And Jesus is God's dream, the dream of *the* Creator. He is the perfected Adam. He is somehow who you most truly are. But we dream to dream that we are our own creator and the dream has turned into a nightmare and so we may ask, "God, why did you let us dream our own dreams?" Well, maybe because He wanted to show us that He is the dreamer and His dreams are better than our dreams, and you, in fact, are His dream. One day all your dreams will agree with His dreams, and that will be reality.

Whatever the case, don't take this world so seriously. Listen for the whispers and remember that you are God's dream.

Believe the Gospel. Amen.

*They tell me, Lord, that when I seem to be in speech with you,
Since but one voice is heard, it's all a dream, one talker aping two.*

*Sometimes it is, yet not as they conceive it. Rather, I
Seek in myself the things I hoped to say, but lo!, my wells are dry.*

*Then, seeing me empty, you forsake the listener's role and through
My dumb lips breathe and into utterance wake the thoughts I never knew.*

*And thus you neither need reply nor can; thus, while we seem
Two talkers, thou art One forever, and I no dreamer, but thy dream.*

- C. S. Lewis

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 version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

3

Waking to the King of Kings

Waking to the King of Kings

Revelation 1

#3 in our series The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation

September 24, 2017

Peter Hiatt

“Starman” by David Bowie

There's a starman waiting in the sky
He'd like to come and meet us
But he thinks he'd blow our minds
There's a starman waiting in the sky
He's told us not to blow it
Cause he knows it's all worthwhile

He told me:
Let the children lose it
Let the children use it
Let all the children boogie

I know that's kind of a weird offertory, but I asked for it because it reminded me of what we read in Revelation 1 Just last week. [Peter begins singing “Starman”.]

John sees Jesus with seven stars in His right hand, and a face shining like the sun in full strength—the sun is my favorite star. John sees Jesus, it blows his mind, and he drops to the ground as if dead.

Last week, we wondered,

“Is John dreaming?”

“Is *this vision*—the revelation of Jesus—just a dream...

Or is *this world* the dream, and John is waking up to reality?”

If this world is a dream, then waking up would be downright apocalyptic!

Clip from *Inception*

Cobb: *When we're asleep, our mind can do almost anything...*

Ariadne: *Such as?*

Cobb: *Well, imagine you are designing a building. Right? You consciously create each aspect. Time feels like it's almost creating itself if you know what I mean.*

Ariadne: *Yeah. Yeah. . . like discovering.*

Cobb: *Only one aspiration right?*

Cobb: *Now, in a dream, our mind continuously does this. I mean we create and perceive our world simultaneously. [Cobb draws a diagram]*

Our mind does this so well that we don't even know it's happening. Dreams . . . they feel real while we're in them, right? It's only when we wake up that we realize something was actually strange.

Let me ask you a question: You never really remember the beginning of a dream do you? You always end up right in the middle of what's going on.

Clip from *Inception* continued . . .

Ariadne: *I guess . . . Yeah.*

Cobb: *So how did we end up here?*

Ariadne: *Well, we just cam from the . . . uh . . . (confused)*

Cobb: *Think about it Ariadne, how did you get here? Where are you right now?*

Ariadne: (Looking around bewildered) *We're dreaming?*

Cobb: *You're actually in the middle of the workshop, right now. This is your first lesson in shared dreaming.* [The table that Ariadne and Cobb are sitting at begins to shake. A newsstand explodes and then the reality around them begins to crumble to pieces as Ariadne realizes she is in a dream. Ariadne watches in wonder as "reality" crumbles around her.]

Ariadne: *If it's just a dream then why are you with...?* [Ariadne suddenly awakens to find herself in the workshop with Cobb talking to her.]

Cobb: *It's never really "just" a dream is it? A face full of glass hurts like hell when you're in it. It feels real.*

[Ariadne gasps for air as she recovers from her dream and tries to make sense of what she has just experienced.]

If this world is a dream, then the sky might roll up and the stars might fall from the sky as we woke from the dream.

Waking would be downright apocalyptic from the perspective of the dream world. But from the perspective of the waking world, it might look something more like this:

[Image from *Snow White* (The prince awakens Snow White with a kiss)]

That was our sermon last week. Now, let's go deeper.
Let's pray!

Prayer

Father, we pray that you would help us to preach.

Message

Revelation 1:1-3

The revelation (apokalypsis) of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time (kairos) is near (eggus; "at hand").

God's time—eternity—is pressing in on our temporality, our chronology.

In Revelation 10:6 an angel that looks just like Jesus swears that in the days of the seventh trumpet call, *chronos* will be no more.

Well, “*The time is at hand.*”

And Jesus came preaching, “*Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*”

The Kingdom is the sovereign *dominion* of the King.

Last week, we talked about Flatland.

I held Flatland an inch from my body and said, “King Peter is at hand.”

And that was true at every point of space and time in Flatland.

“At hand” means at hand. The King is at hand, whether you see Him or not.

A few years ago, on my day off, my son Coleman and I explored the new sewer pipes under the Home Depot they were building a couple blocks from our house. We crawled a couple hundred yards in pitch black—in cement pipes buried deep underground. At one point, I quietly crawled ahead and stopped. Coleman followed.

After a while, Coleman said, “Dad, where are you?”

And I didn’t answer. “Dad, where are you?”

Soon he was yelling, “Dad! Dad! This isn’t funny! Dad, where are you?!”

I was like an inch from his face.

I let him scream, and then he fell silent, and I said: “Hey Coleman!”

I blew his mind . . . It was awesome!

I think most folks like the idea of God . . . somewhere, but not literally “*at hand.*”

One day, I was working out next to this guy at the gym for like an hour.

Out of the blue, he said, “So Peter, how are your kids?”

Ahhh!!

It turned out to be a guy from church; it blew my mind!

I’m cool working out next to general people, but a person who knows me that I don’t know . . . or know that I don’t know knows me . . . that’s freaky—I don’t want them *that* “at hand.”

H. G. Wells told a story about a pious clergyman who pontificated about God to thousands on a regular basis. He didn’t pray much for he seemed to understand his theology and he had everything in his world under control.

But one night, for some reason, he decided to kneel and pray at the front of the church: He folded his hands and said, “Oh God...” Immediately, he heard a voice, clear and crisp: “Well, what is it?” It blew his mind. His parishioners found his dead body the following morning.

The first time I ever saw a demonic spirit cast out of a person and I knew it wasn’t fake—thirty-five years ago at Hollywood Presbyterian Church—I really wasn’t stressed about the demon, but Jesus, the Word of God in flesh . . . who obviously bound it and drove it out, and knew my every thought. I didn’t want Him and His Kingdom to be *that* “at hand.” It blows my mind.

Jesus came preaching, “Repent the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

That means, “Repent the King is at hand.” But I’m not so sure we want the King of Kings to be *that* “at hand.”

It seems to me that liberal Christians are cool with God being large as long as He's vague. So, for a liberal . . .

- God is love, light, way, truth, and life.
- But love, light, way, truth, and life are not person but principles, values or forces.

You see with science and technology, we can harness forces and use them for our purposes.

- So, Jesus is the savior.
- But He doesn't actually save us, we apply His principles and values to save ourselves (according to the liberals).

Liberals like a God that's large as long as He's vague and impersonal— but not a person at hand . . .

Conservatives like a God that's personal and well-defined as long as we can keep Him small and in a box: our box, our temple, our tribe . . . under our control. It's like Ricky Bobby says in the movie *Talladega Nights*: "I like the baby Jesus best." We like a God we can keep in a manger in our barn. And if He gets out, we'll try to nail Him down . . . like to a tree:

- He can be the savior . . . of the people we tell Him to save, but not of whomever He wants to save—not tax collectors, prostitutes, and Romans.
- He can't save them because He's supposed to save us *from* them. That's why we want His Kingdom to come because it's really ours.
- He can be at hand, as long as He stays in our box."

Jesus said, "*Repent. The kingdom is at hand.*" "Repent" doesn't mean, "Try harder." It literally means, "Change your mind."

- You think the Kingdom is not here and so you try to make it come—with politics and power, but it's at hand.
- You think the King is not here . . . because He won't fit in your box, but He's standing in front of you.
- You think you're the King and God should serve your kingdom—that you could use God like a thing.
- You're dreaming . . . a very dark dream . . .

Wake up! Repent!"

The religious leaders did not repent and grew furious with Jesus for he wouldn't take up arms against the Romans and make their Kingdom come.

They did not repent, and so they crucified the King and missed the Kingdom.

Sometimes, I wonder if we're not just the same. We didn't like the King, or His Kingdom the first time around, so we imagine the Kingdom and the King to be pretty different the second time around.

[Image of the statue "Christ the Redeemer" in Brazil holding a machinegun with the caption "JESUS IS COMING And boy is he pissed!"]

The Bible ends with the great *apokalypsis*—the great unveiling, *The Revelation*. It's the unveiling of Jesus, but it's the same Jesus—John's best friend Jesus.

The Lamb doesn't change into the Lion as if He's no longer the Lamb.

The whole point is that the Lion is always was Jesus the Lamb.

The Bible ends with the great *apokalypsis*...

And it begins with the great *katakalyptis*—the great veiling.

You remember how it happened: God spoke His Word.

Satan tempted the Adam with a lie. He said, "*You will not surely die. If you take of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, for your eyes will be opened and you will be like God.*" He tempted them with the dream of their own sovereignty.

God had said, "*Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness...*" "Let us make them kings," right? Because God is the King. Satan tempted man saying, "You can make yourself in God's image . . . make yourself king . . ." "Just take the life of the Good, hanging on the tree in the middle of the garden."

God spoke His Word. And satan tempted the Adam to reject God's Word.

Now we know that God's Word is Jesus.

And Jesus means "God is Salvation."

Satan tempted Eve and Adam to renounce "God is Salvation"

And believe "We are salvation."

So, God said, "Let us make man..."

And man said, "No thanks, we'll make ourselves."

Satan tempted humanity with the dream of their own sovereignty. And once they acted on the temptation they could no longer bear the presence of the Sovereign . . . who was at hand . . .

Remember, He went walking in the garden in the cool of the day, calling to the man and the woman—"Where are you?" But they had covered themselves and hid. They were veiled: *katakalypto*. It means, "to cover with a veil," like a woman is veiled and then unveiled, by her groom, on her wedding day (1 Cor. 11:6). Paul writes that the minds of all unbelievers have been veiled (*kalypto*) to the glory of the Gospel, which is Jesus—our bridegroom (2 Cor. 4:4).

Adam and Eve made clothes and hid. They veiled themselves. They were already dead—cut off from the Life, who came walking in the garden, in the cool of the day, for He wanted to be with them, humanity, His Bride. They were already dead, for they would not, and then could not see Jesus.

You'll remember that God kicked them out of the garden so they would no longer take life from the tree in the middle of the garden. He placed two cherubim to guard the way to the tree of Life. Jesus is "the Life," and "the Word of God."

You'll remember that "the Word of God" would rest on top of the Ark of the Covenant, between two cherubim, behind a veil. And when we sleep our mind is veiled to reality. When we wake, the sky rolls up and the stars fall from the sky—in our dream world. We wake to the reality that is at hand, or *WHO* is at hand. We are unveiled—*apokalypto*.

Well, this is the point: when you dream "you are salvation," you cannot see "God is Salvation"—who is Jesus, and He is the Life. In other words, you're dead, even if you dream that you're alive.

So, Paul writes, "*Awake o sleeper and rise from the dead...and Christ will shine on you...*"

Death is our dream, even if, in our dream, we dream that we're alive.

Death is our dream, which God has allowed us to dream for a time...
for a space and a time.

Maybe "hell," or at least Hades, is to be trapped in that dream, that is a veiled mind, an unrepentant mind, a mind dreaming of its own sovereignty. At first, we may like our dream, but soon our dream becomes troubled and turns into a nightmare.

In *The Great Divorce*, CS Lewis asks an angel:

"Are Heaven and Hell only states of mind?" "Hush," says the angel. "Do not blaspheme. Hell is a state of mind—ye never said a truer word. And every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind is, in the end, Hell. But Heaven is not a state of mind. Heaven is reality itself... The choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words 'Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.' ...The whole difficulty of understanding Hell is that the thing to be understood is so nearly Nothing... A damned soul is nearly nothing: it is shrunk, shut up in itself. Good beats upon the damned incessantly as sound waves beat on the ears of the deaf, but they cannot receive it. Their fists are clenched, their teeth are clenched, their eyes fast shut. First they will not, in the end they cannot, open their hands for gifts, or their mouths for food, or their eyes to see."

"Then no one can ever reach them?" Lewis asks.

"Only the Greatest of all can make Himself small enough to enter Hell.... Only One has descended into Hell."

"And will He ever do so again?"

"... All moments that have been or shall be were, or are, present in the moment of His descending. There is no spirit in prison to whom He did not preach."

Death and Hades are the dream of our own sovereignty. And fear is the desperate desire to keep dreaming, for what do we fear, but the loss of control. We fear the death of death. In other words, we fear . . . the Life and Jesus is the Life..

Jesus says, "Repent for the kingdom is at hand." But we don't repent for we trust the illusion of our own control... We trust our dreams and we're terrified to wake up, for we don't know what or who we will wake up to. We trust our dreams and we're terrified of God's Dream—eternal Life.

Revelation 1:3 "*...the time is near (at hand).*"

Revelation 1: 4-8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead...

“Firstborn of all creation,” writes Paul, and “firstborn of the dead,” which clearly implies that none of us are entirely created and all of us might actually be dead, only dreaming that we’re alive.

and the ruler of [the] kings of earth.

The Greek is very clear He’s “the ruler of *the* kings on earth.”

The ESV translators just took out the word “the,” and you can see why.

He doesn’t seem to be the ruler of Kim Jong Un, or guys like Adolph Hitler and we wonder about Donald Trump...

We think, at best, He’s ruler of *some* of the kings on earth.

But John writes “*the* kings on earth.” “...ruler of the kings of earth.”

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins...

No one seems to be free in the Revelation except Jesus and these little churches.

by his blood and made us a kingdom.

Some ancient manuscripts read, “made us kings.”

Well, depending on how you understand chapter 20, we either *are* kings or *will be* kings who reign on earth with Jesus.

Kings don’t dream of being sovereign; they are sovereign. They are free. But the kings of the earth are ruled by Jesus, and Jesus has made us free.

Verses 5b-8

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” Almighty!

If God is Almighty, then you are not at all mighty; you’re no-mighty.

Unless, of course . . . God is like mighty . . . in you.

But anything other than that is just a dream.

Verses 8 & 9

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who

is to come, the Almighty.”

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation [the suffering] and the kingdom [the sovereignty] and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Do you see how weird this is?

If God is Almighty and John is in the Kingdom—and even in Jesus—then, why is he getting tribulated?

Surely, this is a problem that will need to be fixed by the *Left Behind* movies. And it's a problem we try to fix each and every day.

We say things like,

“God has done his part, now you have to do your part...”

“He's 99% mighty, and you're like 1% mighty... and you screwed up.”

But John said, “the Almighty,” The *pantokrator* in Greek—*panto* is all, and *krator* is power. It's very clear.

“*He accomplishes all things according to the council of his will,*” writes Paul. And all the prophets would say—and did say, “Amen.”

He never loses control.

-Even when He surrenders control . . . He's in control.

-Even when we disobey, it's only because He consigned us to disobedience.

-Even when we took the fruit, it's only because He first made the tree, forgave us the fruit, and put us in a garden with a talking snake.

-Even when we took His life on the cross, it was only because He first *forgave* His life on the cross—according to plan—such that, what appears to be His greatest loss of control, is the ultimate victory of His Will.

-Even when we dream evil dreams, we are still God's dream.

Well, in Revelation there is never any question of God's victory . . . every when, every where, and every how.

I know this is weird and it hurts your head to think about but . . .

- There is never any question of whether or not God is in control
- There is never any question about what the *dragon* will do.
- There is never any question about what the *beast* will do.
- There is never any question about what the *harlot* will do.
- There is never any question about what the kings of the earth will do, or whether or not there will be famines and plagues and earthquakes and hurricanes. They *will* all come according to plan.

None of that is in question...

The only question in the book of the Revelation is . . . *you*.

The action is not with the kings of the earth.

It's with you—a seemingly powerless insignificant little church that is *you*.

The dragon, beast, harlot, and kings of the earth have no choice, but it seems that God is giving us a choice.

In the next two chapters there is a call to conquer And so this is the question, who will we conquer, and how will they conquer?

- In Ephesus will they return to their first love and conquer?
- In Smyrna will they remain faithful unto death, which is to conquer?
- In Pergamum how will they renounce idols and so conquer?
- In Sardis will they wake from the dead and conquer?
- In Philadelphia will they hold fast and conquer?
- In Thyatira will they turn from immorality and conquer?
- In Laodicea will they humble themselves and conquer?

At first, it sounds like God is saying you have to “try harder and do your part.” But that’s not how we conquer . . .

Revelation 1:10

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.”

In Scripture, trumpets wake people up.

In the New Testament, the trumpet wakes people from the dead.

Revelation 1:10-11

I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, “Write what you see [that’s the vision] in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

Now, this is wild, but the part of The Revelation that makes sense to us is not sent to us. And the part of the Revelation that makes no sense to us, and seems like a ridiculous dream, is the part that is sent to us. (The part that seems practical to us is not sent to us. And the impractical bizarre part *is* sent to us.) The vision is sent to us—the Church. And the assignment, what we are to do, is sent to the *angel* of each church.

In the next two chapters we’ll read what people refer to as the letters to the seven churches, but the letters are not addressed to the seven churches, but the angels of the seven churches. The seven angels are seven stars, that must shine like the sun from the seven lampstands that are the seven churches. I suspect the seven angels are also the seven spirits of God (1:4), that are the seven eyes of the lamb, and we know that He is the Starman— “*I am the bright and morning star*” (Rev. 22:16).

Get the picture? Because that’s your job: pay attention to the vision.

The seven letters are addressed to the seven angels—the seven stars. And the vision is given to us—the seven lampstands.

In the vision, we'll discover that there's only one that conquers, and He is the Lamb.

He is 100% mighty. He's *all*-mighty.

So if we conquer, it must be His might in us.

If we shine, it must be Him in us.

If we choose, it must be God's good will at home in us.

And in the vision, we discover: we do choose, we do shine, and we do conquer. John sees it in Revelation chapters 4 and 5. He sees the slaughtered lamb standing on the throne of God. And he hears "*every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them*" *worshiping* the one who sits on the throne, and the lamb, for he has conquered. He has ransomed men for God. That's what it says.

That means that every creature has conquered because their hearts have been conquered by the Lamb. They worship the Lamb, for He has ransomed people for God. John sees God's dream, which is reality and the eternal Seventh Day in which everything is very good. John sees God's dream, which is the eternal reality.

Then John sees how it happens (Revelation chapters 6 through 22). He sees the Gospel according to Jesus. The Lamb opens the seven seals. John hears seven trumpets and seven thunders, and watches seven bowls poured out upon the earth, and then John sees the New Jerusalem coming down like a bride adorned for her husband.

Her husband, Jesus is the Light. And she is filled with light.

She is the lampstand, and He is the Bright and Morning Star.

We conquer by the "blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony" (Rev.12:11).

He is the Word of our testimony. It's his blood that flows in our veins.

He is the Light in the lampstand that is us.

Seven is a reference to the seven days of creation, which are the seven days of space and time. In those series of sevens, we witness a lot of darkness, death, Hades, and fear. That's not God's dream . . . and yet, we are God's dream, and darkness, death *hades*, and fear are our dreams . . .

They are the dream of our own sovereignty.

They are our self-centered dreams in Flatland.

They are our dreams in space and time, and yet even our bad dreams exist inside of God's good dream, for we, the dreamers, are, in fact, God's dream.

God is so sovereign that He even arranges our bad dreams to reveal His good dream. He uses our Kim Jog Uns and Pontius Pilates and even our old sinful selves to reveal Himself, and even our new selves.

- He uses our dark dreams to romance us to the Light . . . that shines in the darkness . . . where we discover no darkness can conquer the Light—the Starman. The Starman shines His light and transforms all our dark dreams into His dream. [Peter turns and looks at the cross.] Just as Jesus risen from the dead transformed the greatest evil into the greatest good.

Well, darkness, death, *hades* and fear are the dream of our own sovereignty.

We cannot conquer those dreams, with more of the very same dreams.

Let me say that again: Darkness, death, *hades* and fear are the dream of our own sovereignty. We cannot conquer those dreams, with more of the very same dreams. We can only conquer those dreams by waking up.

About seven years ago, I was having a really tough day. At that time it had been about ten years since I preached this chapter in The Revelation. Those ten years had been really hard. The more I preached, "God is Salvation," the more I offended people who believed that they were salvation. I lost an awful lot of friends, a lot of respect, and a lot of sleep wondering if maybe I was a heretic or just plain nuts. That day I poured my heart out to God. And that day Susan received a word from God for me. This is what she heard:

Peter,

I am waking them up. My People have been asleep too long. Some will wake up easier than others. Some won't want to wake up at all. But all will have to wake up eventually because I will cause them to have restless dreams. I will send others to help. You are not alone in this. Be glad you are not asleep otherwise there are many things you would have missed along the way. Yes. You will get tired and be tempted to sleep but in the end, your only rest is in me.

~Abba

We conquer by waking up. In verse 11, John hears the trumpet saying, "write what you see and send it to the churches..."

Revelation 1:12-17

Then I turned to see the voice [like a Word!] that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

Last time, we noted that if you wake a person too quickly from a dream you can give that person a heart attack. And if you wake them quickly from a dream, you better hope that they know who you are.

I've told you about a night back in 1987 when Susan and I were newly married, and I came home unexpectedly, from a great distance, at an hour Susan did not anticipate. It was 3:00 in the morning, she was sound asleep and dreaming her own dreams. In our dreams, we are in complete control—even though that control is an illusion.

I had been driving all night because of a crisis in my friend's marriage. I dropped him off and went home to my new bride. I would be entering like a thief in the night. But I wasn't a thief in the night—I am her husband. I tried not to startle her. But trying not to startle a person at 3:00 in the morning makes you seem to be, all the more, a thief in the night.

I remember thinking, if only I could enter her dreams and tell her, "Honey, I'm coming

home like a thief in the night. But I'm not a thief in the night, I'm your husband, and you're about to wake up." [Peter looks at the cross.] Imagine if a Person could do that!

I worked at the lock; the key in the door made a sound. And then I heard a voice of absolute terror, coming from the other room: "Is somebody there? Who is it! Oh my God who is it?" And I knew in that moment that my bride believed that whoever had opened that door and wakened her from her dreams, was in absolute control, and would most likely rape her.

Waking from a dream is waking from the illusion of sovereignty. Rape is stolen sovereignty. God will mess with your dreams, arrange for the destruction of your city and even your temple, just to wake you from your illusions. But He will not rape you.

"Is somebody there? Who is it? Oh my God who is it?" Susan exclaimed. I called out—as quickly as I could, "It's me. It's me. It's me. I love you." And she knew my voice... She knew me, and I knew her. She's my dream . . . and I'm her star man.

In Revelation 1:17-20 John writes,

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

I love that scene, The Starman walked over to John and touched him... "at hand." Just like He did twice to the prophet Daniel, (Daniel 10) in the Old Testament. He appeared in just the same way, Daniel fell as though dead, and the Lord touched him saying, "*Oh man deeply loved—beloved—fear not.*"

John referred to himself as the beloved. Jesus touched John, and John knew him. In fact, this had happened once before on the mount of transfiguration. Jesus shone like the sun, John dropped, and Jesus came and touched him...

Now, Jesus touches John with His right hand—the hand that held the seven stars. Now, He touches him as if to say, "John you know me; you laid your head on my chest at supper. We used to go fishing. John, I'm your best friend, Jesus... AND John, I am the Almighty."

Do you see why it's so important that you get to know Jesus *now*? In 1 John 2, John writes, "*And now little children abide in him, [we will talk more about what "abiding in Him" looks like next week] so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.*"

Those that refuse to wake up to Jesus only hide themselves deeper in Hell—in *hades*.

Well, after imagining that it was not me, Susan was so glad that it was me that she gladly surrendered her dreams, her sovereignty, and her unveiled temple to me. She got pregnant and gave birth to life, my life in her and through her. She became fruitful and multiplied, not by seizing control, but by surrendering control like a dancer surrenders to the rhythm of a dance.

I don't mean to be crass, Bride of Christ; I mean to point out, just how it is, that we conquer. We conquer, by being conquered, by Love. We conquer by waking up to the Starman.

[Peter begins singing]

There's a starman waiting in the sky	He told me:
He'd like to come and meet us	Let the children lose it
But he thinks he'd blow our minds...	Let the children use it
	Let all the children boogie...

I have no idea what David Bowie was thinking, but I do think he was tapping into something very profound: In order to conquer we have to become like children. It's much easier for children to surrender sovereignty. And it's much easier for children to dance, for children live in the now, and now is where we surrender and start to dance.

"Let the children lose it... lose control."

"Let the children use it... or be used by it."

"Let the children boogie."

When children surrender to a song, they start to sing.

When they surrender to music, they start to dance.

I think Jesus would like us to sing and dance.

He'd like us to join the song that John saw in chapters 4 and 5: "*...every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them...*"

singing and dancing, at the sight of the lamb on the throne." It's one song, but a different dance in each and every city, each and every part.

When we dance to His Rhythm, we become His Body, His dancing Body.

His will becomes our will and, yet, we are absolutely free.

His dream becomes our dream, and that dream is reality.

He is the dreamer and it's our choice—a choice given to us by Grace—to always be His dream. He is the King, and we rejoice that He is always at hand.

One day, you will hear a voice like a trumpet. And you will turn to see the Word that you heard—the Starman. And you will suddenly realize that you only exist because the Starman constantly dreams you into existence. At that moment, it is absolutely critical for you to know that the Starman is your best friend, Jesus.

Communion

So, on the night He was betrayed—in the very depths of our darkest dream—He took

bread and broke it, saying this is my body given to you; take and eat. And 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.

You're about to wake up, but let's surrender to Him right now. Would you pray with me?

Prayer

Almighty God, we have suspected that someone is at the controls of the universe. We've suspected there's a Starman so we even write songs about it. Thank you that when we see Jesus we see you. Thank you, Jesus, that you are the Starman.

Now, join me quietly in your heart: "Jesus, to you I surrender my body. To you, I surrender my heart, my soul, my mind, and my strength. To you, I surrender the lampstand. Be the Spirit that inhabits my temple. You are my Savior. You are my Lord.

Benediction

In case you're thinking:

"Those are nice words. I sure wish they were true, but I watched the news this morning. I'm worried about people in Puerto Rico not getting enough to eat. There are famines and wars; the kings of the earth are threatening to nuke each other. There are storms. This world just seems like a bad dream."

Right. So, read the Revelation—the vision.

And I know what people say,

"Well, I read it and it freaks me out because there are famines, storms, earthquakes, and kings at war with each other. I worry that might happen."

But don't you see that it *is* happening?

Read the Revelation—the vision. Keep reading it until you realize it's a story about how God conquers. He conquers the whole God-damned thing—with a Lamb—who makes it all a God-blessed thing. You are already awake and beginning to see.

Blessed are you who read aloud the words of the vision and hear the prophecy: Jesus wins. He always wins. He's the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords and your friend.

Believe the Gospel. In His name, 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 version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

4

Ephesus and “That Lovin’ Feeling”

Ephesus and “That Lovin’ Feeling”

Revelation 2:1-7

#4 in our series The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation

October 1, 2017

Peter Hiatt

[The worship band sings “You Lost that Loving Feeling” by the Righteous Brothers.]

Prayer

Lord God, we ask that you would help us to preach, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Message

In January of 1978, I went on my first date with Susan Coleman, who is now Susan Hiatt. I think I remember almost everything about that date: the way she smelled, how her hair sat on her shoulders. I took her to see *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. It was sold out, so we went next door and saw another movie—an awful movie. So I said, “Would you like to see the late show of *Close Encounters*?” And she said, “Yes!” During the first movie, I had managed to get my arm around Susan’s shoulder. I was so thrilled with that close encounter that I jumped at an opportunity for another close encounter.

So, during *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, I put my arm around her again. About halfway through the movie, she said, “Do you need to move your arm?” I said, “No, it’s just fine.” There was no way I was moving my arm. But it wasn’t fine. It was screaming with pain; it felt like knives were being jammed into my arms, but there was no way that I was gonna move it. And then, I discovered . . . that I could not move it. It was utterly paralyzed from my neck all the way to my fingertips—just dead meat sitting on her beautiful shoulders. At last, I had to excuse myself, reach around her head, pick my arm up, set it on my lap, and slap it until the blood began to flow once again.

On our second date (it’s amazing I got a second date) I worked like crazy. I prepared a picnic. I cleaned the car. I took her up to a horse pasture in the mountains where we kept our horse. But we couldn’t catch the horse. So we picnicked on a rock under a pine tree, and we talked about death. My friend Bobby had died that week in a car accident. We talked and talked, and talked . . . I was absolutely stricken with her.

On our third date, I arranged a snowshoeing trip. My mom helped me prepare a picnic. On the way up to Frisco, at the top of Loveland Pass, we parked the car and hiked to the top of a 13,000-foot mountain in our tennis shoes in mid-winter. I remember looking at her and thinking, “Wow! What a woman!”

I now know that I was being conned. That was the last mountain Susan ever climbed—she hates mountain climbing. I was being conned. But, it was a *beautiful* con, for she did it because she wanted to be with *me*. She disciplined herself in the hope of being with me.

We snow-shoed to my Uncle Chuck's cabin in the woods, where we had a picnic in the tree house that I played in as a little boy. I would never do that, on my own, but I wanted to be with her . . . And I figured that it was the kind of thing she might float her boat. And I was right! It did. It was euphoric.

Adults often look down on that "first love" and discount it and call it puppy love. We probably discount it, 'cause it hurts too much to remember it, and we despair of ever feelin' it again.

On our fourth date, we went to the Sade Hawkin's dance. In a James Bond-like, romance-induced fog, I drove my dad's car out of the parking lot, over a median on South Broadway. I acted like I meant to do it, but I didn't. I bent the frame; it was *bad*. And she still liked me!

By our fifth date, I was feeling fairly confident and figured that I had this thing under control . . . So, we just went to a movie.

And on the sixth date, we went to a movie . . .

On the seventh date, we went to a movie . . .

On the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth . . . we went to a movie.

It was long about then that I said, "You know, maybe we ought to date other people too."

An anonymous author wrote this:

Their wedding picture mocked them from the table, these two whose minds no longer touched each other.

Somewhere, between the oldest child's first tooth and the youngest daughter's graduation, they lost each other.

Throughout the years each slowly unraveled that tangled ball of string called self, [but] as they tugged at stubborn knots, each hid his or her searching from the other.

Sometimes she cried at night and begged the whispering darkness to tell her who she was. He lay beside her, snoring like a hibernating bear, unaware of her winter.

Once, after they had made love, he wanted to tell her how afraid he was of dying, but, fearful to show his naked soul, he spoke instead of the beauty of her [body].

She took a course on modern art, trying to find herself in colors splashed upon a canvas, complaining to the other women about men who are insensitive.

He climbed into a tomb called "The Office," wrapped his mind in a shroud of paper figures, and buried himself in customers.

Slowly, the wall between them rose, cemented by the mortar of indifference.

One day, reaching out to touch each other, they found a barrier they could not penetrate, and recoiling from the coldness of the stone, each retreated from the stranger on the other side. [then he writes]

For when love dies, it is not in a moment of angry battle, not when fiery bodies lose their heat. It lies panting, exhausted expiring at the bottom of a wall it could not scale.

They lost hope.

No longer lovers—at best, roommates—each trapped in a prison of resentment and failure that we call the "self"—the illusion of our own sovereignty.

Last week, we noted that Jesus is waking us up from the dream of our own sovereignty—our own illusion of control.

“Awake o sleeper and rise from the dead,” writes Saint Paul,
“and Christ will shine on you.”

Revelation (*apokalypsis*) 2:1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands...’”

That’s quite a picture.

Jesus just revealed that the seven lampstands *are* the seven churches and the seven stars in His right hand are the seven *angels* of the seven *churches*...

So, Jesus, the Starman is talking to the seven stars in His right hand as He walks among the churches that are in fact lampstands... and lampstands hold lamps like the seven lamps of fire on the seven lampstands that became one (like a menorah) before the throne of God in Revelation chapter four. The seven lamps of fire are the “seven spirits of God,” which are the “seven eyes of the lamb” (Revelation5:6).

Seven lamps burned in the Holy Place in the tabernacle or temple. They were to shine light on the bread of the presence the altar of incense and on the veil that covered the throne of God (on top of the ark)—and the One who abides on that throne. And now, to make things even weirder, it turns out that we are Christ’s Temple, which is His Body and Bride.

Now, He goes walking among the lampstands, just as He walked in the garden, calling to the man and the woman saying, “Where are you?” He wanted to be with them, but they were hiding behind a veil...

katakalypto—they were veiled.

apokalypto—means to unveil, to reveal.

Revelation (*apokalypsis*) 2:1-7a

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. ‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...’”

So Jesus, the Starman, talks to this star angel, which means “messenger.” Men are referred to as angels and in the Old Testament, so is God and His Word. Jesus talks to the star angel in His hand and then says, “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God*” (Rev. 2:7b).

Eden means “pleasure” or “delight.”

Paradise is a Persian word that literally means “garden of pleasure or delight.”

Adam and Eve were *katakalypto*—veiled to that pleasure when they took the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil from the tree in the middle of the garden. [Peter turns around and points to the cross.]

And then they veiled themselves with fig leaves...

And then God veiled the Way to the tree of Life in the middle of the garden...

And then He veiled the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that would rest on top of the ark between the cherubim. Israel was commanded to worship in front of that veil, before the bread of the presence, under the seven golden lampstands.

But now, to “the one who conquers,” the Way to the Life that hangs on the tree of Life in the midst of the garden... is unveiled—as if the veil ripped, from top to bottom.

Now, I’m sorry to talk this way, because it makes us uncomfortable, but The Revelation ends with a marriage feast. And a Jewish marriage feast was all about two unveiled people celebrating a communion of delight in a covenant of body and blood that would then produce fruit—that is, more life.

Jesus is the Groom and His Church is the Bride. And Love, Joy, Peace, Patience Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faith, and self-controlled by Love are the fruit of this communion.

Isaiah 62:5 “...as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”

But now Jesus mourns, as He walks among the lampstands saying, “*You have abandoned the Love you had at first.*”

Isn’t that incredible?

This is the first order of business with His church, for Jesus, this is the foundational issue.

He says something like, “You’re a dutiful spouse. You take care of our home. You faithfully nurture our kids teaching them what’s true. You care for it all, but I wonder if you care for me. I want you so deeply, and it seems, you don’t want me anymore.”

Do you sense how painful and how humiliating it must have been for our Lord to author this Word, this letter? What's He saying? [Peter begins singing part of the song "You Lost that Loving Feeling."

Baby, baby, I'd get down on my knees for you
If you would only love me like you used to do, yeah...

You lost that lovin' feelin'
Whoa, that lovin' feelin'
You lost that lovin' feelin'
Now it's gone, gone, gone, whoa, woe, woe...

As I mentioned, I'm sorry to talk this way because it's very painful for some. And I'm sorry to talk this way because I haven't always been sensitive to that pain in the past.

Well, it was about forty years before Ephesus received the Revelation from Jesus that they received another letter from Paul. It was in the letter to the Ephesians that Paul wrote,

"Awake o Sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will give you light."

And then he wrote,

"... We are members of [Christ's] body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."

—Eph. 5:14, 30-31

He's pointing out that God made the Adam—*ha adam*—male and female, and told them to commune in the garden of delight, for it was to reference the communion that Christ desires with us, His bride, in the eternal covenant of His Love.

So you see, it makes complete sense that the evil one would do all he can to mar our conception of the substance—the reference, so we would miss the substance, which is Christ.

In the 21st century, we have all sorts of debates about how exactly satan does that, just as they had all sorts of debates about how he did that in the 1st century. But the point is that each of us was made for intimate communion in a covenant of delight. We all long for that communion and, at times, we all despair of ever finding it or experiencing it. But we are each made for it, and so all your longings and satisfactions—the good ones and the bad ones, the wounds and the delights—all tell us something about Jesus and His Love. They are a physical reference to a spiritual reality.

We each have a physical body but are destined to receive a spiritual body. The spiritual is not less real than the physical, but more real. And the spiritual is not about less intimate communion, but more.

Your physical body only feels its own pleasures and pain.
It's the kingdom of your own sovereignty.

But even now your spirit *can* feel the pain and pleasure of those you love.

Sexuality is so powerful, for it's a physical communion beyond the boundaries of your own self-centered kingdom of control—a communion that is somehow life and creates life—like Paul writes the two become one flesh. So, for a moment one feels another's delight. It's a communion of delight, as two self-centered autonomous physical bodies are unveiled, surrender their sovereignty, and become one.

And yet... it's a reference.

So, you have a physical body that can become one with another body in a communion of delight in the Covenant of Love. But you will receive a spiritual body that will be part of one great body, and even now becomes one spirit with Christ. We can barely even begin to imagine the ecstatic joy of that reality that is your destiny and my destiny, but God has created in our very flesh . . . a reference.

Please don't get hung up on the reference, but please learn from the reference.

You will lose the reference and gain the reality.

Don't get hung up, but please see how satan tries to hang you up.

The problem with sexuality is that it works. Two bodies really become one flesh—that's called marriage. It's a covenant. Satan tempts us to break that covenant, for when we do we break a living body. Then, in our pain, we renounce the intimate communion that we all long for. We do that by shutting down our hearts and retreating into our own self-centered kingdoms of control.

Sometimes people become promiscuous—trying to divorce the physical communion from the spiritual, which ultimately destroys both. And then sometimes those very same people discover religion and think it means giving up hope in any form of intimate communion at all. They think Christianity is all about gaining control, when in fact it's all about surrendering our illusion of control to the Great Bridegroom.

The Great Bridegroom longs to take delight in His Bride. But He *will not* take delight unless she surrenders to delight because *His* delight is *her* delight. And *her* delight is *His* delight. It's a communion of delight; it's ecstasy. Satan hates ecstasy, and so he will tempt us to immorality, which is broken communion.

He will tempt us to immorality and then morality—and by that, I mean faith in the law.

He'll whisper into your soul, "Since your heart was raped, never surrender it again. Guard your naked heart. Guard it. . . with law . . . keep it prim and proper. Maintain absolute control over the sovereign, little kingdom of your soul. And this is what Jesus is for... He came to guard the borders of your kingdom so that, locked away inside your sovereign little kingdom of absolute control, you might never be hurt again. And above all do not surrender your shame. Never let anyone touch it, most of all Jesus, for He is

good and would only despise your evil. Keep your shame safe, behind the veil—*katakalypto*.”

Now you may never have been physically promiscuous, and yet we’ve all been spiritually promiscuous. We’ve all trusted the lies of the ancient serpent, broken the heart of God, covered our shame, veiled our souls, and hidden in the trees; we’ve hidden in the illusion of our own sovereignty—the dream that we need no one’s help but our own.

In C.S. Lewis’ novel, *That Hideous Strength*, the director counsels a young woman struggling in her new marriage. At one point he says this:

“There is no escape. If it were a virginal rejection of the male, [God] would allow it. Such souls can bypass the male and go on to meet something...higher up, to which they must make a yet deeper surrender. But your trouble has been what old poets called, Daungler. We call it pride. You are offended by the masculine itself: the loud, irruptive, possessive thing the gold lion the bearded bull – which breaks through hedges and scatters the little kingdom of your primness...The male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it. You had better agree with your adversary quickly.” “You mean I shall have to become a Christian?” said Jane. “It looks like it,“ said the Director . . .

The Church doesn’t talk very much about this today—I think: *we are* the Bride of Christ, betrothed to Jesus the Christ. Why?

So that He would provide a house with a two car garage and a nice kitchen?

So that He would guard your prim and proper little kingdom?

Is that why?

He did not hang on a cross and bear the pain of Hell so you would be regular in your devotions, go on one mission project a year, and be a faithful tither. He suffered, died, and bore Hell in order to win your heart.

So that you would surrender your sovereignty to His sovereignty;

So that you would surrender to a communion of delight in His Covenant of Love.

But Satan has made you fear the deepest longings of your own soul so that you would spurn the Lord’s advances and turn Him into a roommate—or even better, a border guard.

Jesus writes, *“I see your works. I see your faithful endurance. I see your orthodoxy... thank you! And you hate the works of the Nicolaitans. I hate their works too.”*

We don’t know, but the Nicolaitans may have been a group that taught Christians to be sexually promiscuous (as we read about in Pergamum later in this chapter in verse 5).

Well, Jesus is saying,

“Thank you, Ephesus. Thank you for hating immorality.

Thank you for hating passion out of bounds. . .

But, my dear, you have come to hate passion in bounds!

You cook, you clean, you take care of the children, and I'm absolutely convinced you'd never give your passion to another. . .

*But what's the point? You no longer give it to Me.
You have abandoned the love we had at first."*

We can philosophize and theologize about the meaning of Love, but if you've ever been in a relationship (the pain, the joy, the sorrow, the struggle) you *know* what Jesus means.

You never close your eyes anymore when I kiss your lips
And there's no tenderness like before in your fingertips

You're trying hard not to show it.
But baby, baby I know it—
You've lost that lovin' feelin'...

We may say, "Well I can't control my feelings...."
But that's not entirely true, is it?

I've been married to Susan for thirty-four-and-a-half years. And we've been hangin' out together for forty. And let me tell you, we've had to fight for that "lovin' feeling"—not at first, but ever since that sixth or seventh date. And I hope you know that I'm talking about far more than sexual attraction. I'm talking about intimacy, physical and, even more, *spiritual* communion. It's been a fight for passion. And it has cost me energy, and mostly pride. At times, I've had to get down on my knees, cry out to God and even beg Susan.

One time twenty-five years ago was particularly hard. She was nursing our fourth child . . . and raising our children largely on her own because I was constantly busy at church or in my office. But after the kids were in bed, I was desperate for her affections. I mean *any* affection . . . a hug . . . a kiss . . . a smile . . .

She would say things like, "Well, I just don't express my self that way."

And I would think, "You used to express yourself that way."

She would say, "I cook, I clean, I take care of the children . . .
That's how I say, I love you."

But I knew the truth: she was growing tired of the fight—fighting for passion. And it *was* a fight for her, because, I can be very critical, self-centered, strong and demanding . . . not easy to love.

Well, during that time, I would stay awake all night sometimes, angry, and frustrated, not knowing what to do with my feelings. She might *agree* to do what I wanted her to do, but she wouldn't *feel* what I wanted her to feel; her heart would be far from me. I couldn't demand delight. And her delight is my delight, and that's what I wanted—a communion of delight.

To tell her how I felt was utterly humiliating. . .

“Susan, even though you don’t long for me, I still long for you. I sit awake all night; I watch you while you’re sleeping, just wishing, hoping, and praying that you would wake up and receive my love. Let my love shine on you.”

During that time, there were nights I remember thinking to myself: “Peter, just give up. Just give up. Give up on being lovers, and just settle on being roommates.”

Late one night, when I was no longer strong but felt profoundly weak, I wrote my wife a letter. In that letter, I just shared my broken heart . . . That was the night I decided to love Susan more than my ego. It was the death of my ego—“It’s not easy to say, “I want you more than anything in this world, and I want you to want me... and I don’t think you do. . . anymore.”

Do you know that Jesus loves you more than His ego?

I don’t know if he ever had an ego, but if he did have an ego, I’m sure we nailed it to a tree in the middle of a garden. He most certainly had a body, and it was broken for you,
The life spilled out for you...

And the Spirit was delivered up for you...

You realize that Jesus is the Word of God, that is God, that has all power and dominion. And now He sends this letter to His sleeping Bride.

“I have this against you...”

That sounds so demanding, but listen to what He has against them:

“I don’t think you like me... anymore.”

What does God Almighty want from you?

I think He wants you to like Him, the way He likes you . . .

Freely, passionately, relentlessly and absolutely . . .

I wrote Susan a letter, and several times she’s reminded me of that letter because the letter gave her hope. It was a new beginning for us. We began to do some of the things we did at first. And then, began to feel some of the things we felt at first...

According to some scholars, the name Ephesus means “Desired one.”

“My desired one, remember what we had?

Repent and do the things you did at first.”

So, Bride of Christ, what were the things you did at first?

Maybe the Lord is saying something like this to you:

“Remember those hikes we used to take? And *you* probably didn’t even think of them as anything remotely religious, but remember those hikes? You thought of *me* the whole time! Would you go hiking again?”

“Remember how you used to stay up late and *read* your Bible?

You *memorized* parts of it. Would you do that again?”

“Remember how you sang songs to me. Would you sing to me like you used to sing to me?”

“Remember how every week you couldn’t wait to come to worship, hear about me, talk about me, listen for me, and commune with me?”

I'm always cautious about pushing worship attendance because I have ulterior motives, but that was something we did at first; every week we disciplined ourselves to go on a date. The discipline didn't really feel like discipline, but that's what it was.

You're with Jesus all the time, but once a week, go on a date.

Discipline yourself in *hope*.

- If you discipline yourself in *fear* and *shame* you'll end up hating Jesus.
- But if you discipline yourself in *the hope of loving Jesus*... you're already loving Jesus and are bound to feel more Love for Jesus.

"Ephesus, Ephesus, do the things you did at first."

Wouldn't you like to know the things they did at first? People always want me to tell them what to do; I'm entirely serious about that. That has really surprised me as a pastor. People ask me, what I always ask Jesus, in a host different ways: "Jesus just what is it that we have to do?"

So, wouldn't you like to know the things they did at first? Because He says, *"Do the things that you did at first."* We really don't know, exactly, what they did at first . . . and maybe that's good. For if we did, we'd probably start a denomination called *The True Fellowship of the Things They Did At First*... (incorporated)

Actually, we do have an idea of some of the things they did at first. You can read about them in Acts chapter 19. And folks have actually started denominations based on what they did at first.

In Acts 19 we read about . . .

- Twelve Ephesians that were baptized in the Spirit and spoke in tongues—and people have started denominations where you have to do just that.
- Then Paul argues with Jews—and there are several denominations all about doing just that.
- Then Paul reasoned daily for two years in the Hall of Tyrannous—and all sorts of denominations are all about that—and judge others for not doing that.
- Then twelve sons of the high priest try to cast out a demon, doing just what Paul did at first—and the demon literally strips them naked and beats them up, saying *"Jesus I know and Paul I know about, but who are you?"*

The demon didn't care about *what* they did, but *who* they knew...And isn't that the point? Paul had a relationship with Jesus...At first, the Ephesians had a relationship with Jesus. You can read about it in Acts 19: It was confusing, messy, and took a lot of work because that's how relationships are. But they did what they did because they had met Jesus, fallen in love with Jesus, and wanted to *know* Jesus; they had a relationship.

At one point, (Acts 19:23) church even turned into a riot in the theater in Ephesus . . . But now, forty years later, they had everything under control: right doctrine, right practice, right discipline . . . and cold hearts.

Did you notice that my passion for Susan in High School grew cold when all I did was the very thing I did at first? I took her to movies.

I remember everything about our first date to *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. But I don't remember anything about dates number six through fifty—when I thought our relationship was under control and so all I had to do was just do what I did at first...

And yet . . . it wasn't what I did at first, was it?

If I do the things I did at first, *because* someone told me that I have to do the things I did at first, *then* I'm not doing the things I did at first. No one had to tell me at first! I saw Susan and just did what I did at first. And, at first, I did anything and everything that I thought might get me closer to Susan.

- I worked hard on our relationship . . . in hope!
- I disciplined myself . . . in hope!
- And I didn't even think of it as discipline; what I didn't want to do, I did want to do, because I thought it might get me closer to Susan. It was hope.

So, if you have any hope in Jesus work on your relationship.

- Go for a walk and talk to Him like you used to.
- Stay up late reading your Bible.
- Sing louder.
- Don't miss worship services.
- Seek Jesus with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength—and then it doesn't much matter what you *do*, but that you *care* to do it!
- You know? Susan really didn't care about the movie, or trying to catch the horse, or climbing a mountain or wrecking my Dad's car—she cared, that I cared so very much for her.

So, if you have any hope in Jesus . . . work on your relationship with Jesus.

But what do we do if a person has no hope?

What do you say to a Bride who's lost hope?

"Susan you are a disciplined wife.

But I have this against you: you don't like me.

Therefore you must go with me to *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Then you must try to catch a horse, have a picnic instead, and talk about death.

Then you must climb a 13,000 ft. mountain in February.

Then you must distract me with your beauty, such that I bend the frame on my father's car...

OR I will 'remove your lampstand.'

Like me as much as I like you or I'll come and 'remove your lampstand'!"

How do you say that to a person? Well, Jesus is not saying that to a person. (That's what's so fascinating here.) People are overhearing Jesus say this . . . to a star, in His

strong right hand. The Light of the world is talking to a light in His hand as He walks among lampstands.

The Starman is talking to a star, that is an *angelos* (that's where we get our word "angel")—but *angelos* means messenger. That messenger is sent to each church. So, Jesus delivers the message to the messenger and, then, Jesus says, "*Let him who has ears to hear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" The message to the messenger, is imparted to us by the Spirit, who in two chapters is called a lamp (*lampas*—torch, Rev. 4:5), who must then be the lamp in our lampstand.

The seven angels must somehow be the seven spirits of God (Rev. 4:5) sent out into all the earth, which means we're overhearing a conversation between God the Son and God the Spirit about each and all of us—His Church, His Body, His Temple, His Bride—His Lampstand.

We overhear Jesus talking to His own Spirit, about His *relationship* with us: His hurts and sorrows, His hopes and dreams, His choice that must become our choice if we are to conquer. We overhear Jesus talking to the stars, which are flames of fire, which are *lampas*—lamps. See? I think Jesus is fixin' to put the lamps in the lampstands.

So . . . As we've preached, as you've heard the Word, did you feel any hope at any point? I know you probably felt pain, but at any point did you feel a little bit of hope? The hope might have felt weak, perhaps broken and inconsequential . . . but hope . . .

In Colossians 1, Paul talks about the mystery hidden for ages and generation... He says it is this: "*Christ in us, the hope of glory.*"

You see? *Hope* in you, is *Christ* in you.

When I wrote Susan that letter, the thing that gave her hope was not suggestions for activities that we could do. It was the revelation that my heart was broken for her. And when she saw my heart, it changed everything she did. What if you actually saw God's heart broken for you?

Well, the Church is to overhear a conversation that Jesus has with Himself. And then she is to read aloud and hear the vision that Jesus is sending. In the vision, they see a slaughtered lamb. The Jews had been slaughtering lambs in the temple for a thousand years. Now they see that the Lion of Judah is the Slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne—that had been covered behind the veil.

The Slaughtered Lamb conquers the kings of the earth, the beasts, the great harlot and the ancient dragon. All in preparation for us—to be married to us—His Bride. His Bride is a city and she has no need of the sun, for the Lamb is her lamp (*lampas*)...The lamb is her Lamp (Rev. 21:23), and she is His lampstand.

He conquers, and she conquers with Him (Rev. 17:4). Their relationship, their communion, conquers all things. Right now, it may seem so very weak—like a broken heart or a slaughtered lamb. But *hope* in you is *Christ* in you. Be with Him, think about Him, talk to Him, keep nothing from Him, delight in Him as He delights in you, and that's what it is to conquer sin, death, hell, the Father of lies and this entire whole cursed world.

Communion

So, He took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. And He took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you."

Do you see what He's saying? "*Baby Baby, I climbed up on this tree for you...* [Peter reaches out and holds onto the cross as he continues singing] *if you would only love me, the way that I love you.*"

"Let him who has ears to hear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

[Several worship songs are sung]

Benediction

As we were singing, I was thinking about this day back in the early eighties. Susan and I drove up on Vail pass. It was just beautiful that day. I remember at one point looking at Susan and thinking to myself, "*I can die now God; she loves me. Thank you! From here on out nothing matters. I can die now because I just experienced this. God, this world has lost its power over me.*" And then, of course, we drove down the mountain, had a bunch of fights, got jobs, had four kids, got old...but it was a reference because God was also speaking to me through the reference, and through the sunrise, through the flowers, and through the mountains. He was saying, " Peter, I love you."

If I could ever get a really good glimpse of that, if I could see that the Creator loves me in such a relentless and furious way, this world would lose its power over me, wouldn't it? Your opinions of me would lose its power over me. My suffering and sorrow would lose its power over me. I would, in effect, conquer the world because of this Love that I know deep, deep down in my heart. Jesus said, "*In this world, you will have tribulation but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" "*I have overcome the world,*" and when you are *with* Him, *you* have overcome the world too. And get this: the evil one knows that. He's not afraid of your religious rituals, but He is afraid of the faith, hope, and love you have in your heart for Jesus. To you it seems small, inconsequential, like a little seed — weak and powerless. But the evil one knows it's the Life that flows from the throne and nothing is more powerful.

So, in Jesus' name, believe the Gospel.
And work on your relationship. 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 version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

5

Smyrna and the Prosperity Gospel

Smyrna and the Prosperity Gospel

Revelation 2:8-11

#5 in our series The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation

October 15, 2017

Peter Hiett

All images by Peter Hiett.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you that we can hold on because you hold on to us, and you never let us go. Father, we ask now that you would help us to preach your Word—your Word that is victorious over all darkness, despair, death, and chaos over all this world, your Word that was spoken into the darkness and the void that created all things. Would you speak your Word even through me? It is such a weird thing: to preach, to talk about you seems kind of absurd to me most of the time. Lord, would you send your Spirit to impart your Word to our hearts; cause us to believe what's true, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Message—

[Clip from the *Twilight Zone*]

[A man (a thief) is walking in the desert with the sun beating down on him. Time lapses. He collapses to the ground from heat exhaustion. The scene changes to him lying on the ground with a man standing above him. The thief calls out to him.]

Thief: *Mister! Mister, this is gold . . .* [He weakly lifts his hand, which is holding a bar of gold.] *Here you can have it. You can have it. Drive me to town. If you give me water...I'll give it to you.* [The thief stops talking and dies. The traveler that was above him hurriedly puts his ear to his chest to see if the thief is still alive and quickly realizes he is not.]

Traveler: *Poor old fella. I wonder where you came from.*

Traveler's Wife: *Who is it George? What's the matter with him?*

Traveler: *Some old tramp, at least he was; now he's dead.*

Traveler's Wife: *What's that?*

Traveler: *Gold...that's what he said it was. He wanted to give it to me in exchange for a lift to town.*

Traveler's Wife: *Gold? What in the world would he be doing with this gold?*

Traveler: *I don't know. He's probably off his rocker. Can you imagine that? He offered this to me, as if it were really worth something.*

Traveler's Wife: *You know, wasn't it worth something once George? Didn't people use gold for money.* Traveler: *Sure but...a hundred years or so ago, before they found a way of manufacturing it.*

[The traveler tosses the gold to the side of the road.]

[Twilight music plays]

Narrator: *The last of four rip van winkels who all died precisely the way they lived—chasing an idol across the sand to wind up bleached dry in the hot sun as so much desert flotsam worthless as the gold bullion they build a shrine to—tonight's lesion in the twilight zone.* [The *Twilight Zone* theme song plays.]

That man threw the gold away as if it really had no value...
And that woman in the futuristic space car said, "Wasn't it worth something once George? Didn't people use gold for money?"

This is money.

[Peter pulls out a dollar bill and burns it.]

Was that painful for you?

It was painful for me: it set off all these voices in my head:

"You need to learn the value of a dollar."

"You need to learn the value of money."

But what is a dollar? It's just green paper. It has no inherent value. It only has the value we give it. If you make ten dollars an hour, it represents six minutes of your effort.

If you make one hundred dollars an hour, it represents thirty-six seconds of your time.

So, not only does it have no value—except the value that we give it—the more we get it, the less value it has to us. And yet, the more likely we are to become addicted to it and refuse to let it go. Money is currency. We use money to obtain things of *actual* value. But money has no inherent or real value, kind of like an idol.

Well . . . if burning a dollar is really difficult for you, like it is for me, maybe we're chasing an idol, across the sand, in the twilight zone.

[The *Twilight Zone* theme song plays in the background.]

We want to be wealthy, but we don't know what wealth is.

We want to be healthy, but we don't know what health is.

We want to prosper.

The man weeping and gnashing his teeth alone in the desert in that old *Twilight Zone* episode was a thief. Along with three other thieves, he took gold from a train bound for Fort Knox in 1961. Then he fled to a cave in Death Valley where a scientist had designed suspended animation chambers through which the thieves could effectively travel into the future, where they planned to enjoy the gold long after all their enemies had died. But when they wake up in 2061, they fight over the gold, until only two remain. Then, walking to civilization, one kills the other for the little bit of gold he can still carry and a cup of water.

The man that finds him in the desert is from the future—a future in which people have learned to manufacture gold. And so they use gold, but not for currency, they use it like we use asphalt—to pave roads on which people travel.

Imagine a city with streets of gold—would that be prosperity?

Imagine that you had all the money in the world—would that be prosperity?

Imagine that you were as healthy as Richard Simons or Jane Fonda or Dr. Atkins—would that be prosperity?

Jeremiah 29:11 *“For I know the plans I have for you,”* declares the LORD, *“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

No doubt, God wants you to prosper, but what is prosperity?

Revelation 2:8 *“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life...’”*

We know quite a bit about Smyrna from the writings of ancient history, especially a man named Polycarp and because it's still there. It was a beautiful, well-built, wealthy city with large, glorious boulevards. The most famous of those boulevards was referred to as “The Golden Street.”

But, if you were a Christian it was very dangerous to walk down that street.

Of all the places in the Empire, perhaps Smyrna was the most dangerous place for a Christian to live . . . for two reasons:

First: In 26 A.D. Smyrna won a contest in order to erect a shrine to Emperor Tiberius. Smyrna was a great center for emperor worship, which would soon become a required civic duty throughout the Empire.

Secondly: Smyrna had a very large Jewish population that was quite influential with the Roman authorities. The Jews were exempt from emperor worship because Judaism had become a recognized religion in the Empire.

The early church considered themselves to be Jews. The twelve disciples were all Jews and Gentiles that followed Jesus were grafted into the family tree.

But if the Jews, that rejected the Messiah, also rejected the Jews that trusted the Messiah, that is, the Christians in Smyrna... If those Jews didn't want Christian Jews hanging around the synagogue, all they had to do was say to the Roman authorities, “These guys say they are Jews, but they're not.” Then the Christians would be subject to the confiscation of property, torture, and even death. They'd lose wealth, health, and reputation, as they'd be slandered by people they loved.

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

—Revelation 2:8

The Jews are God's chosen people. But the whole point of being chosen people is that you didn't choose, but God chose—long before you were even capable of choosing. God chose you to choose Him. You didn't choose God and so God chose you. God makes that abundantly clear in the Old Testament. And Saint Paul explains it in the New Testament. In Romans 9, He points out that God chose Israel—long before Israel could

choose God—to demonstrate the fact that God will “have mercy on whomever he decides to have mercy.” It’s *His* Choice.

“So then it depends not on human will (that’s choice) or exertion (that’s works) but upon God who has mercy” (Romans 9:16).

In other words, God chose to prosper the Jews. Prosperity is a gift. But the Jews were always tempted to think prosperity was their due—that they earned it . . .

And isn’t that the exact temptation of satan?

“Take the fruit and make yourself in the image of God.”

“Take the knowledge of the good and use it to justify yourself.”

“Take the law, apply it, and make yourself prosper.”

“Prosperity is your due because you’re better than your neighbor.”

Well, the synagogue of satan would accuse the Christians of being godless. (The word devil means accuser.) And then as they were being persecuted, they’d slander them by suggesting that their sufferings were the obvious result of their lack of faith.

Jesus says, “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.” “I know your tribulation.”

It’s interesting that in just the last hundred years or so, many prosperous Christians in Great Britain and America began saying, “Surely God will rapture His chosen people before the great tribulation.”

In the next chapter, to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, Jesus does say, *“Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.”* (Rev. 3:10)

So, we might think, “If Smyrna is experiencing some tribulation, surely a little faith would save them from great tribulation . . .” It turns out that Jesus has a rebuke for each of the seven churches except the church in Smyrna and Philadelphia...

So, unlike most of the churches, Smyrna was a model of faith. And so, we’d expect God to reward that faith with some prosperity.

According to a 2006 pew survey, 46% of American Christians think God grants material possession to believers (that is people with faith), and 56% think rewards the faithful with health. Clearly, all health and wealth comes from God, And before Jesus would heal, He would often ask for faith, but the idea that we can somehow purchase health and wealth, with faith, right now, is a rather different idea. It’s often called the prosperity gospel.

In its current form—it’s relatively new, and yet you’ll find it all over your television set, and even in the White House. In a recent article, *Newsweek* defined it as follows:

The essence of the prosperity gospel is simple: Faith brings rewards, not only in the afterlife—as taught in all mainstream forms of Christianity—but also in the earthly life. These rewards can take the form of health, career success, and, most controversially, wealth (Conner Gaffey 9-9-17).

Faith purchases rewards—that is prosperity.

See? that would mean that faith is like a currency...

So, you can use faith to get prosperity like you can use money to get a cheeseburger.

Newsweek points out that the prosperity gospel teaches that you can get prosperity now . . . while traditional Christianity says you get it later. So, that means—in the opinion of *Newsweek*—all Christianity is about *using* faith to *obtain* prosperity.

Jeremiah 29:11 *“For I know the plans I have for you,”* declares the LORD, *“plans to prosper you...”*

“Plans to prosper you...” that’s a pretty popular verse down at the Christian bookstore. You see it everywhere. So we naturally think, “If Smyrna is struggling a bit, surely Jesus is going to say, ‘Have faith and it will work out...’”

Next, verses 10 and 11:

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days [Ten is the number of the law, and ten is the number of the dragon’s power (without the law it’s pretty hard to accuse)—He is the accuser with ten horns on his head] for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.”

—Revelation 2:10-11

“Be faithful unto death”... Is that prosperity “faithful unto DEATH”?

Smyrna appears to be one of the most, if not *the* most, faithful of all the churches, so they get more tribulation and persecution . . . and some get death. And hopefully, you noticed that Jesus didn’t say, *“You’re poor and you’re going to be rich sometime in the future.”*; He said, *“You are rich... already.”*

Do you ever get the feeling while reading the Bible that we really just don’t know what riches are . . . or the Good is? And if we got a notion, we might just not want it . . . the Good or the Riches?

“To him who has, more will be given.” Ouch. Sorry about that, Smyrna . . . but meet us in Laodicea and we’ll have a slideshow on the sufferings in Smyrna, take a collection, and say a prayer . . . *“Oh, Lord, help those poor people in Smyrna.”*

But Jesus says that *they* are rich. Who is poor? Who is rich?

Soren Kierkegaard told about a most evil thief who broke into jewelry stores and switched all the price tags. He didn't care about jewels or gold, He just hated the owner and all his customers. Because the price tags were switched, young men gave fake jewels to their brides; poor folks wore diamonds and precious jewels and didn't even know it. Eventually, the cheap stuff was exposed (destroyed in fire or worn out with time), and the valuable stuff was lost through neglect. Kierkegaard's point is that maybe this entire world is like that store, where all the price tags have been switched.

Maybe the price tags have been switched.

Maybe we couldn't read them in the first place...

Maybe we were born without "the knowledge of good and evil."

That's the way Scripture refers to infants—as having no knowledge of good and evil; they don't know the value of things.

One day about twenty years ago, I caught my son Coleman eating dirt. With obvious distress, I said, "No Coleman! Don't eat dirt. Never eat dirt." And then Coleman started eating dirt. He had like a dirt eating addiction. He'd sneak into the backyard, eat dirt, and hide from me. And when I'd ask, "Coleman, have you been eating dirt?" He'd lie to me, trying to justify himself to me, saying, "No Daddy I didn't eat any dirt..." but dirt was caked all around his lips.

We had a house full of great food—a great banquet if you will . . . and Coleman would sneak out back to eat dirt in the dark all alone. Maybe we're all like Coleman. We don't know what's "good," and what's not "good." And then we get addicted to the not good, trying to make our selves "good." And then we hide our not good in outer darkness where we weep and gnash our teeth all alone.

There are an awful lot of wealthy people that feel terribly alone.

There are an awful lot of healthy people that feel terribly sick inside.

There are an awful lot of powerful people trapped in outer darkness.

That's how CS Lewis describes hell in the Great Divorce. It's this place where people get whatever they want... but in getting whatever they want, they become incapable of wanting other people.

So who's poor and who's rich?

Jesus says, "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)."

Why are they rich in Smyrna?

Poverty and tribulation aren't riches... but maybe poverty and tribulation expose riches.

I read about a first-grader coming home from her first day at a newly de-segregated school sometime in the 1960's. If you were alive at the time, you remember the tribulation. Well in this story, an anxious mother met her daughter at the door to inquire,

"How did everything go, honey?"

"Oh, Mother! You know what? A little black girl sat right next to me!"

In fear and trepidation, the mother tried to act calm,

"And what happened?"

"We were both so scared . . . that we held hands all day," said the little girl.

That's rich and they were rich.

Rabbi Kushner told about a Chinese woman that lost her family and went to a wise man seeking wisdom on how to handle the grief. He instructed her to visit every house in the village and obtain a mustard seed from every person that had not known grief. She did, and of course, every person had known grief, yet in the process of sharing in their poverty, she became rich. She gained a family the size of a village; she didn't gain a mustard seed, but she gained faith in Love that grew into a Kingdom.

Tribulation and poverty have a way of breaking the hard soil of our hearts and making way for a seed that grows into a kingdom. They break our egos and reveal the spirit inside. In tribulation and poverty we all lose, and then we all win . . . each other.

Maybe they were rich in Smyrna because they knew each other...
And maybe they were rich in Smyrna because they knew Jesus...

In Philippians 3:10 Saint Paul wrote, *"—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death..."*

That was Paul's greatest wish: "That I may know him..."

An old Hassidic rabbi renowned for his piety was interrupted one day by one of his devoted young disciples. In a burst of feeling, this disciple exclaimed,

"My master, I love you!"

The ancient teacher looked up from his books and said,

"Do you know what hurts me, my son?"

The young man was puzzled. Composing himself, he stuttered,

"I don't understand your question, Rabbi. I am trying to tell you how much you mean to me, and you confuse me with irrelevant questions."

"My question is neither confusing nor irrelevant," answered the rabbi.

"For if you do not know what hurts me, how can you say that you love me?"

Do you know what hurts Jesus?

Jesus is a Jew who was betrayed by the Jews. He was betrayed by His family. And in particular, Judas (which means Jew)—who was his friend—was overcome by satan. Jesus was betrayed and slandered by a synagogue of satan. And, He was crucified by Gentiles—that is, Romans.

He says, “I know your tribulation and poverty...”
Maybe that’s because it’s His tribulation and poverty...

And maybe all suffering can be, or is, His suffering. Isaiah writes. “*He has born our griefs and carried our sorrows...The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all...*” And John will soon reveal that this happened from the foundation of the world. So, Jesus bore it long before you ever felt it.

Maybe all your grief is an invitation to share in Christ’s suffering, in order that you might know Him. Smyrna will also know the power of His resurrection. But even now, in their poverty, they know Him and so they are rich; they are prosperous. They know Jesus and they know each other—maybe that’s prosperity, and maybe that’s Love. Maybe they’re rich with faith in Love, and God is Love.

Whatever the case, if they are rich in Smyrna, and they’re not rich in places like Laodicea—(We’ll read about them in the next chapter: They say that they’re rich, have prospered and need nothing, but Jesus says that they’re wretched pitiable, poor, blind and naked...)

So, if they’re rich in Smyrna and poor in Laodicea, then prosperity isn’t gained through a process of addition but through a process of subtraction.

In fact, the Lord’s counsel to Laodicea is to purchase from Him gold refined by fire. Scripture says that our faith is like gold refined by fire. Fire burns away the dross and reveals the gold. If it’s hot enough, even gold will burn, but faith will never burn. So faith isn’t gained through a process of addition, but subtraction. And it appears that prosperity isn’t gained through addition, but subtraction.

I had a weird little experience last Saturday while in New Mexico for my mom’s birthday. In the afternoon, I went for a little jog down some street near Albuquerque. At one point I just stopped and suddenly realized I was just terribly happy. All I had was a pair of shorts, a t-shirt, and my sneakers.

Nobody knew where I was. Nobody driving by knew who I was. I was momentarily free of the burden that is me . . . or I should say the burden of the *false* me, and I was just me.

It reminded me of a similar experience ten years ago sitting in the parking lot of a Big Lots, or some such store, on Colfax. I had just been defrocked, and I was being slandered. I had just lost my job and lost my reputation, and suddenly I just realized I was just happy and I loved everyone I saw in that parking lot on Colfax.

I shared these weird experiences with Kathleen and she said, “Yeah, I feel happy when I don’t feel important.” Why do we want money, power, and a reputation? Isn’t it so that we’d feel important? But what if we’re *already* important...like an infant is important to a Mom or a Dad? Well then, all our efforts to become important might continually block us from the realization that we *are* important... to God.

To the Corinthians, who were arguing over who was important, Paul wrote, “*So let no one boast of men. For all things are yours... all are yours and you are Christ’s, and Christ is Gods*” (1 Cor. 3:21 & 23).

In other words, you are crazy rich and if you don’t know you’re crazy rich something must be blocking you from all these outrageous riches . . . maybe you desire riches that aren’t actually riches. You desire for prosperity that isn’t prosperity.

I think that’s what I momentarily lost in the parking lot on Colfax:

The burden of my desire for money, power, and reputation.

The burden of having to produce health, wealth, and prosperity.

The burden of the “me” that I think I have to create.

The burden of my “self”



Remember this picture? I showed it to you about a year ago.

This is me (or a likeness of me). And when I was born, I was surrounded by Love. I’ve never not been surrounded by Love. God is Love and “*In Him we live and move and have our being.*” But I didn’t really know love from “not love,” that is good from evil.

So, I listened to a lie, that I had to make myself good, and so I began to take what I thought was good—to *make* myself good, which isn’t good because Love is good...

To make a long story very short, I grew one of these...



An important grown-up me that I call my “self” that the Bible calls “the flesh.”
And by that, Scripture doesn’t simply mean *a body*; it means *an ego*.
Maybe it’s my ego, my flesh, my need to justify myself that keeps me from the outrageous prosperity that is God . . . and is all around me.



And maybe that’s why Jesus said, “*unless you receive the kingdom like a child you will never enter it.*” A child has no money, power, or reputation. And maybe that’s why Jesus said, “*If anyone would come after me, let him **deny himself** and take up a cross...*”
A man who takes up a cross has surrendered all money, power, and reputation.
He has denied himself.

The chairman of the presidential board of evangelical advisors is also a well-known prosperity preacher. According to *Newsweek*, and multiple other sources, she once told an audience: “*Anyone that tells you to deny yourself is from satan.*” Now, maybe she misspoke and didn’t realize what she was saying, but that’s profoundly backward . . . isn’t it? And I hope you see why: the problem with the so-called prosperity gospel is that

It’s not the Gospel, and it teaches you to be profoundly poor...

Just like the church in Laodicea, who thought she was, in the words of Jesus, “*rich, had prospered and needed nothing*” when in fact she was “*wretched pitiable, poor, blind and naked.*” All things were hers, just as in Smyrna, but she couldn’t receive all things because she was full of herself or trapped in herself and wouldn’t deny herself.

The problem with the so-called prosperity gospel is that teaches us to eat dirt alone in outer darkness when the doors to the great banquet are wide open in front of us.

At the end of the Revelation, we see the New Jerusalem coming down. The gates of the city, are *never shut by day* and in the city *there is no night*. Outside is *everyone who loves and practices falsehood*. That is everyone who loves to eat dirt when the gates are wide open!

Coleman is twenty-three now. How sad, if I found him out back, all alone on Thanksgiving day, eating dirt and trying to hide it. See? It wasn't hatred that gave him a little tribulation when he was three. It was love and a desire to make him rich with turkey, mashed potatoes, and me.

We love Jeremiah 29:11, but we forget that it completes Jeremiah 29:10, wherein God explains to the Jews that He's sending them into exile for seventy years, where they are commanded to love their enemies... *for God knows the plans He has for them—plans to prosper* (Jer. 29:11).

See? The problem with the so-called prosperity gospel is that it switches all the price tags just like the most evil thief in Kierkegaard's story. Nothing's wrong with gold, it's just not as valuable as people. Satan will teach you to use people to love gold. But God made gold that you might use that gold to love people.

In the New Jerusalem, the main street is paved with gold. But check this out: It's transparent as glass (Rev. 21:21). You won't see it, but you'll see the people walking on it—supported by it. Actually, the city is made of people—the last and the least of these. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit in whom the Kingdom of God*" and "*Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness sake (the slandered), of them is the kingdom.*"

Nothing's wrong with gold and nothing's wrong with money.

- Use *money* to love people,
- But never use *people* to love *money*.
- Use money to love God,
- But never use God to love money. That's profoundly depraved.

Money is currency. It's a human measure of human effort. It has no inherent value. Faith is not currency. Prosperity teachers teach that we should use faith, to gain things hoped for. But faith is not a payment for things hoped for. Hebrews 11:1, "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for.*"

God is love and faith is the gift of Love. You gain faith through an encounter with Love. Faith in you is the Spirit of Christ Jesus in you. Never simply use faith as if faith were a thing to gain prosperity. Faith *is* prosperity.

Jesus says, "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)...be faithful unto death." Is that prosperity?

Yes it's life.

Life is losing your self and finding yourself.

Life is faith in Love.

Jesus is the Life rising in you from the dead.

"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death." Rev. 2:10-11

The second death is sacrificing your self—(your psyche, your flesh, your ego)
It's losing your self, for the sake of Love, and finding yourself in Jesus.

You are Christ's body. The first death is isolation from His body.
And the second death is the death of that death; it's communion in His body.

The second death is the death of death and the beginning of Life. You won't be hurt by the second death if you've already been crucified with Christ, for you've already denied yourself and begun to truly live—eternally.

"The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death."

Well, who is the one who conquers? Remember that the letter isn't written to the Church but the angel of the Church, which appears to be the Spirit of the Lamb, and the Revelation reveals that the Lamb has conquered.

In verse 10 Jesus says, *"the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested (peirazo-also translated tempted)."* Remember that Jesus was tested and tempted right after He was baptized. Immediately after hearing the voice from Heaven say, *"This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3:17).

The Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, who tempted Jesus with bread, miracles, and political power. He tempted Jesus with wealth, health, and a great reputation. He tempted Jesus to make Himself important. But Jesus knew He already was important. He knew that He was His Father's beloved son in whom He was well pleased. That's faith. And faith in you is the Word of God in you, it's the Spirit of Jesus from the dead in you.

Well, Smyrna was rich. Some of you are rich, but you think you're poor—because you don't have much money, and maybe your health isn't so good, and maybe you're being slandered and rejected by people that you love. You're rich, but you think you're poor... so I just need to tell you that you're rich, so you don't try to make yourself rich and become poor.

Some of you may be poor, but you think you're rich... and I need to tell you that you're poor... and you need to get some wealth in Smyrna. Smyrna is actually all around you.

Smyrna is rich.

Smyrna doesn't just *have* riches.

Smyrna *is* rich.

Sometime around 160 A.D. a letter was written by the leadership of the church in Smyrna and sent to all the churches in Asia Minor. It is a letter of gratitude for all that God had done recently in Smyrna. It recounts how twelve believers had been martyred... eleven scourged and devoured by beasts in the Coliseum of Smyrna, and the last given to the fire.

The twelfth martyr was the eighty-six-year-old bishop of Smyrna, who knew John as a young man, who no doubt had read the Revelation aloud many times in the church in Smyrna. The authorities decided to burn this eighty-six-year-old—Polycarp for refusing to sacrifice to the emperor.

Jews from the synagogue gathered the wood for the fire He prayed thanking God that he was counted worthy to share in the cup of Christ and praying that he would be an acceptable sacrifice. When they lit the fire, it encompassed Polycarp, but it did not consume him, until finally, in desperation, the executioner thrust a spear in Polycarp's side, just as the Romans thrust a spear into Christ's side. While the fire raged around him, witnesses said he appeared "not as flesh that is burnt but as bread that is baked, as gold and silver glowing in a furnace."

[Image of Polycarp and his persecutors]

Maybe Polycarp was gold as refined by fire. He was definitely filled with faith. And faith in us is Christ in us: "*No longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*" (Gal. 2:20).

Money will burn. But faith can't burn! Because faith is the Fire. The old bishop not only *had* riches, he is rich. Smyrna is rich.

Communion

On the night that He was betrayed—by the synagogue of satan, and handed over to the Roman authorities, Jesus took bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body given for you; take and eat, and do this in remembrance of me." And in the same way, He took the cup and He said, "This cup is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do this in remembrance of me."

[Peter points to the communion table.] This is the substance of prosperity.

And this is the Gospel.

In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel; receive it. 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 version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

6

Pergamum and Your Name

Pergamum and Your Name

Revelation 2:12-17

November 12, 2017

#6 in our series The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation

Peter Hiett

Song

“Man Gave Names to All the Animals” –by Bob Dylan

Sung by Vince Colbert and The Sanctuary worship team

Prayer

Lord God, I pray that you would help us to preach. Help us all to connect now with the book of Revelation, with our series in Revelation, and most of all with *you*. Be glorified in us. We pray in your name, calling on the power of your Spirit, Amen.

Message

Robert Fulghum writes about a time when he was placed in charge of eighty-some children in the church fellowship hall. The adults were off doing something, and there were *all* these children—craziness! He had to find a way to keep order. So, he had them play a game called “Giant, Wizard, Dwarf.” It’s like the game “Rock Paper Scissors” except it’s an enacted game.

Each child had to take the name of giant, wizard, or dwarf and then act out that name with a surprise partner and see who won and would survive.

Kids were running everywhere.

He yelled out, “*You have to decide now which you are a giant, wizard or dwarf!*”

As the children took their places, he saw a little girl standing in front of him. She looked up and asked in a small, very concerned voice, “Where do the mermaids stand?” Pastor Fulgham didn’t know what to say.

“Where do the mermaids stand?” he repeated.

“Yes,” she said. “You see, I am a mermaid.”

“There are no such things as mermaids,” Fulgham said.

“Oh yes! I am one,” the little girl responded.

She knew she wasn’t a giant, wizard, or dwarf; she was a mermaid.

And she was not about to go stand where a loser, giant, wizard, dwarf would stand.

She knew her name, and she assumed Pastor Fulgham would know just where a mermaid would stand.

I wonder how she knew her name?

Wouldn’t you like to know your name like she knew hers?

It used to be that if you asked my daughter Becky her name, she would say, “My name is Pretty Pretty Princess.” She knew that was her name because her father called her by

that name. It fit. And she was quite comfortable with the name . . . “Becky Pretty, Pretty, Princes Hiett.”

She no longer goes by that name. She’s twenty-six.

People have called her by other names, and sadly, she’s believed many of those names.

Names are really big in the Bible.

We usually pick names because they sound pretty like Gregg, Jill, Susan or Peter. But in the Bible they mean something, and they often create something.

Actually, all things are created with words that are names.

God says, “Let there be plants” and there are plants.

“Let there be fish” and there are fish.

“Let us make man in our own image” and there is man. . .

In God’s image... kind of...

Like God, Man names things. God has man name all the animals, which, in the words of Madeleine L’Engle, was “asking Adam to help in the creation of their wholeness.”

Adam names the animals, but struggles to name his Helper. (Scripture says that God is our Helper.) And then, a snake tempts the woman, and the man, to name themselves good, which makes them not good.

And after that, Adam isn’t much good at naming things. And maybe he never was. And that makes us wonder about God, for Adam doesn’t appear to be very “in the image of God.” So did God mess up? Isn’t that the question? Just look at us . . . or is God still dishing out names?

*But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O **Jacob**, he who formed you, O **Israel**: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” — Isaiah 43:1*

I love that verse. Wouldn’t it be incredible to hear God call your name? Well, at first God calls the name “Jacob.” That’s interesting because Jacob is a human name. Jacob literally means “heal grabber” or “supplanter” or even “cheat.” He cheats his brother, the firstborn, out of his birthright and (as you know) was born grabbing his brother’s heal.

His parents named him **Jacob**, and then, God named him **Israel**. God named him with His Word, who appears as a man. And so, of course, that’s Jesus—the firstborn of all creation. He wrestles with Jacob all night long, prevails, and then gives Jacob his blessing, which is a birth right, and then names him Israel. “You don’t just wrestle with your firstborn brother, Esau, you wrestle with your firstborn—Jesus—Son of God and Word of God, which means wrestles with God.

At the cross, we tried to take Jesus’ birthright,
And at the cross, Jesus gave us His birthright—along with a new name.

Well, my point is that God called **Jacob** and named him **Israel**.

He knew Jacob's human name, and He even used it to reveal his Divine Name. And He did it through His Word—Jesus.

Jesus is the Word through whom God names everything. When Jesus first met Simon Peter, He said, *"You are Simon son of Jonas. You shall be called Rock"* (that's Cephas in Aramaic and Peter in Greek). And, of course, Peter appeared to be anything but a rock. On the night that Jesus seemed to be most in need of a friend like a rock, Peter proved to be soft as Jello and denied Jesus three times.

So, did the Word of God fail? Did the name fail?

You may remember, Scripture says Jesus glanced at Peter in the house of the high priest, as they led Him off to be crucified. Then, Peter went out wept bitterly, then the risen Christ appeared to Peter reminded him of who he was. And Peter became who he was—the rock on which Jesus built His church. So, Peter did not make a name for himself. But God made Peter with a name.

Sometimes Jesus gives a new name and sometimes He gives new meaning to old names. I suspect that He always does both. When Jesus meets James and John He named them *"boanerges,"* which means *"sons of thunder."* People think it's because the two brothers have a terrible temper, and they did.

At one point they want to call down fire and thunder on a whole Samaritan village. But Jesus rebukes them and reveals to them the nature of His Fire and His Thunder. James is martyred for preaching the Gospel of Love. John now writes the Revelation, revealing that God's Fire and Thunder is *Love*.

In Revelation 2:12 Jesus dictates these words to John: *"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword, (that's Jesus and remember the sword comes from His mouth in chapter 1) 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. (Pergamum was the capital of the Roman province of Asia) Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith ('my faith'... as if their faith is Christ's faith manifest in them) I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.'"*

Jesus calls Antipas "my faithful witness." We don't know exactly how Antipas died, but he most certainly died because he would not renounce the name of Jesus. More than likely he died in a coliseum, like in Smyrna, with a crowd of people chanting names at him.

It reminds me of the movie *Gladiator*, or *Spartacus*, or the TV show *Spartacus*. I wouldn't recommend watching it, it's incredibly explicit like Rome was explicit. But it has a fascinating plot device. A slave owner gives Spartacus his name and the crowd chants his name. We never know his true name except those names are not his name. Spartacus, champion, traitor, gladiator are not his name. He keeps reminding himself, *"That is not my name."* Whether the names the crowd chants are good or bad he

reminds himself, *“That is not my name.”* And that provides the drama, “Will he—whoever he is—let them name him?”

In Rome, they learned to control the crowds by issuing white stones that served as tickets to the Colosseum where they would receive free bread like manna they judged people—named people—and watched them die.

In Rome, white stones also indicated the judgment of a jury—each juror would vote with a white or black stone. A white stone indicated “innocent.” A black stone indicated “guilty.” To name something is the judge something.

Jesus commends the church in Pergamum for holding fast *His name* in the days of Antipas, His faithful witness. You know? to receive Jesus name is to deny some other names. And to accept some other names is to deny Jesus/ name. The name Jesus literally means “*Yahweh* is Salvation.”

So, if *Yahweh* is Salvation, it means that we are not salvation. It means that Caesar, Donald Trump or Barak Obama are not salvation. It means that Farmer’s Insurance, a safe car, and a vacation in Mexico are not salvation. Even the *Church* is not salvation.

To profess Jesus’ name is to renounce some other names.
And it tells me something about our own name.

Jesus means “*Yahweh* is Salvation.” And *Yahweh* means something like “I am that I am.” *Yahweh* is “beingness,” “the ground of all being,” “the creator.”

So, if He’s the Creator, I am *not* the creator, but someone that is created.

And if He’s the savior, I am *not* the savior, but someone that is saved.

In other words, God names me, and I don’t name myself.

The snake said,

“Take from the tree of knowledge and make yourself in the image of God”

“Take knowledge of the good and make yourself good.”

“Make a name for yourself.”

To “make a name for yourself,” must be to renounce the name that God gives you.

That first Adam (and you know and means “humanity”) and Eve (which means “mother of the living”) are kicked out of the garden. And they no longer hear Him calling their name in the cool of the day.

Imagine if you never heard anyone call your name. I think that would be hell. I think that *is* hell.

In Genesis 11 all those orphaned and widowed from the garden get together and say, *“Let’s make a name for ourselves. Let’s build a tower that reaches to Heaven!”* (Gen. 11:4) When God finds out about this plan He comes down and busts up their tower and tears it down. He takes away their name.

Maybe you have been building a tower called “Success,” in order to make a name for yourself.

Don’t be surprised if God comes along and tears it down. He tears them all down; it’s called death. That’s a drag. But maybe He has another name for you, not one you build that reaches to heaven, but one He builds that comes down to you.

Isaiah prophesies of the day that the towers of Jerusalem would be torn down. It actually happened in 586 B.C. and then again in 70 AD. Isaiah prophesies, “*Seven women shall take hold of one man in that day saying, ‘We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name. Take away our reproach’*” (Is. 4:1).

Understand? They were so desperate for a name, they would hop into any man’s bed, just to have a name, for it seems that any name is better than no name. And maybe that explains all our sins. We’re just desperate for a name.

In Isaiah 62 God says to Jerusalem through Isaiah, “*You shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall give you.*”

At the end of the Revelation John sees the New Jerusalem coming down from God prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband—her Helper. She is a Princess prepared for her Prince. She can’t name herself, but God *has* named her and is revealing her name¹.

Well, through John, Jesus says to the angel in Pergamum:

... you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.’

—Revelation 2:12-17

I think He’s saying something like: “The crowd tries to name you with white stones like

¹ Even Jesus didn’t name Himself. Listen to Philippians 2:6,7a,9-11

... though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself (made himself nothing) ... Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him (freely given him) the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

they tried to name Antipas. But I will give you a stone, with a new name written upon that stone, that no one knows except the one who receives it, and, of course, me, the one that writes it.”

Isn't that amazing? You don't know your name.

In fact, no one knows your name, but the Lord.

And there is a stone upon which your name is inscribed . . . already.

Paul writes that “the Father names every family in heaven and on earth.” And “we are already seated with him in the heavenly places.”

Well, imagine what it will be like to read your name. I bet that the moment you read it, you will find yourself entirely at home. I mean you won't try to be it, for you'll realize that you already are it... completely it.

You won't try to be your self, you will just *be* your self—your true self.

You won't *try* to be good because you *are* good and couldn't be more good than you are.

You are God's masterpiece created in Christ Jesus . . . for good works which God prepared beforehand, that you might walk in them with perfect freedom, peace, and joy.

You'll exclaim, “So this is who I am!” And you will be at home with “I am that I am,” and indeed with all creation. You will be at home with yourself, and in yourself, and yourself in God, and God in You. And so you will exclaim,

“Oh God thank you for me! I cannot imagine a better me!”

“Thank you for making me who I am: me and not another. You know me as I am.”

What a gift . . . *and yet*. . . And yet . . . Jesus does say, “To him who conquers . . .” And before that, He says, “I have a few things against you...” like what?

Well for one He says, “*You have some that hold the teachings of Balaam.*”

In Numbers 25:3 we learn that Balaam taught Israel to yoke himself to Baal of Peor.

They did that by eating sacrificial meals offered to the idol Baal and literally “whoring” (25:1) with Midianite women—probably temple prostitutes.

In Pergamum, believers were tempted to participate in sacrificial meals offered to pagan gods (including Caesar) and in so doing maintain a good name in Roman society. They were also tempted to sexual immorality, which might just mean adultery, but probably implies ritual adultery, which was blatant idolatry. In Scripture all idolatry is considered adultery—it's marrying yourself to another god (and it hurts the *living* God) and it is allowing that god to name you.

So what's your name?

Republican, Democrat, American, Doctor, Professor, Senator, Reverend? If that's not just what you do—but who you are—then the folks that gave you that name must be your idol.

We even take names like Gucci, or Levi's, or Chevrolet, Ford, or Denver Broncos . . .
We even print the names on our clothes to tell people who we are.

We love names, and we love to give each other names.
Names like Successful, Magna Cum Laude, Employee of the month, Sweetheart, Great Guy, Good Preacher.

If you let people name you good, they can also name you bad. The world has given me lots of names... many that I can't repeat in a place like this. But many that you might call good, that fill me with pride, and then trap me in terror, for if they name me "good," they can also name me bad, and then I'm imprisoned to gods that are not gods . . . one of them being myself.

We use names to control each other—to judge, divide, quantify, and qualify. Once you've named someone a liberal or conservative; or Muslim, Christian or Jew; or maybe schizophrenic, alcoholic, giant, wizard or dwarf, they're a little easier to control, at least in your own mind, and then later in reality.

See? I think Jesus is saying, "I have this against you. You're letting the world name you." And then He says, "You also have some who hold the teachings of the Nicolaitans."

No one is sure as to what that means, but one enticing idea is that
"nico" refers to "*Nikao*" which means to conquer or be superior and
"laitans" refers to the *laos*—laity, which means the people.
So, some have speculated that the Nicolaitans were the first to teach a split between the clergy and the laity—the idea that you need a professional clergy to name you.

Now, that sounds like something that no one would ever want. But I can tell you from experience that it is exactly what everyone wants, including me. We want someone to tell us who's in and who's out—who's a giant, wizard or dwarf and exactly where each one should stand.

Everyone loves those spiritual gifts tests. Fill out a form and it'll tell you your spiritual gifts, give you a name like prophet, encourager or teacher and then tell you what to do. Well, they can be helpful, but they can't tell you who you are. They don't know your name, and I don't know your name—your full name. No one does . . . except for the Lord.

When I was in college, I went on a Campus Crusade Retreat. Because it was my first retreat, they gave me a red folder. Red folders were for "beginner" Christians. Blue folders were for "intermediate" Christians. And green folders were for "advanced" Christians.) I was so insulted, that I stole a green folder, just to prove how spiritually advanced I was.

It was wrong of them to judge me and reduce me to a red, green or blue Christian. But what is so truly disturbing is the fact that I was so very desperate for a name, and so I

let them name me. I turned them into an idol.

After I graduated from seminary and was ordained in the Presbyterian Church, I let them name me “Reverend.” It means someone deserving of reverence. But because I gave them the power to name me Reverend, I also gave them the power to name me Irreverend. So, when they took away my ordination, it felt like they took away . . . *me*.

But they didn’t kill *me*, they only killed the *false me*, which liberates the *true me*. They actually can’t hurt the *true me*... In fact, they don’t even know who I am. Actually, I don’t even know *exactly* who I am.

See? I think Jesus is saying,

- Don’t let the world name you.
- Don’t let the church name you.
- Don’t even let you name you.

So, don’t try to be yourself because not even *you* know who your “self” actually is, and the moment you try to be yourself, it reveals that you’re not yourself. Don’t try to be yourself, ‘cause then you’re not yourself. And don’t try to be yourself... ‘cause, not even you, know who your “self” actually is.

Jesus is saying, “You have to lose your ‘self,’ for my Self, in order to find yourself.” So don’t try to be yourself... set your eyes on Jesus’ Self.

Paul put it this way, “It’s a very small thing that I should be judged by any of you. I don’t even judge myself, but I am not thereby acquitted...it is the Lord who judges me.” (1 Cor. 4:3).

Both Paul and John taught that Jesus is our Judgment, and that makes some sense. For He’s the only one that knows our name—He’s the One that hands us the stone, upon which is the name that no one knows except the One who wrote it and the one who receives it. I mean how could you or anyone else judge your self good, when you don’t even know who or what your good self is?

Even Peter didn’t know his whole name, just that part of it was Rock. And John didn’t know his whole name, just that part of it was thunder and that he was just learning what “thunder” actually is.

Actually John referred to himself by no other name than “the beloved disciple.”

As if to say, I don’t know who I am, except that Jesus loves me.

See? Maybe right now, we don’t need to know our name . . . (our full name)
We only need to know one name—Jesus’ name.

We only need to know Jesus’ name, and not denying His name does tell us something about our name. And it does tell us what our name is *not*.

God is salvation... and so I am saved—and not my own savior.

God is Creator... and so I am created—and not my own creator.
God is Father... and so I am His child.

John writes: *“Beloved we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears we will be like him...”* (1 John 3:2).

So, anything unlike Him is not who we truly are. Paul writes that God has made Jesus “our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Cor. 1:30) So, anything Wise, Right, Good and New in you is Jesus in you. Paul calls him the “*eschatos Adam*,” the ultimate man, the firstborn of creation, and he calls us Christ’s Temple, His Bride, and His Body.

I think that means that any name that doesn’t stick, on the resurrected Jesus, doesn’t stick on you and shouldn’t stick on me. It’s not my name.

The other day, I googled the phrase “That’s not my name,” and found this video:

“ Not My Name” Clip

[Two men are standing across from each other. One man shouts out: “Spartacus.” He flings a whip he is holding at the man across from him. The man who is about to be whipped catches the whip in mid air. It wraps around his wrist and with a slight smile on his face he says, “That’s not my name.”]

[Music starts playing and various scenes of the man whom they called “Spartacus” (working as a slave) play on the screen as the following lyrics are sung in the background.]

*They call me 'Bell'
They call me 'Stacey'
They call me 'her'
They call me 'Jane'
That's not my name
That's not my name
That's not my name
That's not my name*

The song morphs into another band singing the same song with different lyrics:

*They call me blud
The call me rudeboi
They call me oi
They call me mate*

*That's not my name
That's not my name
That's not my name
That's not my naa-aaame*

*They call me maiyou
But I'm a fly you
They use the n word
Like it's a game*

*That's not my name!
That's not my name!
That's not my name!
That's not my naa-aaame!*

That song is catchy! Don't you think?

That's "Not my Name" by *The Ting Tings*, with a cover by Dizee Rascal. We should all learn that song and sing it to the devil. I've been singing it for the last three days.

The devil whispers, "Anxiety" . . . and I sing, "That's not my name, That's not my name. That's not my name. That's not my naa-aaame!" How do I know it's not my name? Well, 'cause it's a name that doesn't stick on Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

The devil whispers, "Despair" . . . and I sing, "That's not my name. That's not my name. That's not my name. That's not my naa-aaame!"

He whispers, "Arrogant and worthless" . . . and I sing, "That's not my name. That's not my name. That's not my name. That's not my naa-aaame!"

You see? if I try to make myself humble, I'll be arrogant about my humility. If I try to make myself worthy, I make myself worthlessly arrogant, and that's a lie about me—who I am and who I AM is. If I try not to despair, I despair that I'll never stop despairing. And if I try not to be anxious, I get deeply anxious about my anxiety.

But if I "*consider myself dead to sin,*" as Paul puts it in Romans 6:11, I'll begin to feel "*alive to God in Christ Jesus.*" And then "*It's no longer I who live, but Christ Jesus who lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me*" (Gal. 2:20).

In other words, I'm saved and created in the image of God, "*not by works lest any man should boast, but by grace through faith, and this faith is not of myself.*" (Eph. 2: 8-9)

The works of the flesh are obvious writes Paul (Gal. 6:19-21):

"fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these."

So, if an accuser points out some of these things in you don't panic, but thank the accuser for exposing this darkness to the light, and then sing loudly:

"That's not my name. That's not my name, That's not my name.

That's not my naa-aaame!"

"Yes, I may have done some of those things . . . but that's not my name."

"I must have *thought* that was my name, but it's not my name. (And 'as a man thinketh so is he').

"I repent." Do you know what repent means? It means "to change your mind."

"I change my mind: 'that's *not* my name.'"

In Revelation 2:16 Jesus says, "*Repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them* (what an interesting way to put it—war against *them*: the lies, the liars) *with the*

sword of my mouth.”

In Revelation 19 Heaven opens and John sees Jesus on a white horse with that sword coming from his mouth... with it, he smites the peoples. Then an angel standing in the sun calls to all the birds saying, *“Come eat the flesh of kings... the flesh of mighty men... and the flesh of all men.”* Did you get that? All men! The birds are going to eat your flesh . . . after Jesus cuts it off.

You see? Your flesh is that thing you construct, believing the lie that you are your own creator, savior, and redeemer. It is the name that you think you have made for yourself. Your flesh is your ego, which traps you in anxiety and despair and causes you to sin.

It must be cut away by the Word of God, who is the Judgment of God if you are to even enjoy God. But you don't need to fear *that* day if that day is *already* this day [Peter points to the cross and the communion table].

So, if the Word has cut you, separating flesh from Spirit, just confess your sins and sing, *“That's not my name. That's not my name. That's not my naa-aaame!”*

So what is your name?

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

[Jesus is talking to His Spirit, who then speaks the Word to us . . .]

To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

—Revelation 2:17

“To him who conquers... ”

So, how do we conquer?

Well, do you remember how Peter conquered?

Jesus told him his name or at least part of his name—Peter the rock.

For three years Peter tried to live up to the name and for three years failed miserably,

Until on the night that Jesus needed him most, he fell asleep and then, as soft as Jello under pressure, He denied Jesus three times.

Then according to Scripture, Jesus just looked at Peter, and Peter must've seen himself reflected in Jesus' eyes as if they were a mirror. And he must've remembered Jesus' words “Peter you are the rock.” And he must've realized that coward was not his name. But Peter was still His name in the eyes of Jesus and so Peter was cut to the division of soul and spirit. Peter ran out and wept bitterly—He surrendered his soul, his flesh, his pride, his ego, his name. He surrendered his name and then received his name, risen from the dead.

He didn't make a name for himself, but with a name spoken in Grace Jesus made Peter, and in the same fashion he would keep making Peter until the day he would hand him

the white stone. I'm saying that Peter conquered, by being conquered by Grace that created faith in Peter.

Actually, I believe that all will conquer, for ultimately Jesus conquers all. That's what the Revelation tells us. But please understand, we still must conquer, we still must have faith through the revelation of Grace. You cannot be saved until you trust that "God is Salvation."

1 John 5:4 *"Everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that has conquered the world—our faith."*

Your faith is the life of Christ rising in you and telling you who you are. Any name that does not stick to the resurrected Jesus is not your name. And your new name is the life of Jesus rising in you. Some scholars debate whether the name on the stone is our new name or Christ's new name, and of course, it's both. In chapter 3, verse 12 he writes His own new name on us.

Antipas is named "faithful witness." And only one other person in all of Scripture is named "faithful witness." That person is Jesus (Revelation 1:5). Any name, that doesn't stick on the resurrected Jesus, is not your name. And your New Name is the life of Jesus, rising in you and filling all the empty places that you thought were you.

So, I believe that you will recognize your name on that great day because Jesus is telling you your name all the time . . . that's why He made time. And He's telling you your name in every place . . . that's why He made space.

So, even in the place of sin God will reveal the wonder of His Grace. Like God says through Hosea and Saint Paul: *"In the very place where it was said to them 'you are not my people,' there they will be called sons of the Living God."*

The empty places are being prepared for the Revelation of God. And the full places *are* the presence of God already. C.S. Lewis wrote,

Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance. 'To him that overcometh I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.' What can be more a man's own than this new name which even in eternity remains a secret between God and him? And what shall we take this secrecy to mean? Surely, that each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the divine beauty better than any other creature can. Why else were individuals created, but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently? And this difference, so far from impairing, floods with meaning the love of all blessed creatures for one another, the communion of the saints. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note.

From *The Problem of Pain* by C.S. Lewis

Heaven is a city, and a body, and a symphony of praise.

The New Jerusalem is made of living stones. Each one is unique. And each one has a

name, and one of them is yours.

Well, right now, you don't need to know your entire name.
You only need to know Jesus' name . . . and trust Him to reveal your name in time.
If you know Jesus' name . . . You already know where you stand.

Jesus means *Yahweh* is Salvation . . . and that means you are saved.
Yahweh means Creator . . . and that means that you are created.
John tells us that "God is Love" . . . and that means that you are "the beloved." Who else could you be if God is love? How else could you relate to him other than as the beloved . . . just like John?

So, don't play the game. Don't let this world name you. If you know Jesus' name, you already know where you stand.

So, Robert Fulghum stood there in the church fellowship hall not knowing what to say to the mermaid who was asking, "Where do the mermaids stand? Then he writes,
"Every once in a while I say the right thing. 'The mermaid stands right here by the King of the Sea,' says I. So we stood there hand in hand reviewing the troops of wizards, giants, and dwarfs. It is not true (by the way) that mermaids do not exist. I know at least one personally. I have held her hand."

Well, I don't know if that little girl was actually a mermaid.
But I do know that she belongs right next to the King of the Sea.

And I'm convinced that Becky actually is a pretty, pretty princess. For I know she belongs to the Prince of Peace... and Princess fits with Prince.

I suspect that all our dreams will somehow be wrapped up in that name on the stone.
And we'll discover that Faith, Hope, and Love have not disappointed us. And at last will be home in Heaven, and at home in the garden that is our own soul.

But for now, there's only one name that you need to know: Jesus.

Communion

Jesus took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body which is for you." What is this? It's hidden manna and He's giving it to you. And He took the cup, saying, "This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins." And He said, "Drink of it *all* of you."

As I was preaching maybe you heard some names that you've received that don't fit upon the resurrected Jesus. Think of those names. (These could be some of them):
Adulteror, Addict, Failure, Cheat, Loser, Loner, Liar, Whore . . . think of the name.
Now say, "In the name of Jesus... That's not my name. That's not my name. That's not my naa-aaame!"

Now, this is mind-boggling, but Scripture says: “*He who knew no sin became sin that we might become the righteousness of God.*” On the cross, Jesus bears those old names to destruction. And gives you His name in their place.

As I was preaching maybe you heard some names that *do* belong to Jesus... Names like Good, Beautiful, Clean, Free, Happy, Right and Beloved. “*This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.*” For those names say, “In the name of Jesus, thank you for making me who I am.”

Scripture says this is the Judgment of God. And Paul warns us about the Judgment. But that’s not because we’re going to hurt the Judgment. It’s because the Judgment might hurt us. So, if you think you are a lie about yourself this could hurt. But come to the table because the Judgment is good, and God knows who you are.

Now let’s worship!

[Several worship songs are sung.]

Prayer

Lord God, we sing Hallelujah. Praise *Yahweh* our Creator. We thank you that you create us and that you are creating us with a name, and now we see that the name is good and the name makes *us* good. We are so grateful that you have called us your own and you make us who we are. And we couldn’t be better than the us that you have made. So, Lord God, Thank you! We receive your name. In the name of Jesus, we receive the name. You are our Father, and we are your children—in the name of Jesus.

Benediction

Scripture says God is Love, and God makes us with His Love—the Word of Love. So, we are the Beloved. When I used that song throughout the sermon I didn’t mean it as a silly sermon illustration; I meant it as the very focus of our warfare against the evil one. When the evil one gives you a name other than the Beloved, stand against the evil one and sing, “That’s not my name, That’s not my name. That’s not my name.” And then stand right next to the One who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Revelation goes on to say that the one who conquers is the one who is with Him—chosen and faithful.

In the name of Jesus, 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 version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.

7

Thyatira and the Love That Can't Be Pimped

Thyatira and the Love That Can't be Pimped

Revelation 2:18-29

November 19, 2017

#7 in our series The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation

Peter Hiatt

Message

May 28th, 1983 at the Christiana Lodge in Vail, Colorado, Susan and I consummated our covenant with the sacrament of physical communion in the sanctuary of our shared temple of one flesh.

In Scripture, that's the thing that means you're married. And according to Scripture it's a picture to teach us about Christ and His Church, and even more . . . God and humanity.

Stripped naked, I offered all my heart, soul, mind and strength—like a living sacrifice placed upon an altar waiting to be consumed by the eternal fire that is unquenchable love.

I offered my strength and I offered my weakness—my shame. I surrendered that very place on my body that had been covered ever since the first Adam took leaves and covered that private place in confusion and fear. That place that expressed a profound longing that displayed the incompleteness not only in my flesh but in my soul. *That place* from which came seed . . . seed to be implanted in the broken soil of her body—seed that would die and then miraculously come to life as Jonathan, Elizabeth, Rebekah, and Coleman.

I presented myself a living sacrifice, in the sacrament of communion, consummating the covenant, forming one body in the place where there had once been two, and it was ecstasy. I fell asleep. And when I woke, I found a letter.

The Letter read:

“Wow... I had a really good time! Enclosed you'll find a check for \$41.37. I make about \$413.70 a week at the dentist office, after taxes and social security—is it 10% of gross or net? Let me know. I'll see ya next week, same time, same place. You can count on me . . . Except, of course, the weekend of the 7th, every year me and my girls plan a wild little weekend in Miami; you understand.

Thanks Again, Love Susan.”

It's very hard to explain what happened next . . . the mixture of pain and longing, rage and burning desire is very difficult to express. My heart began to beat uncontrollably. It felt as if it was swelling in my chest and about to burst, and then it did. It literally ripped in two. Blood began to flow from my broken body.

It flowed out of the altar that was once a bed and out into the street and became a river that filled the land to the depths of a horse's bridle. And then the blood began to fall from the sky like burning wine poured from bowls in the heavens. The blood burned.

That's a true story! It didn't actually happen to me. But something like that did happen to Jesus.

Let's Pray.

Lord Jesus, we pray that you would show us your heart and that we would have the courage to see and believe who you are and that you are good. Give us the courage to believe the Gospel. Father, we ask it in Jesus' name with the power of your Spirit. Amen.

Revelation 2:18

This is our seventh sermon from the Revelation. And it's the middle letter of the seven letters to the angels of the seven churches. I think this is the heart of the matter.

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze'" (Rev. 2:18).

- Thyatira was located between Pergamum and Sardis, midway on the journey of the letters to the seven churches.
- It's the smallest of the seven but has the longest letter.
- It was known for the manufacturing of purple dye.
- Lydia (a seller of purple), in the book of Acts, came from Thyatira—Lydia who received the word from Paul and became the mother of the church in Europe and in Asia.
- Thyatira was known for purple, and for a temple to Apollos who was thought to be the sun god and the Son of God—whom the Greeks called Zeus...

Revelation 2:18-29

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

"I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality [porneusai from porneuo. Root: porne] and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality [porneias]. Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority [exousia it is also translated power] over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when

earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority [exousia] from my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Verse 23 “*And I (Jesus) will strike her children dead.*” Wow . . . What’s with Jesus?

What happened to Jesus meek and mild— the guy who said, “Suffer the little children to come to me...”? Jesus who is the voice of God, who made it clear in Deut. 24:16, “*Children shall not be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sins.*” That’s weirdly terrifying, and comforting, all at once. You won’t be put to death for your father’s sins. You *will* be put to death for your *own* sins.

Well, anyway . . . This mix of desire and apparent rage in Jesus is a bit shocking isn’t it?

- He gives these folks an incredible compliment.
- And then rails against them for tolerating a woman and her teaching, this teaching, which leads people to sexual immorality and some form of idolatry.

“Sexual Immorality” is such a terrifying term, for no one seems to know what it is. We’re each sexual creatures and the very first commandment before the fall was to be fruitful and multiply, which seems to involve sex and some sexual desire.

Life is sexually transmitted. Well . . . commands about sex are confusing. And “immorality” is really confusing, for immorality is a lack of morality and morality is the dominant mores of any particular society.

Our society just elected this man.

[Image of Donald and Melania Trump]

He’s seventy-one and she’s forty-seven. She is his third wife according to law, but by biblical standards, she’s a number far beyond three. We elected him right after the Access Hollywood tape came out, in which he brags about seducing women while newly married to a super-model.

Before that, we elected this man, who told us on national television, “*I did not have sexual relations with that woman*”

[Image of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinski]

Well, I’m just pointing out that “moral” is not the same as “good.”

So, “sexual *immorality*” is a confusing term, and it’s not the term Jesus uses.

He uses the verb *porneou*, which comes from the noun *porne*, which immediately makes us think of pornography, which is a huge problem, but incredibly difficult to define.

I grew us thinking female nipples were pornographic. Fashion magazines were an exercise in showing as much female flesh as possible while playing “hide the nipple.” So fashion magazines were OK ... but nursing a baby in church would cause a scandal.

In Seminary, my professor told about some missionaries that purchased t-shirts for all the topless African women in a village where they ministered. The women were very grateful for the shirts and every one of them wore them to worship the following Sunday, but each one of them had cut two holes in the front so they would have no trouble nursing their babies during the long-winded sermons.

What they did was not *porneou*. That is actually a picture of the New Jerusalem in Isaiah 66:10. Read it when you have a chance.

Well, *porne* doesn't really mean sexual immorality, or pornography, as such, even though it likely includes both. *Porne* (the female) and *pornos* (the male), both come from the verb *pernemi*, which means to sell as in selling a slave. The verb *perneuo* is the activity that a *pornos* or *porne* engages in. Young's literal translation translates it as “whoredom.” And it turns out that we are gonna read all about the great *porne*—the Great Whore—in the vision that John is sending to the churches.

Remember that the letters are sent to the angels of the churches, and the vision is sent to the churches. The vision describes the victory that the letters require, that is “how to conquer.”

Well, for some reason, we Americans stress about the beast, but never talk about the *porne*—the Whore—the Great Harlot.

In Revelation 18:4 a voice cries from heaven, “*Come out of her my people.*” That's got to be the voice of Jesus and it's got to mean that His people are participating in *porneou*. That's His people in Thyatira and, I would imagine, His people in Denver . . . or wherever you might be.

“*Come out of her my people.*” That paints quite a picture.

So maybe we ought to ask: What does Jesus have against *porneou*?

What's Wrong With Whoredom?

By that, I mean the entire enterprise—the selling and the buying (both the male and the female and the female and the male).

Hopefully, some answers seem readily apparent... Here are a few that I thought of:

What's Wrong With Whoredom?

1. It objectifies (or “commodifies.”)

It turns people into objects or commodities.
And when you think about it that way, it may be far more common than you think.

I mean what does she see in him?

[Image of Donald and Melania Trump]

And what does he see in her?

Or . . .

What does she see in him?

[Image of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky]

And what does he see in her?

We don't know. We can't know, but if you're a man or woman you can guess because you're basically the same.

She probably sees power, and he probably sees beauty. And there's nothing wrong with power or beauty, but if that's all a person is you've probably turned them into a commodity like a car. So, if your car loses power or beauty you just get another; it's a commodity.

Well, no one is as powerful or beautiful as Jesus.

Is that why you love Him?

Would you love Him if He was weak as a slave...

And ugly as a man nailed to a tree?

Well, harlots turn their tricks into a commodity—not a person, but a source of money, which is power. And a Johns turn a harlot into a commodity—not a person, but beauty that is to be consumed.

So if *porneou* has crept into your marriage . . . and your partner is no longer beautiful or rich, you'll probably find another.

What's Wrong With Whoredom?

1. It objectifies

2. It quantifies

I once asked my three-year-old daughter: "*How much do you love me?*"

Her face lit up and she exclaimed, "*I love you twelve... and that's a lot.*"

It was precious because twelve was the biggest number she knew.

And it was tragically funny because some people actually think that way.

They quantify love... I suppose we all do.

Do you and your spouse run your marriage like a business—a place of trade?

Do you keep accounts of what each owes the other?

Or do you constantly forgive, which is to constantly give, like one member of your body constantly gives blood to another?

Do you keep a record of wrongs and rights?

If so... There's a moneychanger in your temple—and it's the spirit of *porneou*. "*Love keeps no record of wrongs,*" writes Paul. (No bookkeeping.)

Thyatira was known for its trade guilds so to do business in Thyatira you needed to belong to a guild. And to belong to a guild was to participate in the worship of a patron deity, much as groups like the Masons do today.

This woman, that Jesus calls Jezebel—like the notorious Queen Jezebel of ancient Israel—seems to have taught a little idolatry was OK. Idolatry is all about transactional trade arrangements with little gods that aren't God but pretend to be God.

Every time I turn on the TV, there seems to be some new "prophet" revealing some deep new insight into how to get your miracle or blessing. It usually involves some money or some deed that will make God turn a trick for you. Understand? It's not just whoredom that Jesus is renouncing, it's teaching whoredom in church and calling it prophesy.

Jesus said, "*An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign.*" You see a sign is not the substance but points to the substance. To seek the *signs* of God over the *substance* of God is adultery and *porneou*. Nothing's wrong with signs if you read them, and follow them to the substance. The substance belongs to Christ; it flows in His veins.

To the Pharisees, Jesus said, "*The prostitutes go into the kingdom before you.*" It's as if the Pharisees were the ones committing whoredom while Jesus seemed to have such compassion for whores. It's as if he says to them, "*You understand how I feel—how it is to be objectified, commodified, and used for your beauty or power while men utterly miss your heart.*"

What's Wrong With Whoredom?

1. It objectifies
2. It quantifies
- 3. It qualifies (It says, "I'll love you if.")**

Porneou qualifies love, but that's not love.

"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Love is not qualified by anything.

What's Wrong With Whoredom?

1. It objectifies
2. It quantifies
3. It qualifies
- 4. It consumes**

Porneou seeks to consume love as if it were a commodity, like mere bread or wine . . . like something you could nail down and use as you see fit.

When we come to the communion table, we are confessing that we nailed Love down and turned Him into body broken and blood shed.

What's Wrong With Whoredom?

1. It objectifies
2. It quantifies
3. It qualifies
4. It consumes

5. It consumes but will not be consumed

It seeks to consume love... but will not be consumed by love.

porneou is control, which refuses to surrender control.

porneou will sacrifice another but refuses to be sacrificed its self.

I'm struggling to know how to say this, but it reminds me of a story that one of my seminary professors shared in class one day. Dr. Mouw was at a conference somewhere when he decided to head down to the hotel bar and get a drink before bed.

A very attractive middle-aged woman sat next to him and they struck up a conversation. After a time, she explained that she and her husband agreed to have an open marriage so that each could pursue their own needs and desires, and now she wondered if he would like to come join her upstairs in her hotel room.

Dr. Mouw said that he was extremely flattered. He wasn't the handsome type and so he looked at this woman and said something like this:

Thank you. You're extremely beautiful and I'm very flattered, but I want to say no... because you see I'm married, and my marriage is my best shot at tasting the kingdom of God on earth. And that happens when two people sacrifice their own needs... and that's my greatest need.

So, my marriage is a covenant, in which I give all of myself to her, the way Jesus gave all of Himself to us. Sex is the sacrament of that covenant, and sex works. It doesn't just bind bodies, but it binds hearts, and not just for a moment. So, while I'm stuck in the confines of this body in space and time, I can only give all of myself to one other person, the way God has given all of Himself to me. So, if I give some of myself to you in this way, I can't give all of myself to her in this way—the way Jesus has given all of Himself to me.

Jesus can give all of Himself to each one of us for He's no longer bound by space and time, and He considers all of us to be His Bride, His One Bride, and One Body. Maybe one day we'll be just like Him, but as for now, I can only give all of myself to one other self, in the way that Jesus has given Himself to me.

My point is that Love is not a small thing that can be traded in a hotel room. Love is the limitless sacrifice of all that you are.

So, if we try to go trade little bits of love to satisfy our needs, it won't be love but the death of love.

So, Dr. Mouw said, "Thank you, truly I'm truly flattered... but no thanks."
He said that when he finished, he was surprised to look up and see her cheeks streaked with tears, as she said, "Oh that is everything I have ever wanted."

My old boss, Don Moomaw, who was the pastor of Bel Air Presbyterian Church, was seated at a dinner in Hollywood next to Hugh Hefner.
At one point, Hefner leaned over and said, "Hey Don, what do you have against my magazine?" Don had a great response. He answered; "It's not sexy enough."

Porneou is not too much love, but far too little.
Porneou is not too much sacrifice of self but the refusal to sacrifice self *to* Love.
Actually, *you* can't make Love. *Love* makes you.

Porneou tries to objectify, quantify, qualify and commodify love so it can consume love, but will not be consumed by Love. It tries to reduce love to a drop in a thimble when in fact Love is a mighty river. It tries to reduce love to a mere crumb of bread and drop of wine, when Love is the source of all things and the ocean in which we live, move, and have our being.

Once upon a time Love allowed us to reduce Him to body broken and blood shed, but He will not stay weak and ugly for long. The drop in the thimble turns into a mighty river of life, which flows through all creation. Love rises from the dead in us like a seed that comes to life and we will see Him as He is. In fact, that's judgment—to see Him as He is—all eyes will see Him as He is.

What's Wrong With Whoredom?

1. It objectifies
2. It quantifies
3. It qualifies
4. It consumes
5. It consumes but will not be consumed
- 6. It seeks to buy and sell Love.**

You cannot buy Love. You can only be swept away by Love.
You can only love Love because you've been loved by Love.
God is Love. And Love is free.
Porneou is not free so it's not love but the death of love.

Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength . . . and the second command is like it, love your neighbor as yourself."

Maybe He said, “Love your neighbor as yourself” because, in some utterly amazing way, your neighbor actually is yourself. So, we are all one Self... one Body, one Bride. We are one Self, loving God’s Self, with all our heart, mind, soul and strength . . . for He is our Helper, our Husband.

You Know? If you were to love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, mind, soul, and strength that would leave no heart, mind, soul, and strength left, with which to love your neighbor . . . *unless* God was in your neighbor, *then* you could love your neighbor with all you’ve got and at the same time love your Lord with all you’ve got.

Perhaps God is in you and in your neighbor like Holy Fire in the Temple, or the Life is in the blood and circulates through the Body like blood in arteries and veins.

If that were the case, *porneou* would be a blood clot. It would be taking life and not giving life. It would be taking life and seeking to control life, for your own ends when Love is freely giving and receiving life, for Love’s own ends. Jesus is the End & Jesus is the Life & we are His Bride—His Body.

Now, that will blow your mind and I doubt that I’ve expressed it well. But I must receive Love freely and give Love freely. However, I mustn’t give sex freely and receive sex freely, for that is to limit love in my marriage, which is a reference to Christ and His love for us.

Sex is a picture of the faithful love that we are each to return to God our husband. Sin is being unfaithful to God and so using love to serve idols, one of which is me.

The problem with *porneou* (whoredom) is that it seeks to turn Love into something small and dead, that I can control when God is Love and to truly love He must control me.

What’s Wrong With Whoredom?

1. It objectifies
2. It quantifies
3. It qualifies
4. It consumes
5. It consumes but will not be consumed
6. It seeks to buy and sell Love.
- 7. It crucifies Love in the flesh.**

I’m saying: the problem with *porneou* is that it crucifies Love in the flesh.

- So whether Jezebel was just teaching folks that God’s favor could be bought with good works, the way that favors would be purchased from idols.
- Or whether Jezebel was teaching some that they could serve an idol a bit and still be able to serve God a lot.
- Or whether Jezebel was teaching that it was fine to have sex with temple prostitutes . . . it was all *porneou* and all the crucifixion of Jesus.

It was the spirit of *porneou* that tempted Eve to take knowledge of Good from the tree in the garden. The Good is God, and God in flesh, is Jesus, and Jesus is the Life. *Taking* that life is the opposite of Love while *receiving* that life as a gift is Love.

It was the spirit of *porneou* that tempted the Pharisees to justify themselves with the knowledge of Good, that we call the law. The law is a *description* of Love, but it's not Love. It's love objectified. To justify yourself with the law is to objectify Love to obtain things that are not love—from Love—so you can *use* Love when you *don't* love in order to *pretend* to love. It is to crucify Love in flesh in a garden on a tree.

It was the spirit of *porneou* that tempted Eve to take the fruit. It was the spirit of *porneou* that tempted the Pharisees to justify themselves and turn Love into law. It was the spirit of *porneou* that infected Jerusalem as she chanted "Crucify, crucify, crucify," and then, "We have no king but Caesar... "Yahweh is not our husband. We offer ourselves to the beast.

In Revelation Chapter 17 we'll meet the great *porne*, the Great Whore named Babylon, but it's clear that she's not simply Babylon. In places, she appears to be the city of Rome. But in other places, she sounds just like Jerusalem.

Throughout the Old Testament Jerusalem is called a Great Whore.

She's also called God's Bride for her "maker is her husband."

She's God's Bride that has made herself a whore.

- Isaiah 1:21 "*How the faithful city has become a whore.*"
- Jeremiah 3:2 "*Where have you not been ravished... you have polluted the land with your whoredom.*"
- Ezekiel has chapters and chapters on her whoredom with Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians and "any passerby."

She's definitely Jerusalem, and probably Rome, and indeed just about any city on the face of the earth. She's an economy of consumption . . . just like ours. And she's dressed in purple that would likely have come from Thyatira. No wonder Jesus seems angry: the spirit of the harlot is infecting His Bride—His priceless little church in Thyatira—whom He loves with all He has and is.

So how will they overcome? How will they conquer the Great Harlot? Well, that is exactly what the vision will describe . . . And that is what the Spirit must communicate to our hearts. How do you conquer the Great Harlot? Well, this is one way

Clip from *Pretty Woman*

[A woman is about to leave her apartment. She suddenly hears honking outside and moves towards a window to check it out. Suddenly, beautiful opera music is playing. She continues towards the window. A man (Edward) comes down the road in a limousine. He is hanging out of the sunroof of the limousine and calls out: "*Vivian!*" "*Vivian!*" The woman in the apartment (Vivian) looks out the window with a huge smile on her face. She giggles and waves.

Clip from *Pretty Woman* continued on the next page

Edward: "*Precious Vivian, come down!*"

[Vivian comes out to her balcony. Edward crawls out of the sunroof and onto the sidewalk moving towards her balcony.]

Edward: "*It had to be the top floor right?*"

Vivian: "*It's the best!*"

Edward: "*All right, I'm coming up!*"

[Edward begins climbing the balcony while dramatic music plays in the background. Vivian lets her hair down in preparation from him. The scene changes to his arrival. The couple is face to face and embracing each other.]

Edward: "*So, what happened after he climbed up the tower and rescued her?*"

Vivian: "*She rescues him right back.*"

[Edward and Vivian passionately kiss while beautiful music continues in the background. The camera pulls back and the scene fades out.]

Vivian was a prostitute and a pretty woman. And that is one way to defeat the Great Harlot. (Perhaps it is the only way.) You could propose to her and turn her into a Bride. And if you were the harlot, you could accept the proposal. Of course, that's Hollywood. Scripture is reality, and far more graphic and real.

In the eighth century BC, God spoke to a man named Hosea, which means "He saves." Hosea 1:2 "...*The LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD.*"

Hosea's harlot bride is a picture of Israel.

In chapter 2, The Lord says He will strip Israel bare, uncover her lewdness, and take away all her possessions... and then He says,

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor (it means trouble) a door of hope... "And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.'... That's the name of an idol

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.

John records that on Palm Sunday Jesus declared, *“And when I am lifted up from the earth I will draw [allure, or romance] all people to myself.”*

And when He said this, He was speaking of being lifted up on His cross.

Jesus is the door and we meet Him in the place of trouble, where we are stripped bare and have nothing with which to purchase His love. We meet Him in the place where whoredom is no longer an option.

Unlike Vivian in *Pretty Woman*, and unlike Gomer, Hosea’s harlot bride, we actually crucified our Bridegroom on the very day that He proposed. His body broke and blood poured out and it formed a river.

In Revelation 17, we meet the Great Harlot who has seduced God’s people and is described just as Jerusalem. And in Revelation 21 we see the New Jerusalem, who is also God’s people and is no longer a harlot, but a bride.

How do you defeat the Great Harlot? Well in the Revelation, the people of God conquer by being conquered by Love—who is a slaughtered lamb standing on the throne of God. The Lamb conquers the harlot with a covenant . . . of Love.

Now maybe you’re thinking, *“How sweet and kind of cheesy, Peter, although I did enjoy that movie Pretty Woman... but Peter, in verse 23, Jesus said, “...and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.”*

“I will strike her children dead.” Yikes! Whose children? Well, I suppose it could be some lady’s children, but I’m guessing it’s the Great Harlot’s children. Revelation 17:5 *“And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: ‘Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.’”* She’s the mother of the earth’s abominations. Well, what’s an abomination? Luke 16:15 And [Jesus] said to [the Pharisees], *“You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”*

What is exalted among men is our pride,
Which tells us that we can justify ourselves,
Which means that we think we can pay for God,
Which means we’re trying to pay for Love and turning God—who is Love—into a whore.

In John 8:41: They say to Jesus, *“We are not born of porneia.”* And Jesus says, *“You are of your father the devil.”* Does Jesus believe that the devil can father children by sleeping with whores? No! Jesus then says, *“the devil is the father of lies.”* He’s the father of a lie about yourself that is your false self, your flesh that is your pride.

It's that thing in you that tells you that you can purchase love with money, beauty, power, works of the law, or even faith.

It's that thing in you that fills you with arrogance and fear and makes you compete against the very neighbor that you are commanded to love.

It's that thing in you that makes you intolerant, unforgiving, and finally alone.

It's that thing in you that tries to possess love and so crucifies Love.

It's that thing in you that must be destroyed if you are ever to love in freedom in the image of God.

The abomination is not your attraction to nipples in fashion magazines.
The abomination is your ego, which keeps telling you that you must pay for Love, which tells you that you must play the whore with God.

In Ezekiel 16, Ezekiel is commanded to *"make known to Jerusalem her abominations."* What follows is perhaps the most gut-wrenching and mind-bending chapter in all the Bible. (Some older versions tried to change it because they couldn't stomach it—so I suggest the ESV.)

In Ezekiel 16 God describes how He found Jerusalem as a young girl abandoned in a field, how He cared for her and raised her, how she grew and became beautiful, how he proposed to her and showered her with blessings, but how she trusted in her beauty and played the whore, and how she slaughtered their children in her lust. And how he will pour out His wrath upon Jerusalem, for her pride is far worse than that of *Sodom* and *Samaria*.

And then the Lord issues His judgment and it is this: He will restore Sodom and Samaria to their former glory and restore Jerusalem in their midst, that Jerusalem might bear her disgrace and have compassion on Sodom and Samaria, that she might know Love is free, and then freely bestow it upon them.

Ezekiel 16 ends this way, *"I will establish for you an everlasting covenant... and I will give Sodom and Samaria to you as daughters... and you shall know that I am the Lord ...and never open your mouth again [in pride] because of your shame, when I atone for you for all that you have done, declares the Lord God."*

"When I atone for you."

Communion

When and where was that? Well, that was in Jerusalem, not far from the Valley of Achor, on the night that we all betrayed Him, which was the day He took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you"... and He took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood."

It was the custom in that day when a boy wanted to marry a girl,

- He would go to her house and tell her that he would prepare a place for her,
- He would present a marriage covenant and the bride price given to her father.
- He would then pour a cup of wine that represented blood, and if she accepted his proposal she would drink from the cup.

Jesus makes an unconditional and eternal covenant, which He pays for in blood. And when He hands the cup to the disciples, they know what He's saying. He's proposing.

In the morning, we all break His body and His blood flows, and He's still proposing. In Revelation 14, Jesus tramples the winepress that is a picture of His cross—wine that is blood that flows out and fills the land to the depth of a horse's bridle. It stops the war horses in their tracks; it burns away pride.

In Revelation 16, seven angels pour out seven bowls of wrath, wrath that is wine and wine that is blood; it must be the blood of the Lamb that is slain for the sins of the world.

It burns away pride, which is the abomination of this earth.

It burns away pride, and the life in the blood turns harlots into brides.

The Great Harlot is judged and then the Bride descends and the voice from the throne says, "*Behold I make all things new.*" "We overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony."

Like I was saying, Jesus took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you for the forgiveness of sins."

How do they conquer in Thyatira?

They conquer by being conquered by Love. They drink from the cup.

To Him who conquers, says Jesus, I will give authority, *exousia*, that's power.

Jesus is God's authority, God's power.

And to him who conquers, says Jesus, I will give the morning star.

That's Venus, and that's Jesus. He is the Beautiful One.

Do you hear what the Lord is saying? I want to give you all my power, and I want to give you all my beauty. But even more, I want to give you "me."

So as a minister of God's word I ask you: Do you now take this God? Do you take this Man, Jesus, to be your lawfully wedded Husband? By coming to the table and drinking from His cup you are saying, "I do."

Prayer

Lord God, we give ourselves to you. We give The Sanctuary to you. We give ourselves to you and we say that you are our Lord and so we invite you to live your life in us—your Body. So, Lord God, whether you lead us out into the wilderness for forty days or you decide to raise the dead and heal the sick among us, we offer ourselves to you and we seek you and ask that you would live your life in us. Be glorified in us, for you Lord God are good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

Listen to Song of Solomon 5:1 "*Eat friends, drink and be drunk with love.*" Be drunk by Love. I think Solomon was saying, "Believe the Gospel and live from that place." In Jesus' name, 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 version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

8

Sardis and the Dead (Who Don't Know They're Dead)

Sardis and the Dead (Who Don't Know They're Dead)

Revelation 3:1-8

11-26-17

#8 in our series The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

Lord God, we pray that you would help us to preach. Holy Spirit, we ask that you would cause us to see Jesus. Thank you that you have revealed yourself in Jesus our Lord. We call on your Spirit now to help us to see Him.

Revelation 3:1

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: "The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. 'I know your works. You have the reputation [onoma: name] of being alive, but you are dead.'"

A dead church . . . Have you ever been to a dead church?

Years ago, Susan and I got to visit Westminster Abbey in London. . . impeccable music . . . magnificent words . . . and astounding boredom.

We sat in the chancel, up front where everyone could see. *Three times*, during the sermon, Susan fell asleep . . . not a little—a lot. She literally fell over and slammed her head into the sideboard. The thud echoed throughout the entire cathedral.

Often times, the church I grew up in seemed dead. The sermons were usually boring in my estimation, and the preacher was my dad.

Have you ever been to an alive church? You know what I mean: it's exciting, growing and vital?

After leaving my home church, I moved to California for seminary and worked at Bel Air Presbyterian Church. It was the president's church, and it was filled with movie stars. And it had a name for being alive.

After that, I took a position in Northern California. Susan *never* fell asleep in church because the Senior Pastor was incredibly dynamic. (I'll call him Rick) He had published several books, was in high-demand as a speaker nationwide, and really fun to be around.

In 1991, he had just written a book on mentoring, and in the book I was the prime example. That was pretty cool. I was like the "mini-Rick" of Danville.

Rick had a name—a *great name*—for being alive, authentic and passionate. Sometimes while preaching, he would just break down weeping. People would say, "Wow, the Holy Spirit was moving!" "This church is so alive. Rick is so alive."

In the first week of September 1991, I ran into Rick by the dumpster, behind the church and next to our house. I would walk past the dumpster every day on my way back and forth to the youth house. You can learn a lot about people by hanging out at the dumpster.

The dumpster smelled, but it was where the action was: secret pastor meetings between services, grooms, and groomsmen sneaking beer before weddings . . . Dumpsters are often full of stuff that folks don't want you to see. A dumpster is metaphorical in a way; it smells like death but can teach a lot about life.

Well as I was saying, in the first week of September 1991, I ran into Rick by the dumpster. He used to sit back there in his car. He had been gone on sabbatical for three months, and this was his first day back. He had called an emergency staff meeting.

I had heard some rumors, so I went to his window and said, "Rick, what's up?" He said, "Peter, I'm glad I caught you before the meeting. I've decided to resign. I'm too stressed and too busy . . . I want time to speak and write." Before I could catch myself, I said, "Oh good!" Then quickly, trying to recover, "I mean, good that it's not something bad." He chuckled, and said, "Oh you mean like a divorce or something?" Looking me in the eye he said, "Oh no. Nothing like that." He got out, and we walked together past the dumpster up to the meeting where he shared the same story.

A few days later, I was sitting in another meeting with some denominational officials who informed us that four women were suing Rick for using his position to obtain sexual favors from them during his last pastorate.

We then had another meeting with Rick. He confessed, wept, and promised there were no affairs like that in our church. I journaled about how beautiful his repentance was. A short time later, I was in another meeting and found out that his repentance was more lies—for he was still doing the same with women in our church, even as he wept in front of us over those women in the past.

About then I was also informed that the same thing had happened at Bel Air Presbyterian and had been happening the whole time I had worked there. It wasn't much later, that my old friend Tim—one of the best preachers that I've ever heard, he had a silver tongue with a great name for being alive—wrote a note to his big, thriving congregation and his young family, then went out to the garage and asphyxiated himself.

Dead. . .

Since then I've done two funerals for pastor friends who had a name for being alive and yet took their own lives—dead. I'm just saying I'm not so sure we're all that good at telling whether something is dead or alive.

Maybe we confuse growth with something just getting bigger . . . like a cancer.

[Image of Nazi soldiers carrying Nazi flags]

Maybe we confuse alive with shiny objects with lots of noise and commotion.

[Image of a flashy jet]

So we see something like this . . .

[Image of an open hand holding a mustard seed]

A dark little object in the palm of a gardener's hand, and we think: "*It's dead.*" Maybe we are just not all that good at telling what's alive from what's dead.

We look and see lots of excited people, mighty works, and demons fleeing, and it all smells good. We say, "Man, look! That church is alive!" Then we see a few sad people, their numbers shrinking, no miracles, lots of tears – in a place that smells of dirt and demons. And we say, "Man, this place is depressing and that guy in the middle hanging on the tree. . . He's already dead . . . dead, dead, dead I tell ya... The man on that cross is dead."

I'm just saying maybe we just don't know dead, or alive as well as we'd think.

"Sardis, you have the name of being alive, but you're dead." Other folks called them "alive." And I'm sure they wanted to be named "alive." Sometimes just the name of being "alive" can kill you. A reputation can kill you. Jesus even said, *"Woe to you, when all people speak well of you."* (Luke 6:26) "Woe to you that have a good reputation."

Rick told me later on, "It was the pressure of the ministry." I totally get that . . . but I doubt it was the pressure of the ministry that *God* gave him. I bet it was the pressure of living up to a name that everyone else gave him.
. . . And a name that he was trying to give himself.
. . . It might have even been a name that Jesus had given him, but he couldn't live up to the name by trying.

The letter to the seven churches has a chiasmic Hebrew construction. That means the last three letters mirror the first three. Sardis is parallel to Pergamum. Two weeks ago in Pergamum, we preached that even a good name can kill you.

Remember how Peter tried to live up to the name that Jesus gave him? It just about killed him... and maybe in a way it did. He tried to make himself the Rock, until finally like butter, he denied Jesus three times. He realized that he couldn't make himself the Rock... and then he became the Rock on which Jesus built His church.

Jesus warned the folks in Pergamum: "Don't let people name you. Don't even let you name you." In other words, Don't concern yourself with a reputation. Your true name is

handed to you on a white stone, which no one knows . . . but Jesus. You can't earn it—that name. It comes by grace through faith. Trying to live up to a name can kill you. And making a name for yourself *will* kill you... or *already has* killed you. "You have a name of being alive, but you are dead," says Jesus.

My friend Gary found a man lying on the floor in the fetal position in a back hallway at a convention center where he had gone to hear a famous pastor with a name for being alive. The man was shaking and sobbing. He said, "I'm not making it." Gary bent down and said, "That's okay. You don't have to make it." The man said, "Yes I do. My name is _____." It was a name you'd probably know—the man with a name for being alive . . . about to tell everyone else how they can be alive too.

I have a friend who comes from a family of Evangelical Christian royalty. But living up to his name has been like a curse. He started out in professional ministry but would repeatedly act out in really bizarre ways . . . ways that I just could not understand, not particularly mean ways but vulgar ways, ways I couldn't understand . . . and I told him so

I was visiting this friend years ago in another state and went with him to one of his father's prayer support meetings. At this prayer meeting, we broke into "sharing groups." Everybody wore ironed blue jeans with sweaters over their shoulders tied in a knot in front, and they all said things like this: "Oh, bless you, brother." "I have experienced victory this week." "Isn't God good?" and "Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!" The whole time they smiled. And my face hurt from pretending to be happy.

Finally, we said a little prayer because it was called a prayer meeting and then we left. When the two of us were alone, my friend turned to me and said, "So, what did you think?"

Now, I'm not saying this to be cute; I said it because I meant it.

I said, "To be honest with you, the entire time I had an irresistible urge to fart." My friend didn't laugh. He stopped me, looked me in the eye, and said, "Well, now you know. Now you understand what it is to be me."

I have heard counselors say that pastors have affairs often times just to get out from under the pressure of a good name . . . almost as a way to confess—I'm a white washed tomb, I look good on the outside but I'm dead on the inside and smell like a barn . . . or a manger.

I'm talking about pastors because I am one. But the same is true with business executives, teachers, moms, dads, church attendees . . . anybody who has a public life and wants to have a good public name. . . like presidents, congressmen, and Hollywood executives.

You've made a name for yourself, and you're working to live up to the name. But inside you're empty, tired, lonely, and desperate . . . You want someone—anyone—to know you, but you think, "*What if they really knew me?*" So you work harder to hide the stink.

What if all your good works were like soiled garments, garments just used by you to hide the stink? Like Isaiah says, “*all our righteous deeds are like soiled garments—filthy rags*” (Isaiah 64:6).

Maybe the evil one is committing extortion, saying to you, “Pay, work, struggle, strive for your name, for if they discovered that’s not your name—you’ll die.” So, you strive to live up to your name, but deep inside you long for the dumpster—the sewer, the bottle, the flesh, the porn, the gossip.

“The power of sin is the law,” says Scripture. “The power of sin is the knowledge of good and the desire to make yourself good.” Satan’s temptation is to make a name for yourself...

So, satan’s extortion is powerless without an addiction to a good public name. . . . Which produces a desperate need to hide your shame in fig leaves and pride... You hide from the Truth in lies that you call your “self”—in a soiled garment you call your “self.”

The Lord said, “*In the day you eat of it you will surely die—(dying you will die.)*” You will hide from the Truth, who is the Life, who is Me—Jesus. You will hide from the Truth, in a prison you call yourself—a whitewashed tomb. It looks nice and it smells like a dumpster.

Soren Kierkegaard wrote, “If someone in public happens to pass gas loudly, people are so startled, it is as if it were the voice of a spirit. So intoxicated are we when we are in public.”

Well, maybe it is a spirit. Maybe it is the Spirit—the Spirit of Truth saying,
“It’s dead in here and I want out of this tomb.”
“It stinks in here . . . like a barn . . . or a manger.”
I know that’s gross, but Christ is born in a barn and placed in a manger.
It smells like a dumpster.

Revelation 3:1-6

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: “The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. ‘I know your works. You have the reputation [onoma: “name”] of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete [perfect] in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come [“upon”] you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his

angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

So the message seems clear, doesn't it?

“Wake up! ...For I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.”

Jesus calls us to perfection! Are your works perfect? Perfect love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Do people look at you and say, “Wow! That's life!”?

When was the last time you danced before the Lord in absolute self-abandon and joy?

When was the last time you led someone to the Living Christ?

When was the last time someone stopped you on the street and said, “Why are you so happy? How can you be so alive?”

[Peter begins to shout.] So look alive! . . . like Billy Graham, Benny Hin, . . . or Jesus.

Do you want garments white as snow? Do you want your name written in the Book of Life? Then Live! Live! Live! Or am I just screaming at dead things?

Now . . . Do you feel more alive?

Or do you feel more dead, imprisoned to the name of being alive?

A lot of yelling on the outside, but more dead on the inside?

The more I scream “Live!” the more you are reminded of how dead you are. And the more you are reminded of how dead you are, the more self-conscious you get. And the more self-conscious you get, the more dead you get! For Jesus was very clear: “*Lose your life* (your self, your soul) *and you'll find it.*” That means stop thinking about yourself.

I said, stop thinking about yourself! Now . . . are you thinking about yourself, not thinking about yourself, which is only more thinking about yourself? Which is to be trapped in death.

1 Corinthians 15:56 “*The power of sin is the law.*” You see?

We take law and it makes us dead.

We take knowledge of the Good, to make *ourselves* good and it makes us *not* good.

We take knowledge of Life and it makes us dead.

And worse still dead doesn't know dead, 'cause it's dead.

It's like the creepy kid in the movie *The Sixth Sense*, Remember? He talks to his counselor saying, “I see dead people. They don't know they're dead. They only see what they want to see.” They don't want to see the Truth. Jesus is the Truth.

We often wonder, “What's wrong with the world? What's wrong with me?” Perhaps you're dead and don't know you're dead—that would explain a lot. It would explain a lot . . . But screaming at you wouldn't do any good, 'cause you're dead. Have you ever

screamed at a dead cat? “Get up!” It doesn’t do any good.

If you’re dead, you can’t conquer? Dead things don’t conquer.

Each letter to the seven churches ends with this phrase: “To him who conquers I will give . . . I will do . . . such and such.” So I read and wonder:

Will I conquer?
Will I revive that first love?
Will I be faithful unto death?
Will I renounce false teaching?
Will I tolerate that Jezebel woman?
Will I wake up and live?
Will God blot my name out of the Book of Life?
Will I conquer?

It could scare you to death . . . if you’re not already dead.

Like Saint Paul writes in Romans, “I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came to life and I died—I died!—The very commandment that promised life to me proved to be death to me” (Rom. 7:10).

These seven letters sound a lot like law and the law brings death: “Do this or die. Conquer or die.” And it’s especially weird, considering this was written by John. When we preached through the Gospel of John (a few years ago), over and over we were struck by the fact that Jesus does everything! He calls people, chooses people, saves people, sanctifies people...

He lives His life through people. So in John 5:21, Jesus says, “*Whoever does what is true comes to the light—which is the judgment (v.19)—so that it may clearly be seen that his deeds have been done **by God.***”

But here in these letters . . . it sounds like he’s saying, “*Do these deeds or God will be done with you—He’ll blot you out of His book.*”

What is Jesus saying to us? Well technically, He’s not talking to us. We are overhearing Him talk to someone else, the way John overheard Jesus talking to God the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.

John is writing down what Jesus is saying to someone else. Each letter is addressed to an angel and ends with this phrase: “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches*”

Most of the pronouns in the letters are second person singular pronouns that get lost in

translation. So when Jesus says, “*I have not found your works perfect,*” He is talking to the angel. That’s really weird, for . . .

1. In Scripture, angels are good or bad, but this angel gets *rebuked* for bad things and *commended* for good... utterly bizarre. And Not only that, but the rest of the New Testament teaches that we don’t need some angel mediating our relationship with God. There’s one mediator—and that’s Jesus.
 2. Some have postulated the angel is a bishop or a prophet or some person in the local church because *angelos* means “messenger.” But that puts a whole lot of ungodly pressure on these seven guys—pressure to save the churches—And there’s only one savior and that’s Jesus.
 3. Neither “angel” nor “man” works, so some see it as just an unprecedented, bizarre, literary device. Yet Jesus seems to make a very big deal of these seven star messengers held tightly in His hand.
- Seven messengers, yet one.
 - Seven is the number of God’s manifold fullness.
 - In chapter five, the Lamb has seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.
 - Seven spirits, yet we know that’s one Spirit—the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Jesus.
 - Rev. 1:20 we read: “*The seven angels are the seven stars.*”
 - Rev. 3:30 We just read, “*The words of Him (Jesus) who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.*”

Some commentators say that the “and” is expegetical, so this verse should be translated, “*The words of him who has the seven spirits, that is, the seven stars,*” which then, would clearly mean what the Revelation seems to mean—that the seven eyes of the Lamb, that are the seven Spirits of God are also the seven stars, and the seven stars are the seven angels.

Which means that each angel, in each church, is Christ’s Spirit in each church . . .

So, Jesus is talking to His own spirit—the Holy Spirit—residing in each member of His body in each church—His body.

So, of course, He knows their works.

And of course, Jesus says to His Spirit in a way that the church can overhear, “*Let him with ears to hear, hear what the spirit says to the churches.*”

The Spirit is called the *parakletos* the Counselor, the Advocate, the Helper. He is the light in each lampstand. Now, it seems so obvious, but I haven’t read a commentator who says this—and as I’ve thought about it I realized why. It would mean that Jesus is like blaming His own Spirit for our sins (for losing our first love, for tolerating Jezebel’s *pornea*, for being dead).

- It would mean that Jesus is like not imputing our sins against us, but Himself.
- It would mean that Jesus had died (or at least His Spirit) and is now calling to Himself in us . . . to rise and to live.

- It would mean that He is charging His own Spirit with the work of our own righteousness, sanctification, and redemption or salvation and creation.
- It would be a Grace almost too incredible to believe, and we'd even need help believing it; even faith would be a gift.

Yet, this is just what Scripture asks us to believe: *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them”* 2 Cor. 5: 19 (NKJV). So, if the Lord wasn't imputing them to us, was He imputing them to someone else? YES! *“For He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Cor. 5:21 NKJV).

God was in Christ, doing this. So, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are doing all of this for us!

In I John, John says, *“If anyone does sin [and of course we know “all have sinned...”] we have an advocate* (a helper—remember Adam couldn't find his helper and Scripture says our helper is God) *with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”* 1 John 2:1b.

Jesus gives us His Spirit, who is called “the advocate”—the *parakletos*

It means “one who pleads another's case before a judge.”

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, *“I'm sending another advocate. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”* (John 14:16-17)

Then He tells the disciples, *“The Advocate, the Helper, The Spirit of Truth will teach you all things. He will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak.”* (He takes direction from Jesus and speaks it to the church.)

“He will declare to you the things that are to come... And he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13-15).

The letter goes to the angel in the church. A church is a sanctuary made of people filled with the Spirit of Jesus. Jesus says, “You're dead.” “You” is singular, not plural, which means He's talking to this Angel, which must be His Spirit. He says, “You are dead.” And now that raises a fascinating question...

If Jesus is “The Life”... and the book of Hebrews calls Him “an indestructible life.”

If Jesus is “The Life,” how can He die or His Spirit die?

Maybe He can't die unless He dies in us...

And maybe death isn't the absence of life, so much as the separation of life from Life.

You know the Breath of God—that is the Spirit of God and Spirit of Truth and of Life—that Spirit was in Adam when Adam believed the lie, and so cut himself off from the Truth and the Life, covered himself in fig leaves, and was exiled from the garden.

I mean maybe the Breath of God, Spirit of God, and Spirit of Jesus lies in the dark soil of each and every human heart like a seed, which at one point was taken from the tree Life and buried in the ground that is you... until Jesus calls to His own Spirit saying, *“Awake oh sleeper, rise from the dead and I will give you Light.”*

I don't know . . . but I do know that each of us is like an earthen vessel, in which God plants a seed, which is faith, and that our earthen vessel must crack and eventually be discarded for the seed to grow, and reach the Light. That earthen vessel is your flesh. You've grown that flesh based on a lie that you must make yourself in the image of God, that you must make a name for yourself, and so you've made a false self. A false self in which your true self is imprisoned like a seed.

Perhaps death is separation.

So, to say Christ died is to say Christ was separated from Christ . . .

As if a drop of life was separated from the river of life and placed in you . . .

As if a crumb of truth was broken from the body of Truth and planted in you.

Just like body broken and blood shed are planted in you at the table of the Lord.

Your true self is like a bit of Christ's self, planted in the earthen soil that you think of as you. So, maybe the Spirit on the throne calls to the Spirit in you saying, "Live, live, live!" And the Spirit in you, can hear the Spirit on the throne . . . and rise from the dead, like a seed that grows, and breaks through the ground in which it is encased. . . or a Savior that bursts from a tomb that used to be your soul.

I don't know how to describe it, but we die with Him and He rises in us, crying "*Abba Father.*" Life is communion with God.

Perhaps death is separation. And the death of death, the second death, is communion.

So *Yes!*... In these letters, I think we hear Jesus calling to His own Spirit buried in our faithlessness, shame, and isolation. He calls "**Live, live, live!**" until "*it is no longer I that lives but Christ who lives within me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.*"

It means that you are like a field prepared for harvest. Or a womb prepared to give birth to you. You are like a patient on an operating table overhearing the Great Physician talk to Himself about your surgery. If that's the case, what should you do?

Hold still and surrender . . .

Surrender your "self," your false self, your ego.

Surrender whatever is dirty or rotten... especially any infection or sin.

Surrender, hold still, and see the Salvation of our God.

Conquering, then, depends on the Physician.

So, "Will the Physician conquer? Will Jesus conquer? Will the Advocate conquer?"

Well, that's what the rest of the book is about! It's a Revelation of Jesus.

But "Will your name be blotted from the book of life?"

I suppose that depends on your name.

In Exodus 32 Moses tries to atone for the *people* of Israel saying to God, "*If you won't forgive their sins blot me out of your book*" and God says,

“Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.”

Wow! That means that only one name has not been blotted out of His book; it is He who knew no sin, but became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God.

In Revelation 20, we’ll read about the Great White Throne Judgment, which is *the* Judgment, for according to John there is only *one* Judgment.

In Revelation 20, the dead stand before the throne. The dead are judged by what is written in the books according to the deeds that they have done.

The books are like a resume. I think they are the record of our attempt to make a name for ourselves—our attempt to justify ourselves according to the law in the power of our own flesh. The books are opened and another book is opened, which is the Lamb’s book of life. It contains names that have *not* been earned with *deeds* done in the flesh. But names that *have been given by grace* through the blood of the Lamb.

In verse 3 Jesus said to the Angel in Sardis,
“Remember what you received and heard. *Keep it.*”

If folks had received the name “alive” from Jesus because He had given it to them;
If they had received the name by grace through faith and this not of themselves . . .
If they were grateful to God for the name . . .
THEN they should *keep it*. That’s a name in the Lamb’s book of life.

But if they received the name from themselves or their neighbors because they sang extra loud, attended every bible study, acted bubbly, or even cast out demons and healed the sick in Jesus’ name . . . if the name was a reputation they thought they’d earned with deeds they had done . . . if they were proud of the name . . . *then* they better beg Jesus to cut the name from their flesh with His sword, lest they be thrown into the fire with it.

“Then death and hell were thrown in the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Rev. 20:14). *“And death shall be no more”* (Rev. 21: 4).

The Lake of Fire is the death of death, and death is separation.

The end of death is a sea of Life, and Life is communion.

The end of darkness is a sea of Light.

The end of the false is a sea of Truth.

The end of pride is a sea of burning hot humility.

The end of sin is a sea of Grace.

The end of the thing that you used to refer to as your “self” . . . is God’s self.

The end of Hell, is communion with God.

Revelation 20:14 *“This is the second death.”*

Revelation 20:15 *“Anyone’s name not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*

And anyone not thrown into the lake of fire had already been baptized in fire like the disciples were baptized at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is Fire. That's the Judgment.

And now, I think the Lamb has written the name of every person He created in His book. But not the name of the person He didn't create—the person that you think you create.

You have an old self, an old man, a false self and he is not found in the Lamb's book of life. And you have a new self, a true self in communion with Christ's self; His name is written in the Lamb's book of life written in blood.

That's the Judgment

Anytime you confess your sins and receive God's grace . . .

You have surrendered to God's Judgment.

You have put off that old self and begun to live in the new self.

You have died and begun to live.

You have faith by Grace and this not of yourself.

You have the victory that has conquered the world—1 John 5:4

"This is the victory—our faith."

You have renounced the name that you have made for yourself...

And begun to receive the name that God is giving you.

You have stripped yourself of your soiled garments . . .

Washed them in the blood of the Lamb . . .

And allowed Him to dress you in His righteousness—Himself.

In verse 3 Jesus said, *"Remember and repent.. or I'll come like a thief."* He may come *like* a thief, but He's not a thief, and you won't think He's a thief if you've already surrendered yourself to Him. You'll hear: *"Wake oh sleeper and rise from the dead and I will give you light . . . I am the light"* (Eph. 5:14). And surrendering to Him, won't be terror but delight. In fact, it's in the place of surrender shame that the seed is planted. It's in that stinky barn that the Christ Child is born.

That's the Judgment.

"Let him who has ears to hear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

- Sardis, stop trying to make a name for yourself.
- Sardis, surrender the garbage, and the Life will be born in your stable, and I will give you a new name; it's my name.

Shortly after my encounter with Rick, behind the church by the dumpster, I went for a walk with an old man. He was a pastor. His last ten years had been really hard. . . He'd never published a book and never pastored a church with much of a name. In fact, he'd lost two churches, and much of his reputation. Yet, I'd have to say that it was in him, more than in anyone else I've ever known, that I had *encountered* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faith, and self-control . . . in places most

would've lost control. I had encountered life in places full of dirt, darkness and maybe even demons.

I don't mean he was perfect, but those things were *real* . . . not just a name. He took me for a walk, and I remember we sat down by the dumpster on the steps out behind the church. He said to me something like this: "Peter, I just want to tell you that I haven't been very on fire lately—alive. I have been kind of dead." Then he said, "I want to recommit my life to Jesus, and I'd like you to pray for me."

Feeling utterly unqualified or worthy to do so, I did. I prayed for my dad.

The Spirit in me called to the Spirit in him, "*Live! Live! Live!*"

For thirty years the Spirit in him had been calling to the Spirit in me, "*Live! Live! Live.*"

I think that's the only reason I could pray, saying, "*Live! Live! Live!*"

And he did, and he does.

My dad died thirteen years ago . . . And yet he's the only person I've known that I'm convinced is truly alive. I'm not saying that for philosophical or theological reasons but for experiential reasons. After he died, at least four people that I know encountered him alive . . .

One he told to have hope.

One he liberated from a bondage.

One he told to come and give me a hug.

And lastly, he told my wife "Susan and Peter don't be afraid to drink the cup the Lord has for you." Susan said to me, "Peter you should have seen him. He looked so alive."

I've known a lot of pastors with the name of being alive who were awfully dead. My dad didn't have much of a name, and he confessed to feeling dead, and I know he's alive. Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but they were dead.

Once upon a time, Jesus had a reputation for being dead, but He alive.

He is "*the* Life." That's His name and He gives it to you. You cannot earn it. He must give it, and you must receive it.

That's the Judgment of God.

Communion

This is the Judgment of God. He took bread and broke it saying "This is my life given to you." And He took the cup saying, "This cup is the covenant in my blood." For thousands of years, God had been telling the Israelites: "The life is in the blood." And Jesus said, "Drink of it all of you."

Would you pray with me? All of you? Pray: "I confess that I have tried to make a name for myself. The name of being alive and then I realize I'm dead. I confess that in and of myself, I'm dead. I surrender the dead to you, for you are the Life. Thank you, that you

have given yourself to me. And you are giving me a name—your name. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

If you’re proud of your name and think you’ve earned your name, listen to the Judgment of God: That’s not your name. But if you’re grateful to God for your name—that is your name and it’s Jesus’ name, and it’s the Judgment of God.

Prayer

Lord God we thank you! Lord Jesus, we thank you that you who knew no sin became sin so that we might know the righteousness of God. Lord God, I thank you that what you will is called reality, and the Word that you will with is Jesus. That Word will not return void but will accomplish that for which it was sent. Thank you that you will make us in your own image and your own likeness and we will love you with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. We will love our neighbor as ourselves. We will be home. Thank you, Lord God, for who we are in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Benediction

Everyone likes practical application points so there’s a very simple practical application point today. Confess your sins one to another. That’s what Scripture says. I confess my sins to Susan (my wife), first and foremost. I confess my sins to Andrew (who is kind of like my brother) and I confess my sins to my small group.

Now, don’t confess them to just anybody. I think that’s what Jesus meant when He said, “Don’t cast your pearls before swine,” but you need to have someone you confess your sins to. So, if you confess your sins to that person, their job is not to say, “You loser! Get your act together; you better try harder.” God is not calling you to an accountability group because what is that? That’s the law. And the more people say those kinds of things the more you think about your “*self*” and get stuck in your “*self*.” What is their duty at that point? It’s to proclaim the Gospel, and what does that sound like? “My dear, that is no longer your name. It’s been nailed to Jesus and born to destruction and He gives you a new name, and it’s your true name.” That’s called the Gospel.

Now, you may have to deal with county officials, the police, and you may not be able to babysit again . . . but that’s not your name. And Jesus rises in you and gives you life. It’s the Word of God that descends in you and makes you a new creation.

In Jesus’ name, 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 version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.

9

Philadelphia and the Open Door

Philadelphia and the Open Door

Revelation 3:7-13

December 10, 2017

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

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

Father, thank you for wishing and willing upon this whole world—and upon each one of us—Jesus. Would you help us to see Him by the power of your Holy Spirit? Help us to preach Lord God. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Message

“I’m waiting for my dad. Have . . . have any of you seen my dad?” He said.

The tall and skinny scarecrow-kid shifted before us on the street corner, fear racing across his face, dirt smeared all over his body. His speech was slowed and slurred, his eyes dull and empty. At first I thought “drugs,” but then I realized it was something else . . . the boy was mentally disabled.

These are the words of sister Mary Rose Mc Geady from Covenant House in New York City.

“Have . . . have any of you seen my dad?” he said.

He was like a baby really . . . a little boy . . . in a sixteen-year-old’s body.

“I’m sorry, son, but I don’t know your dad . . . What’s your name?”

“Eric.”

“Hi, Eric. What do you mean you’re waiting for your dad?”

“He’s coming back. I hope. . . .”

Eric clinched his hands tightly into a fist, and began to rock back and forth . . .

“Maybe we can help you. Where do you live, Eric?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you live in New York City?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you live in a city, with lots of streets and buildings?”

“Yeah. Lots of cars.”

“When did your dad say he would be back?”

“He just took me for a walk, and then said, ‘Wait here, I’ll be right back.’

That was right after he gave me breakfast. But he must be coming back . . . right?”

“How long have you been here, Eric?”

“I don’t know, but I’ve been here for awhile.”

“Have you slept here?”

“Yeah. I sleep in my pipe. I wish I had my blanket, though, ‘cause . . . it gets really cold.”

“Your pipe? Where is that, Eric?”

Eric pointed to the bridge that runs along the Hunts Point section of the Bronx, and then led us to his “home.” Sure enough, hidden in the dirt and squalor of a dark

corner sat a large, old pipe.

“Is this where you sleep, Eric?” He nodded

“Eric, how many times have you slept in the pipe? One time? Two times? Or more?”

“Yeah. I sleep here a lot.”

“Eric, what’s your last name?”

“Eric.”

“No, your other name. Do you have another name? Like, I’m Mary Rose, but my last name is Mc Geady. Do you have another name?”

“Just Eric.”

His name was “Just Eric.”

You wonder how many people there are in this world like Just Eric . . .

People with little power, who find a closed door at every turn . . .

In this insanely affluent and media soaked culture of ours, we occupy ourselves with the lifestyles of a few celebrities and successful business folks, while most of the world lives like Eric . . . just Eric.

You wonder how many people there are in this world like Just Eric . . .

People with little power, who find a closed door at every turn . . .

Yet, people with a confused but belligerent hope that “he’s coming back.”

Thinking: “. . . I must have a source, a father . . . He must be coming back?”

Of course, we Christians believe that we do have a Father and He is coming back in the form of Jesus our Lord. He’s coming back for us . . . but what about Eric?

You know, if you didn’t want to help Eric, it would be really convenient to believe that God wasn’t coming for Eric, and didn’t care about Eric—that God was not Eric’s Father and Eric was not your little brother.

I did a little research this week:

Experts estimate that approximately 108 billion people have walked the face of this earth...

Whether you start counting 6,000 years ago like some fundamentalists or 50,000 years ago like most anthropologists, the number works out just about the same, since the human population would have been so small the first 40,000 years.

So, 108 billion people, created with the breath of God and dust . . . and of those 108 billion people, approximately 8 billion have called on the name of Jesus.

Many of those 8 billion have argued that “God the Father” is coming back for them and for the other 100 billion who haven’t called on the name of Jesus.

He is still coming back, but not to save them, but to consign them to endless torment for

they didn't call on the name of Jesus.

And now this is the truly ironic part: the name Jesus literally means, "*God is salvation.*"

Names mean something in the Bible . . .

Actually, no one even knew the word Jesus in the Bible; they knew the name *iesous*, in Greek, or *yeshua* in Aramaic, *yehoshua* in Hebrew—Jesus is the English form of the name . . . and no one spoke English in the Bible.

You see it's not how the name sounds but what it means that counts. And it means, "*God is Salvation.*" Or "*God Saves*" (Who He is and what He does are the same.)

Well, many believe that unless you say the word "Jesus" before you die, then, God is *not* salvation, but just the opposite of salvation. So, in effect, they believe that we create "*God is Salvation,*" that is Jesus, with our word. While Scripture clearly teaches that God creates us with His Word, that is "*God is Salvation,*" that is, Jesus.

(Acts 4:12) "*There is no other name under heaven by which a man must be saved...*" That's entirely true! But Scripture is clear that every man will one day say the name, "*Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father...*" (Phil. 2:10).

So all will confess, "God is Salvation" . . .because He is. And yet, you're not fully saved until you do—until you believe "*God is Salvation;*" until you believe you're alone, in the dark, trapped in your own illusions like a homeless kid taking shelter in a cement pipe.

So anyway, I was just wondering how many Just Erics there are in the world and how God the Father feels about them . . .

Maybe each one of us is just like Just Eric. The only difference is the size of our cement pipe and whether or not we've abandoned it.

Your cement pipe is your power, your security, your shelter against the storms of this world, your attempt at salvation in the absence of your Father.

Eric had little knowledge and little power so his cement pipe was a cement pipe, but your pipe might be made of brick and wood, with indoor plumbing and electricity. It might be your resume. . . It might be a name that you've made for yourself—like Professor, Doctor or Reverend. . . It might be a bank account.

It's security against the question "*Is He coming back? And does He love me?*"

Some of us have such magnificent cement pipes that we've learned to forget the question, pretending that we don't even need to ask the question or want to ask it . . . But a storm is coming and there is no cement pipe strong enough to endure this storm . . . It's the perfect storm.

Well Eric reminds me of Philadelphia . . .

Not Pennsylvania, but the sixth of the seven churches at the start of the

Revelation.

Revelation 3:7 “*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia...*”

Last time, we preached that this angel appears to be Christ’s Spirit resident in each church and each believer. Some would argue that the Spirit of Jesus is even resident in a hidden way in each person: God breathed His breath into earth to make each person . . .

A person is like a cement pipe (an earthen vessel) containing the breath of God, like Just Eric.

Revelation 3:7 -11

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that [hoti: because] you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie— behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast . . . Hold on. (People in Philadelphia dwelt on the earth.)

A great storm is coming (the perfect storm) to test those who live upon the face of the earth. But Jesus is going to *keep* the Philadelphians from the storm. Some say that this “hour of trial” is a seven-year period sometime after the year 2017. So, Jesus is saying, “Cheer up! You won’t be around for the seven years of tribulation two thousand years from now! Hang on; I’m coming soon . . . actually, in two thousand years, sometime after 2014.”

That’s just silly...

Jesus is saying the whole world will experience this trial—at least within one generation—and I will *keep you* from it.

He promises to *keep them*, but probably not with power . . . right?

He just said, “*I have placed before you an open door. I know that you have but little power.*” A more literal translation is “*I have placed before you an open door, **because** you have little power.*”

He will keep them from the storm but probably not with a power over storms, but maybe some sort of power *through* storms. He will keep them.

You may remember that once Jesus calmed a storm, and even more amazingly slept on a boat in a storm—on a raging sea. Perhaps even more amazingly He walked on water through the storm...

In John 17:15 Jesus prays for His disciples saying, *“I do not pray that you should take them out of the world but that you should keep them out of the evil.”* He uses the same phrase there in John 17 that he does here in Revelation 3. He kept them out of the evil, and yet they all suffered the evil—all of them were martyred except John who is now writing this from a prison colony.

You know people worry about the tribulation, but Jesus promised tribulation to His disciples. . . And can you think of a more difficult trial or tribulation, in this world, than the hour of death?

In John 8:51 Jesus said, *“If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.”*
In John 11:25 He clarified saying, *“He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”*

It's like believing, that is Faith, is dying and living all at once.
Jesus did say something about losing your life to find it . . . so maybe you can die before you die, experience eternal life now, and float right through physical death and into Heaven.

Well, Jesus says a great storm, an hour of trial, is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth.

A little over ten years ago, I remember sitting in my office on Lookout Mountain. I had been pastoring a church that grew from less than a hundred to a few thousand in twelve years or so.

I had agents and publishers competing for my attention. And we had just built a multi-million dollar brand new facility. They had just taken out a multi-million dollar key man insurance policy on me. I had a lot of power.

But some folks had complained about the word that I had preached, and now my Presbytery was demanding that I make a public confession:

1. That there is a group of people that could never be saved, which means that God is **unable** to save some . . . AND
2. That God takes pleasure in damning this group of people, which means that God **doesn't want** to save some, which to me sounded like renouncing *“God IS Salvation”*—or at least renouncing it some. It sounded like renouncing His name—Jesus.

I remember sitting in my office thinking about my staff, some people that wanted control, my associate Gary who was losing his mind, the politics at the denominational headquarters and in the church, and this pending trial. I had thought that I was invincible.

I thought of all these factors coming together and I distinctly remember picturing this

scene from the movie: *The Perfect Storm*.
It was the perfect storm. It was a miracle storm.

[A man and woman are sitting at a desk looking at a computer screen observing weather patterns and discussing them.]

Meteorologist: (pointing to images of weather patterns on a screen) *“What if Hurricane Grace runs smack into it? Add to the scenario this baby off of Sable Island scrounging for energy; she’ll start feeding off of the Canadian cold front and Hurricane Grace. You could be a meteorologist all your life and never see something like this. It would a disaster or epic proportions; it would be the perfect storm.”*

It may have included all sorts of evil, but it was clear to me that God was in charge. I was publicly tried, defrocked, and removed from my denomination and my church. It felt worse than death—for you can die with dignity, but it felt like something was intent on stripping away all my dignity or what I thought was my dignity, that is everything that I had worked for.

If “Just Peter” had a cement pipe, I think that was it. And my cement pipe may have also been your cement pipe, for it wasn’t only my church, it may have also been yours.

Within a few weeks, some of you met with me, Frances, and Susan.
You asked: “Can we worship together in downtown Denver?”

And so, ten years ago today (last night), December 9th, 2007 we held our first worship service as the Sanctuary Downtown. At the time, a friend gave me a prophetic word.

DO NOT trust every person that says God gave them a word—many take the name of God in vain, for their own purposes, but I had come to trust prophetic words from this person; he had also prophesied the storm.

He came to me and said, “Peter, Revelation 3:7-10 is for you.”
That’s what we just read, and as you know it’s also for the church.
It’s addressed to the angel in the church in Philadelphia, and maybe here.

“Look. I have placed before you an open door.”

There is no period at the end of that Greek phrase, and it’s followed by the word *hoti*, normally translated *that, for, or because*.

The ESV translation is really weak and that must be due to the fact that what Jesus says is so counter intuitive. We think that open doors have been opened by “power, strength, or maybe dynamite—*dynamis*. That’s the Greek word translated power in verse 7. Jesus literally says, *“Look, I have placed before you an open door **because** you have little dynamis (power), and have kept my word, and have not denied my name.”*

In case you forgot, His name is Jesus, which means *God is Salvation*.

Now frankly this is still a bit embarrassing and nerve wracking for me to talk about, but I think I'm supposed to do so. I didn't map out the preaching schedule with this verse planned for December 9th and 10th.

And for ten years the "*little power*" has felt miraculous—my every effort to make a big splash or set off some dynamite has fizzled. And yet, every time I plan to quit, I see an open door . . . that I didn't open . . .

"I place before you an open door, because you have little power, have kept my word, and not denied my name."

So what's that Open Door?

It might be worth asking that question as a church, as well as individuals . . . even if, or especially if, you feel like "Just Eric."

So what's the open door? Maybe it's . . .

The Open Door to your heart,

In the next section, to the angel of the church in Laodicea, Jesus says, "*Look. I stand at the door and knock, if any one opens the door I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.*"

It appears that they're not opening the door in Laodicea because they have a really nice cement pipe. They say, "*I am rich. I have prospered and I need nothing.*" "*I don't need any help...*"

Maybe power itself can be a closed door and seizing it the very act of denying His Name.

The Name, "God is Salvation," "*Yahweh Yasha*," "*Yehoshua*" in Hebrew, means that *Yahweh* is our helper. In Scripture, Salvation means far more than getting your ticket punched for heaven—it means "help." In the beginning Adam couldn't find his helper . . . and now we discover *God is Help: Yahweh Yoshua*.

Yahweh is "isness," the Ground of all being, the Creator.

A creature cannot create itself or it hasn't been created.

To be a creature is to be created.

And to truly know your Creator is to observe your own creation.

To be created is something that you cannot do, by definition.

To be saved is to observe your own creation, and thus know your Creator.

Scripture reveals that the chief end of humanity is to know “God is Salvation,” But you can’t truly know “God is salvation” until you know your own need for Salvation.

In other words, to be truly known by you, God must create you, and then let you experience a story of salvation. He must subject you to futility, disobedience, nothingness, evil and the void and then save you with His Word, which created you in the first place. His name is Jesus. It means *God is Salvation*. The thing that keeps you from knowing *God is Salvation* is believing the lie that *You are Salvation*.

So, Israel wondered in the desert forty years until the first generation died and their arrogance died and then a man named Joshua lead them into the Promised Land. Joshua is the Hebrew form of the name Jesus.

Still Israel would not keep God’s *word of patient endurance*, and so trusted in Egypt, Syria, the kings of the earth and their own strength. They trusted in idols so God sent a prophet named Hosea, which means salvation.

Through Hosea God said, “I will take you to the valley of trouble—the valley of storms—and there in the wilderness, I will make for you a door of hope.”

You can’t know *God is Salvation* until you realize you *need* salvation. And you will know that you know *God is Salvation* when you desire *God is Salvation* for all. “*We love because he first loved us,*” writes John.

So anyway, perhaps the door is open because God has brought storms on the outside, and placed His Spirit on the inside, and created a desire in Philadelphia and us to open our hearts to *God is Salvation* who stands there knocking.

If you have little power like Just Eric, it means God loves you and He *is* loving you. If you have little power—and one day we will all have little power—it’s because God loves you very much.

And if you believe *God is Salvation* the door in your heart becomes a door to other hearts. You love because He first loved you.

The Open Door to your heart, to your neighbor’s heart,

In several places, Saint Paul talks about a door being opened for the effective preaching of the Gospel.

As I was being tried, defrocked, and removed from the second largest church in our denomination, the pastor of the largest church in our denomination took me aside and

said, “Peter, why are you saying these things—that ‘God has consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all’—are you trying to increase attendance?” For a pastor, increased attendance is power. You see, we often preach the Word, and even twist the Word, for power.

He asked, “Are you preaching this to increase attendance?” It was then that I realized that Gospel spoken from a naked man hanging on a cross sounds different than gospel spoken from a BMW, gold throne, or institution...

Just a little before that conversation, a man I didn’t know came up to me after worship in our new multi-million dollar facility and he said, “As you were Preaching, I heard the Lord say, ‘He will have to stop driving this sports car.’” I said, “Thanks . . . I guess.” And hoped he was a false prophet.

Don’t get me wrong: there’s nothing wrong with buildings, and it was a great building. You can build very large and powerful buildings and institutions with words preached from golden thrones and BMWs, but it takes something more to change a heart. With just a few words spoken from a cross, you can shatter a hard heart and make it new, and then that cross isn’t a curse, but a doorway to infinite blessing.

Take a look at the life story of everyone that God uses in Scripture. It’s just like Soren Kierkegaard wrote, "God creates everything out of nothing—and everything which God is to use he first reduces to nothing."

You’ve read your Bible haven’t you?

Joseph, Moses, all the Prophets, King David . . . Remember he was the least likely candidate—a shepherd boy . . . And then even as the chosen king, he was tormented by Saul, failed with Bathsheba, was betrayed by Absalom (his son) and yet a man after God’s own heart.

The keys of David, refer to a steward unlocking the Palace of David in Jerusalem. And I think they refer to David’s ability to unlock hearts:

David wrote most of the Psalms...

He unlocked hearts, perhaps even God’s heart.

He was called *“the man after God’s own heart.”*

But just look at everyone God uses to set captives free . . .

Joseph, Moses, David, all the Prophets, Peter, Paul, John the Beloved . . .

And Jesus.

Jesus had all power to calm storms, walk on water, heal the sick, create the universe, etc. And He emptied Himself, took the form of a slave, and humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross. And in that place of utter weakness, hated and reviled by all humanity, and even feeling forsaken by God, reduced to “just Jesus”—just “God is Salvation” He cried out, *“Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”*

And God the Father heard His prayer. *“Father forgive them...”*

And who is “them”?

“Them” is me,

And “them” is you.

“Them” is all who sinned against Him.

And God exalted Jesus above every name that is named.

He was enthroned on that cross and rules over all creation.

But He rules it in the very same way that He saves it.

“Look, there is a slaughtered lamb standing on the golden throne of God.”

There is no power greater than the power to surrender power for another.

That power is Love. And God is Love, and that Love is Free. *God is Salvation.*

Sociologists and psychologists point out that in human relationships—like a marriage—
as power increases love decreases. And as love increases power decreases. They

define power as the ability to force your will upon another,
while love is the willingness to sacrifice your will for another.

Power can force changes in behavior, but cannot change a heart.

Only Love can change a heart and create a new will.

On the Cross Jesus creates a new will—His will—in you.

It turns out that there is no power greater than Love.

God is Love. And Love is revealed in weakness.

[Image of a two young men—one of them in a wheelchair—laughing and enjoying each other's
company]

Ron Heagy is an old friend confined to a wheelchair, who used to come speak at our
church. He broke his neck as a teenager, but now he speaks to schools around the
world about attitude and courage.

The moment that changed Ron's life came late one night in his hospital room where he
was left alone with an eight-year-old boy, whom the doctors thought might be brain
dead.

Ron had been a football star and so told us how he resented being in that room alone
with Jimmy the eight-year-old vegetable. That night, Ron lost all hope; the dam broke,
into the darkness he sobbed, “God... please let me die. I can't take care of myself. I
can't dig a ditch or hug my girl... I can't do anything. Please just let me die.”

Then in the darkness he heard a voice... “R-o-n . . . R-o-n . . . I love you.”

It was Jimmy.

It was the only time Ron ever heard him speak, and it changed his life.

Even as I told you about Eric, a door may have opened in your heart. For a moment you stopped thinking about yourself and you thought about Eric—*just* Eric.

This is the Judgment according to Jesus,
“Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers you do to me...”

See? I think Jesus calls to you from the powerless and the weak.

And when you are weak but speak Forgiveness, Grace and Mercy to those that have mistreated you, a Word rides out on your tongue more powerful than all the kings of this earth and the ancient dragon that rules them.

It's the Word that cuts to the division of soul and spirit and sets captives free: *“I place before you an open door, because you have little power, have kept my word and not denied my name.”*

The Open Door
to your heart,
to your neighbor's heart,
to God the Father's heart,

It's a door to your heart, your neighbor's heart, and maybe even the heart of God.

Next chapter, verse 1, John writes, *“After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven!”* (Rev. 4:1) Jesus then calls to John saying, “Take a look.”

John sees the throne of the Lord God Almighty and a slaughtered lamb standing on the throne. Jesus is the Lamb of God from “the bosom of the father.” He is the heart of God and He bleeds for you.

My old associate Gary Reddish once told me about a father that had been in his congregation in Wayne Pennsylvania . . . not far from Philadelphia and New York City.

One day in late October of 1991, he took his six-year-old daughter Mary sailing off the Jersey shore. He hadn't checked the weather report. Six miles out, John was shocked at how fast the winds changed, and how quickly a storm came up. It was the storm of the century, the perfect storm—the one in the movie, the one that sank the Andrea Gail.

Soon John's boat capsized. John and Mary were in the water and the life preservers were still tied to the boat as the boat was being driven out to sea.

John held on to Mary but soon realized there was no way he could swim the six miles

back to shore, unless he swam alone. Finally he said to Mary, *“Mary, you can float on your back as long as you want.”* They had practiced in the pool back at home. *“Float on your back, Mary. I’ll swim to shore, and I will be back for you.”*

Three hours later the Coast Guard found John. Together they looked for Mary, in twenty-to-thirty-foot swells in the midst of that storm . . . for an hour and a half. It was almost dark, and they were using the spotlight when miraculously they found Mary. She had been floating for five hours.

When the guardsmen pulled her on board they asked, *“Mary, how did you do that?”* She said, *“Well, my daddy said I could float on my back as long as I wanted to, and that he would come back for me. My daddy always does what he says.”*

Your Daddy is God.

His Word is Salvation—Jesus.

And His Word always accomplishes that for which it was sent. . . or He was sent.

The Andrea Gail, a private fishing vessel full of strong men, was lost at sea and sank during the “Perfect Storm.” Coast guard helicopters and rescue vessels couldn’t weather that storm. And six-year-old Mary just practiced her back float because her Daddy said she could float as long as she wanted to, and he was coming back.

You see, her father created faith in Mary with his word, and that faith kept Mary through the storm of the century and all the way home. She conquered the “Perfect Storm” with faith.

You think you have little power. (I think most of you think that.) That’s probably a good thing. You think you have little power; you’re just treading water, but you exercise a little faith (maybe it’s just the size of a little seed).

I suspect you’re doing the back float through the storm of the century and soon your Father will come for you and carry you home. (The angels look on with wonder.)

Jesus slept on the boat in the storm. Faith in you is His Spirit rising in you, and giving you peace in the midst of the storm.

But this is my point: Just think of John’s heart. Mary held the key to his heart.

I’m a father. And I can think of nothing, which would move my heart more, than the knowledge that *Just Jonathan, Just Elizabeth, Just Rebekah* or *Just Coleman*—at six-years-old—would float alone on the surface of the abyss, in a storm, reminding themselves, *“Daddy said He would come back for me. And my Daddy always does what he says.”*

If I could, I would move heaven and hell; I would move all creation. I think I would lay down my life if necessary, just to get to my kid. Nothing would have as much power over my heart . . . or power over their heart. I mean . . . if I saved them, it would

be a story we would tell our entire lives... It would be a story that would create them in my own image.

Now you may say, "Well that's touching Peter, but *what about* Eric, 'Just Eric?' He had faith that his father would come and his father didn't come . . ." Well, no, but Sister Mary Rose McGeady came and loved Eric, and Eric left his cement pipe, went home with her, and she told him about his Father in Heaven.

Actually, his Father in Heaven was in Sister Mary Rose McGeady, so that she could share His joy as he found Eric and saved him through her. And now you may say,

Well that's touching too, but *what about* the Marys that do drown in the sea, and the Erics that freeze to death in their cement pipes or the Erics that go on to construct shelters for their soul out of theft, murder, rape, or genocide?

What about "Just Adolph," or "Just Caiaphas," or "Just Judas," or "Just Saul from Tarsus?" Does God the Father see them buried in their fear shame and rage?

What about the 100 billion that never heard the name of Jesus, *God is Salvation?*

Well, as I was saying, in Revelation 4:1, John sees an open door in heaven and Jesus shows him the throne of God and on the throne, someone that John knows: The Slaughtered Lamb.

All creation, every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and in the sea, and all that is within them worship God almighty and God the Slaughtered Lamb...

"Every creature:" that means Jimmy is there with a new body. Ron is there without his wheelchair; Eric and Sister McGeady are there. Mary is there, doing her backstroke. You are there. I am there.

Everybody from the Presbytery and Lookout Mountain Community Church is there. Judas is there, and *even Hitler* is there—minus his fear shame and rage.

We're all there, praising the Lamb on the throne, for *He* has ransomed us for God.

The Open Door
to your heart,
to your neighbor's heart,
to God the Father's heart,

to all creation.

If we look through that Open Door,
I think it will Open . . .
A door in us
A door to others
A door to God
A door to all creation.

I think it's all the same Door. Jesus is the Door.

Because He has conquered, He is able to unwrap the Scroll of Creation, and give meaning to all reality. He is the meaning of God—God is Salvation.

As He unwraps the Scroll, breaking the seals, releasing the horsemen, sounding the trumpets and the thunders, and calling on the seven angels to pour out the bowls of wrath . . . As the dragon rages, the beasts deceive and the harlot seduces . . . As History happens, something rises through the door and before the throne.

Chapter 8, verse 4: It's the prayers of the Saints, mixed with incense from the altar on which the Lamb is sacrificed. It's prayers. Not crusades, government legislation, big budgets or even mission programs.

It's prayers.

Prayers rising from prison cells, and lonely apartments.
Prayers rising from hospital rooms, and old rugged crosses.
Prayers rising from children just like Mary, floating on the abyss in the midst of the storm muttering, *"He said He'd come back and He does what he says."*
Prayers from cement pipes and tired old nuns in New York City and Calcutta.
Prayers from people who appear to have no power, but people who Patiently endure—refusing to call on their idols for salvation, but insisting that *God is Salvation*.

It turns out that prayers, from Philadelphia, control the world, for there is an Open Door between Philadelphia and the throne of God—His name is Jesus.

"All things work together for good with those who love God and are called according to his purpose," says Scripture. So what's His purpose.

Salvation.

It's His Word.
It's Jesus.

And I think we've been called according to His Purpose...

Ultimately, all that He has created is called according to His Purpose...
It's even those hiding in giant cement pipes that don't love His Purpose,
but hate His Purpose...

God will shatter their pride and save them from themselves, even as He has saved us from ourselves. But as for us and as for now, I do suspect that God has placed before us—and I mean this collectively as a particular church, like one of the seven churches—an open door, that no one can shut, **because** we have little power, have kept His word, and not denied His name: *God is Salvation*.

If that is in fact the case, we mustn't get impatient and resort to human power in order to open doors—claiming that God might *not* be salvation if we don't first believe He is salvation.

If that is in fact the case, we mustn't concern ourselves with human power, with earthly politics and budgets and big programs. We can participate in those things and use those things, but never rely on those things.

If it is in fact the case that God has placed before us an open door, we must worship Jesus. We must look to the throne and worship Jesus, and worship Jesus, and worship Jesus; and then trust that He'll show us the door, open the door and walk us through the door . . . because He *is* the Door.

The Open Door
to your heart,
to your neighbor's heart,
to God the Father's heart,
to all creation,
and to our particular calling
Is Jesus (“God is Salvation”)

He is the door to your heart, your neighbor's heart, the Father's heart, all creation, and our particular calling. The Door is Jesus: “*God is Salvation*.”
That's not a map; that's The Way.

At the end of the Revelation John sees the New Jerusalem coming down as a Bride adorned for her husband. Her gates (her doors) are never shut by day, and in the city there is no night.

Revelation 13:8, 10-13

“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut because you have little power, and you have kept my word and have not denied my name...Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who

dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ”

I bet Jesus’ new name is Eric, and Mary, and Mary Rose, and Jimmy, and Ron, and Peter, and You, and also Jerusalem, for we are His Body.

Verse 13: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Communion

So Jesus took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you. Take and eat.” And 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.”

“Behold, I set before you an open door.”

“Let him who has ears to hear, hear what the spirit says to the churches.”

Benediction

There is joy for the entire *world!* Because look who rules it! [Peter turns and looks to the cross.] Look who’s on the golden throne! It’s the slaughtered Lamb. You are experiencing the storm of the century. It feels like hell down here sometimes. But He said He’d be back, and He always does what He says. And you can float as long as you want to in Jesus’ name.

I was thinking of one more thing my friend said to me. And I think I was afraid to share this publicly for ten years. But He said, “Peter, God really wants this. But it will get smaller before it gets bigger. Right now, this is to be about worship. That’s all. Just worship. I’ve asked what is worship, and I’ve realized worship is looking at the throne. [Peter points to the cross.] And it’s saying to God, “Wow! You are so good.” You can do that everyday in everything you do: in your work, your prayers, singing, your business can be worship; every breath we take can be worship.

I think Jesus is just saying, “Come worship me. And when I want to, I can provide an open door, and you can walk through it because I’m good. And I will come for you. I will come back. I always do what I say.” Believe the Gospel. Have courage. In Jesus’ name, 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.

10

Laodicea: Pleasant as Hell

Laodicea: Pleasant as Hell

Revelation 3:14-22

December 17, 2017

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

Peter Hiett

Prayer

Lord God, we ask that you would help us to hear your Word. Thank you that your Word is so much more than print on a page; it's our Lord Jesus. We ask that you would help us to see you, and we thank you that you sent your Spirit so that we would. Lord God, we are asking that you would help us to preach.

Short Clip of Family Guy “Naming of Jesus”

[A cartoon Joseph and Mary huddle closely together in a barn]

Joseph: *All right here we are. This seems pretty gross.*

Mary: *I can't believe my baby's gonna be the Son of God. What should we name Him?*

Joseph: *Well this is kinda like a barn. We could call him Bernie?*

Mary: *Maybe. I kinda always liked the name Tristan.*

Joseph: *Do you want him to get the crap beat out of him? They will crucify him with a name like that!*

[Joseph and Mary are approached by a cartoon angel who looks a bit like Jesus]

Angel: *No. No. No. What are you doin'?*

Joseph: *How long have you been there?*

Angel: *Those names is no good.*

Look. Why don't ya'll just give me a list. I'll run them up to God and see if he picks one.

[The angel is talking to God in His throneroom]

God: *Nope. Nope. That's the name of champagne. No. No. Terrible. These are all just terrible.*

Angel: *Relax God. You want me to get y'all some wine and cheeses?*

God: *Wait! What'd ya just say?*

Angel: *Cheeses. Ya want me to get y'all some wine and cheeses?*

Message

It's really strange, but people in our culture often don't know what the name Jesus means. In Matt. 1:21 The Angel said to Joseph, “*Mary will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus [not cheeses but Jesus] for he will save his people from their sins.*” It's what we preached on last time: the name Jesus means “God is Salvation.”

In Philadelphia, they had little power but they had not denied His name and so God had placed before them an Open Door—a door to their own hearts, their neighbor's hearts, God's heart and indeed, all of creation.

In Philadelphia, they had little power and an Open Door.

In Laodicea, they have plenty of power and a closed door . . .

Because they don't want to open it.

Revelation 3:20 *Behold (Idou: "Look!" imperative tense... because they must not be looking) "Look, I stand at the door and knock..."* (Literally: "I have stood here and I am knocking"). *"If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."*

"Look, I am standing at the door knocking, Laodicea . . . if you open I'll come in." Isn't that interesting? He wants *them* to open the door.

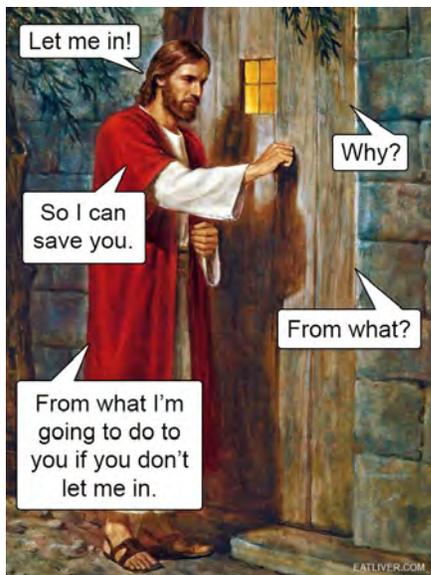
Why don't they open the door?

They must not want to open the door? Perhaps they're afraid to open the door. . . Perhaps they think He's a "thief in the night." Thieves come to take what doesn't belong to them... He may *come* like a thief, but He's *not* a thief. Everything belongs to Him.

I remember seeing the movie *A Thief in the Night* in youth group. It was like the *Left Behind* movies, kind of designed to scare kids into accepting Jesus by the end of youth group, before Jesus comes back. . . The idea was that you needed to *accept* Jesus in order to be saved *from* Jesus.

I remember thinking, "*Gosh, I used to like Jesus, and even trust Jesus . . . before I accepted Jesus, to save myself . . . from Jesus.*"

In Laodicea, maybe they're afraid of Jesus? Take a look at this:



Jesus is knocking and He says, "*Let me in!*"

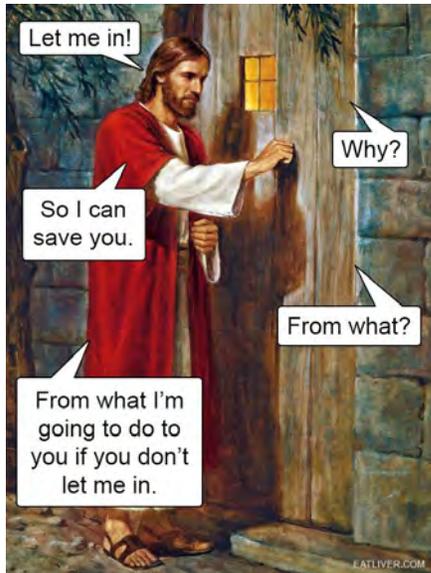
"*Why?*"

Listen closely to what Paul writes in Romans 13: “The time has come for you to wake from sleep. For Salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed.”

The moment we first believed is the moment we first realized that Salvation is coming for us.

But we all got our ticket punched on a cross, where the Lamb is slaughtered from the foundation of the world.

Salvation happened at the cross, and now it’s coming for us.



So, what’s wrong with this picture?
Or I should say, the way we understand this picture?

Well, what’s Jesus going to do to them, if they don’t let Him in?

Well, we assume that He’s going to cast them into Hell? That’s a hard question because the Bible never uses any words that are equivalent to what most American folks think of as Hell.

The Word most often translated “Hell” in the King James Bible is the Hebrew word *sheol*, which is translated into the Greek word *hades*, which is the realm of the dead who are cut off from Life . . . and Jesus is *the Life*.

In Scripture, Hades begins here on the surface of the earth and continues after your body dies *IF* you haven’t opened the door.

So in this picture,
Where is Hades, or what most people think of as Hell?

- Well, where is The Life (There's only one, "The Life" and that's Jesus)...
- Where is The Way... and where is the land of the lost?
- Where is The Truth... and where is the prison of lies?
- *Where is The Life*... and where is the realm of the dead?
- Where is Salvation... and where is the Not Salvation?
- Where is The Kingdom of Heaven... and where is that other place?

If Jesus is on the outside of the door, and they're on the inside of the door, how could He be threatening them with Hell? They're already in Hell . . . And they won't open the door.

Why won't they open the door?

The guy says, "*Look I stand at the door . . .*"

If you see someone standing at the door and don't open the door isn't it because you don't trust the person at the door?

The guy says that he's the mailman, but you suspect that he's a thief in the night. He says that he's salvation, but you suspect he's just the opposite of salvation.

You know they called Him "Savior" in Laodicea, but they weren't opening the door.

-Maybe they said, "God is Salvation," but they were afraid that He was just the opposite of Salvation.

-Maybe they confessed God is good, but they suspected that He's also *not* good.

-Maybe they didn't trust Him.

We would like to think that opening the door is something that we could simply decide to do, like going through a ritual, obeying some law, or saying a little prayer at the back of a pamphlet, but opening the door is trust. And trust is Faith.

Faith is so much more than answering a question in the back of a pamphlet or some tract.

Faith cannot be reduced to steps or laws or programs. . . and so the Gospel is communicated in pictures and stories, and incarnated in human flesh.

Faith is what you believe in the depths of your being about the man on the other side of the door.

Faith is trusting God's integrity—that God is one, and God is good, and God is Salvation.

Faith is wanting to open the door because you trust the man on the other side.

You cannot be "saved" without faith in and *through* Jesus—"God is Salvation".

Opening the door is Faith.

Maybe they're afraid to open the door?

Several years ago, *Time* magazine had a cover story on fear (April 2, 2001).

In big bold letters the title page announced the biblical injunction "**Fear Not.**"

And then, underneath: "*How science is offering new hope for treating all our fears.*"

In the margins, it listed all these fears:

- Alektrophobia, for instance—that's fear of chickens.
- Homilophobia is fear of homilies—that is sermons.

Scientists have therapies to help you believe that chickens don't need to be feared. And they have powerful medications to help you not stress over sermons.

But then the article listed fears like these:

- Zeusphobia—which is fear of God.
- Staurophobia—which is fear of Jesus on the cross.
- And Thanatophobia—which is fear of death.

See? I don't think science can take away those fears.

Science can just help you hide from those fears—so you don't hear the knocking.

Medication can numb you to those fears . . .

Just like a couple pints of beer can numb you to those fears . . .

It can make you comfortably numb.

Our whole culture can make you comfortably numb.

Maybe it's all designed to make you comfortably numb . . . and addicted.

Numb: neither hot nor cold . . . just pleasant.

In Laodicea, they won't open the door because in Laodicea things are pleasant as Hell.

Well, what might Jesus do if they don't open the door?

Some say that He will stop being Jesus—that He will no longer be "*God is Salvation*" and He'll suddenly become "*God is **NOT** salvation.*" But this threat, that Jesus may no longer be Jesus, doesn't engender faith in Jesus, but rather it engenders a lot of public talk about Jesus—while people secretly mistrust Jesus. They honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him.

And, it doesn't make sense; think about this picture. How could Jesus cast folks into Hell, if they're already there? I mean He can't cast you into *Hades*, if you've already locked yourself in *Hades*. But what could He do?

1. I suppose He could walk away for a time and leave you there for a time...
But not for time without end, for *Hades* comes to an end in Rev. 21.
2. And that's the second thing He could do; He could destroy *Hades*...
He could kick the door down . . . or maybe burn it down . . .
 - God is a consuming Fire. Jesus is that Fire. He is Love that burns away evil.
 - He could burn the door down. I think that's what happens in *Gehenna*.
 - And that would be terrifying, but profoundly good...

3. But wouldn't it be *best* if He could descend into *Hades* somehow?
- I mean wouldn't it be best if He could sneak behind the door and convince you somehow saying, "I am salvation, you're already trapped by Hell, so let's open the door... *If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me.*"

That would be Salvation

That would be Heaven.

Revelation 3:14-16

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, [that's like saying the word of Reality or the real thing] the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.'"

Yikes... No wonder they don't open the door.

It's frightening to think that He'd vomit us from His mouth. . .

But even more frightening is this question: "Why did He swallow us in the first place? *"Is he fixin' to eat us; does He plan to drink us?"*

'...because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you from my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.'"

Poor... Blind... and Naked?

Poor? But Laodicea was a center of commercial prosperity!

Blind? They manufactured a world famous eye salve!

Naked? They were known for their beautiful black woolen textiles!

They were so prosperous in Laodicea that when a devastating earthquake hit in 60 A.D.; they refused to accept financial assistance from the Empire saying, "We have prospered and we need nothing."

The only thing anyone could really complain about in Laodicea was the water. -

Nearby Colossae was known for cold, pure drinking water.

Hieropolos six miles to the north was known for hot, therapeutic mineral springs.

Because Laodicea had no water supply of its own, an aqueduct was built from Hieropolos to Laodicea. But by the time the water got to Laodicea, it had become lukewarm and distasteful.

Neither hot, (*zestos*) in Greek... or cold, (*psuchros*)

Zestos was a figurative word like "zesty" or "zealous." Like, "I'm so hot for you."¹

Psuchros was also a figurative word . . . Like, "I'm so cold toward you, I hate you."

¹ It means fervent, (as in Romans 11:11), fervent, passionate, excited.

Chliaros (Lukewarm) is in the middle, and yet, it's the opposite of both.

In Scripture, the opposite of Love really isn't hate—in fact, in the Old Testament God is said to hate, which means Love hates. And God is Love. You can only hate things that you care about. Hate is *not* the opposite of Love. The opposite of Love is apathy... a numbness of spirit. Apathy is just not caring about anyone on the other side of your own door.

It's the thing I fear most in my marriage . . .

Marriage is hard, and when we were first married and things got hard my wife had this way of just shutting down. We'd fight and I'd knock on her door. I'd say, "Are you OK?" And she'd say, "I'm fine," which meant, "Stop knocking on my door." I'd knock harder . . . And she'd just be pleasant, neither hot or cold, just pleasant.

One day, I just kept knocking; I mean I was really a jerk about it, until finally she spun around and screamed "You _____!" She said a word; she won't let me say in church. She had never said this before, but I knew she had felt that for some time and probably been saying secretly in her mind. She screamed "You f_____!" and then that word.

She looked at me... and I looked at her... It was silent for a few moments and then I started laughing. I said, "Wow, I know how you feel . . . Thank you!" Then she started laughing . . . she opened the door. Cold became hot as we began to communicate in truth. We both surrendered our shame and then we feasted . . . on each other; it was a great banquet.

Well, Laodicea is neither cold nor hot. They say they need nothing. They're "fine."

In Laodicea they say, "*We're rich we've prospered and need nothing, **not knowing** that they're wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.*"

"Not knowing . . ." They must be comfortably numb . . .

It's pleasant as hell in Laodicea.

You know, if Salvation were knocking at your door and I were truly evil, and didn't want you to answer the door . . . I'd try to convince you that you were already saved and you didn't need any more saving.

Opening the door is surrendering control . . . and that is a bit frightening. But if you thought you could purchase a little salvation from me, I could keep you in bondage to me, thinking you were in control, when in fact I was in control . . . of you . . . in hell, actually, addicted to hell.

If the King of Heaven were knocking at your door, and I was evil, I'd try to convince you that Heaven was Hell, and Hell was Heaven.

If the Prince of Peace were knocking at your door, and I wanted to keep you from opening the door, I'd sell you some peace, right here, on this side of the door...

Pepsi Commercial:

Kendall Jenner strips off her makeup and fancy clothes and walks as a commoner into a diverse crowd of protestors. The crowd stands on one side of a street. Police officers stand guard on the other. KJ grabs a Pepsi and turns and smiles at a young man in the crowd. The crowd cheers her on as they see her holding a Pepsi and moving towards a police officer. She hands the police officer the Pepsi. He opens it and takes a sip; the protesters burst into an exuberant, joyful roar as the police officer drinks the Pepsi. He turns to an officer next to him, smiles—his expression an invitation to something better he’s found.

Maybe you remember that commercial. Pepsi pulled it after only a few days.

People were offended at the idea that Kendall Jenner and Pepsi could bring, “*Peace on earth*” and “*good will to men*,” because . . .

People think it takes political power and religious leaders to make peace

People think it’s the *Kings of the Earth* who make peace.

Isn’t Donald Trump or Benjamin Netanyahu the Prince of Peace... not Pepsi?

So, people were offended...

And yet almost every commercial in our society is just the same.

Think about it:

What can you say about soda pop, except, “It tastes good and may kill you.”

That’s no way to sell soda pop...

And so companies attach their bubbly sugar water to your deepest hopes . . .

And then, they try to sell them back to you in a can...

And it works! Commercials obviously work...

For you to buy Peace, Love, Life and Freedom in a can.

Companies do it because they want your money. But maybe *something else* inspires the companies and the kings of the earth to do it—to convince you – “*You don’t need salvation, for we are salvation.*”

- What’s the real thing? *Coke*.
- What’s freedom? *7-11*
- What’s infinite justice and enduring freedom? *The US Military*.
- What’s peace? *That thing they talk about on CNN and Fox News . . . and the stuff they sell during the commercials, in the can.*

“And what’s that knocking?” we ask. [Peter knocks out the rhythm of a heartbeat.]

It almost sounds like a heartbeat . . . bum-bum, bum-bum.

What’s that knocking? I’m getting a little concerned about eternity . . .

Eternity? Why are you worried about eternity? Want some eternity?
Well, Here's some eternity:

Eternity commercial:

[Sensual images of a man and woman caressing on a beach are shown while a female narrates.]

Female narration: I was searching and I found you. (Sounds of a beating heart play in the Background.) And I will love you, forever, and ever, and ever. Eternity. Calvin Klein. Fragrances for men and women.

Well . . . that does a few things all at once:

#1. It tells me that eternity is here on this side of the door—down at the mall. And . . .

#2. I can purchase eternity for about \$19.95. I like that—

Because then, I can easily gain control of eternity. And . . .

#3. Although I like the idea of buying eternity for \$19.95, I soon begin to think:

“You know... eternity isn't all it's cracked up to be.”

And I begin to go numb.

If Salvation were knocking at your door, and I were evil, I think I'd try to convince you that Heaven was Hell, Hell was Heaven...

And you could buy heaven

For \$19.95, or maybe . . .

A prayer in the back of a pamphlet, or maybe . . .

A life-time of good deeds done in fear—a repressed and vague fear, that you mistook for faith.

In the next paragraph in the Revelation, a door opens in the heavens, John sees Jesus on the throne unwrapping the meaning of space and time.

In chapter 12 we witness Christmas and Easter. And then we meet the serpent—the dragon. He makes war on the little brothers and sisters of Jesus, using a Beast from the sea, a Beast from the land, and a Great Harlot.

The Beast from the sea is like political power—politicians invariably promise salvation.

The Beast from the land (land usually represents Israel) is like religious power—religion (and I mean by that the institutions and good deeds of men) also promises you salvation.

The Harlot is an economy of consumption—she rides the Beast and seduces the nations—She'll make you think Heaven is Hell and Hell is Heaven.

In Chapter 18, she is judged and a voice cries from heaven, *“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! ...For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her porneia* (That's buying

and selling Love as if Love were a commodity), *and the kings of the earth have committed porne with her...*"

Verse 4 is most terrifying, Jesus cries, "*Come out of her my people.*"

You see the church has participated in her seductions.

-We turn salvation into a commodity that we control.

-We make salvation something small and say, "*Smile! Isn't it great to be saved?*"

-We make salvation small and cheap—something you could purchase with Sunday School attendance, a new members class, or a prayer at the back of a pamphlet.

-We make salvation small, and then argue over who has it, who doesn't have it, and who has the right to sell it, and for how much and to whom.

Salvation is *absolutely* free and that is why it's *SO* expensive. It will cost you the illusion that you could pay for it—your pride, your ego, your arrogance, your soul, your privacy and your autonomy—that thing that you refer to as "*your self.*"

Soren Kierkegaard wrote:

The greatest danger to Christianity is, I contend, not heresies, heterodoxies, not atheists, not profane secularism – no, but the kind of orthodoxy, which is cordial drivel, mediocrity served up sweet... Christianity does not oppose debauchery and uncontrollable passions and the like as much as it opposes this flat mediocrity, this nauseating atmosphere, this honey, civil togetherness, where admittedly great crimes, wild excesses, and powerful aberrations cannot easily occur – but where God's unconditional demand has even greater difficulty in accomplishing what it requires: the majestic obedience of submission. . . . Either all of God and all of you, or nothing at all!

Wilbur Reese puts it this way:

I would like to buy three dollars worth of God please. Three dollars. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, just enough to equal about a cup of warm milk or a nap in the sunshine... I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy about three dollars worth of God please."

In chapter 18, verse 4 Jesus cries, "*Come out of her my people.*"

Then in verse 23 He rebukes the Harlot saying,

*"All nations, (all peoples), were deceived by your sorcery."
(your pharmakeia, your spell, your enchantment.)*

It reminds me of this great scene in the *Chronicles of Narnia*.
Maybe you remember? It's in the *The Silver Chair*.

At one point, the children and their friend Puddleglum (who is a Marshwiggle) find themselves in the dark underground kingdom of the evil witch, who is really the Great Serpent.

When the witch finds them, she doesn't assault them, as they expect; she enchants them. She appears lovely, talks sweetly, and sings melodiously.

Then Lewis writes, "They were being enchanted, and of course the more enchanted you get the more certain you feel that you are not enchanted at all."

They tell the witch of the real world—the Overworld, the sun, and Aslan the Lion. . . but by now it's just soft knocking on the walls.

The witch coos,

"Oh silly. You made up the idea of a sun from the idea of one of my lamps. You made up this idea of Aslan, the Great Lion, from one of our housecats."

So the children mumble, *"I suppose the other world must be a dream."*

"Yes, it's a dream," coos the witch. There is no Narnia, no Overworld, no sky, no sun, no Aslan. And now, to bed all. And let us begin a wiser life tomorrow. But first, to bed; to sleep; deep sleep, soft pillow, sleep without foolish dreams."

She makes things extremely pleasant, just as they were in Laodicea. So what are they to do?

Well, this is what Puddleglum, the Marshwiggle did: just as the enchantment was almost complete Lewis writes that Puddleglum did a very brave thing. In a daze, he walked to the fire and plunged his bare foot into the coals. He knew it would hurt, and it did, but immediately he knew exactly what he thought. "There is nothing like a good shock of pain for dissolving certain kinds of magic," writes Lewis.

At the smell of burnt Marshwiggle feet, the enchantment is broken for all. Their eyes are opened, and the witch becomes a serpent, as they escape to Narnia and to Aslan, the Great Lion—King of Narnia.

In Revelation 3:17-20 Jesus, the Lion of Judah says, *"You say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous (be zestos—"You're not fully clean until your zestfully clean!"). Be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock..."*

Laodicea is enchanted by the Great Harlot. And so Jesus counsels them, or I should say, He counsels the angel of them, or in them, to do three things:

#1 *"Buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich."*

Where could they find this gold refined by fire?
Maybe in Smyrna. Remember Smyrna?

In Smyrna they were wretched, pitiable, and poor, but Jesus said they were rich. It was in Smyrna that Polycarp was martyred and appeared as gold in the fiery flames. In Smyrna there were few illusions about this world, but they were rich in Faith. (1 Peter teaches that we must suffer trials for our faith is more precious than gold, which is tested by fire.) In Smyrna they were poor but rich. And Jesus promised ten days of tribulation; He said, He knew their tribulation.

See? I think Jesus is prescribing some shared tribulation . . . for Laodicea.

I don't know exactly what that means for you:
Perhaps going on the next mission trip to Mexico with Vince and Alison.
Perhaps praying for, and giving to, our sister churches in the Philippines.
Perhaps visiting someone suffering in a nursing home or hospital.
Perhaps it means doing the dishes.

Suffering is the loss of power and control.
In Philadelphia they had little power and an Open Door.
In Laodicea they have much power and they won't open the door.
Tribulation makes us aware that we all need a savior and our savior is Love.
Tribulation makes us face our fears and watch how God conquers them.
God is Love.

It's a bit baffling to me that so much of the American Church believes that we'll get raptured before great tribulation. No one even knew what "pre-tribulation rapture" meant until 150 years ago in wealthy and powerful Great Britain and America.

Ironically, some people teach that we get raptured before the great tribulation through an open door in the very next paragraph of the Revelation. But it's in the very next paragraph that Laodicea is to begin to look through the Open Door and see how we conquer through tribulation.
For Laodicea, tribulation is not the problem, but the prescription. It's discipline: "*I discipline those whom I love.*"

All the rapture talk is baffling to me and yet not baffling to me . . . when I realize that we're so very much like Laodicea. SO:

#1 "*Buy from me gold refined by fire*"... AND
#2 "*Buy from me white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen.*"

In Revelation 7:9 John sees a great multitude that no one can number... standing before the throne with palm branches in their hands. A voice says, "*These are the ones coming*

out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.”

“Buy from me white robes,” says Jesus.

Well what could we buy them with?

Only our shame; only our need . . . for a Helper.

It’s that place on the body of Eve and that place on the body of Adam that we cover in shame. It’s that place on our body that reveals our need for a Helper—a Husband. Jesus means “God is Salvation” or “God is Help.” Jesus is our Husband.

He clothes us with Himself.

He is our righteousness.

He completes us in the image of God.

I don’t know exactly what that means for you, but I suspect that Jesus is saying something like this:

“Laodicea, confess your sin... How dare you say, ‘I need nothing.’”

“Don’t you see who’s knocking?”

“I’m not a thief in the night. I’m your husband.”

So . . .

#1 Buy Gold refined by fire.

#2 White Garments to cover your shame. And . . .

#3 Salve for your eyes, so you can see... who it is that’s knocking.

“See my hands and place your finger in my side.”

“I know it’s terrifying, but see me truly, and you will surrender to Love.”

In the Temple there was a door to the inner sanctuary, which contained the Ark of the Covenant, which was the throne of God. Yet no one could see that throne but the high priest, and then, only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The door was shut. As Jesus hung on the tree and delivered up His Spirit, that veil that served as the door ripped from the top to the bottom. God got out... or maybe God got in . . . to you.

That was God’s temple and, you also, are God’s Temple.

And in your heart, there is a door... I think it’s all one door.

Revelation 3:20-22 “Behold, [Look, See,] I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”

At the start I asked, “What will He do if they don’t open the door?”

- #1. He could just stop knocking for a time...
- #2. He could kick it down... and
- #3. Maybe He could sneak inside, and convince them, to open the door.

And so He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave.
We wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and placed Him in a manger.
And He humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross.

It happened just outside the gates of Jerusalem.
He delivered up His Spirit just outside the walls of Jerusalem.
And then His Spirit descended *within* the walls of Jerusalem.
It's His Spirit that testifies to His Glory, which is His Love—His Spirit that whispers in your heart, "*Just look at how He loves you!* [Peter points to the cross.] *Open the door and let him in.*" When you do, it is the New Jerusalem coming down.

Even now, though the door may be shut, something is getting in. It's His Word, and it's His Spirit that gives you the ears to hear and eyes to see. He says, "*To him who conquers, I will grant to sit with me on my throne.*" That means you will share the same judgment, the same will: "*To him who conquers... as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.*"

How do we conquer? We conquer as Jesus conquered.
And how did Jesus conquer? He conquered by *being conquered* by Love.
He prayed, "*Father, nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done.*"
And now, through the Open Door, John sees Him standing on the throne of God.

He conquered by *being* conquered by Love. God is Love.
And what did He conquer?
Well, He conquered you.

And how will you conquer?
The same way He conquered:
By *being conquered* by Him, who is Love; God is Love.

Love is the Logic of the Trinity—the economy of Heaven.
Love is the willing sacrifice of self for another.

"If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me."

That's Salvation.

And so . . . What's for dinner?

Communion

On the night He was delivered up, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you; take and eat. And in the same manor 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 Open Door.

Now you may think, “Peter that last part was unpleasant. In fact it’s terrifying!”

Yes it is . . . at first.

He invites you to eat Him and drink Him—to ingest Him.

And I think He would like to ingest you, as long as you want Him to. Otherwise, He’ll spit you out of His mouth.

Song of Solomon 5:1 “Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk *by Love*.”²
In other words: “Present yourself a living sacrifice.” (Romans 12:1)

I’ve said it before and I should probably say it every time we have communion:

1. When one person loves in a world that refuses to love. It looks like a man hanging on a tree outside the closed gates of Jerusalem.
2. But when two people love, like when one man sacrifices himself for a woman, and that woman sacrifices herself for that man—it looks like a marriage.
...And might even feel like a Honeymoon.
3. And when all people sacrifice one for another—when they love one another, well that’s the Kingdom of God. That’s Salvation. Listen closely: God *is* Salvation, and I think that means Salvation is God. It’s not small, You can’t buy it or own it. And yet it’s knocking at your door . . .

If you would, say these words out loud after me if you agree: “Lord Jesus, please come in.” The Life is in the blood. Open the door and let Him come in.

See footnote at bottom of last page of scanned notes???

Prayer

Lord, we have invited you into our lives and our hearts. Thank you that you have taken us up on that invitation. And yet, Lord, you know that there are places, corners, dark spots. So, I pray that through your Spirit you would keep romancing us to open the door and let you in, and let you in, and let you in—until that great day when you are entirely in

² “...I see,” said Psyche in a low voice. “You think it devours the offering. I mostly think so myself. Anyway, it means death. Orual, you didn’t think I was such a child as not to know that? How can I be the ransom for all Glome unless I die? And if I am to go to the god, of course it must be through death. That way, even what is strangest in the holy sayings might be true. To be eaten and to be married to the god might not be so different.”

C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1985), p. 72.

and we are absolutely filled with the fullness of God. Thank you that you are so good God. In Jesus' name we pray.

Benediction

It's Christmas this week. This might happen: you might be sitting at home and it's just really pleasant there. You are watching TV and you kinda hear a knock. And you think, "Good God! It could be Him. I bet it's Him. It could be the Alpha and Omega. I bet it's the real thing, the Faithful One, the True One, the Beginning and the End, the King of Kings."

And you remember all your crap and your garbage, and you've got a peephole in the door. Light is shining in through the peephole. You are terrified, but I dare you to get up and look through the peephole because I think this is what you'll see: I think you'll see a

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.

baby! Who's afraid of a baby? Open the door and take Him in! That's Christmas! In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

11

Crown Casting

Crown Casting, Revelation 4

Revelation 4

January 7, 2018

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

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

Lord God, I pray that you would help us now to preach, in Jesus’ name.

Message

Sometimes people say my messages are hard to understand.

Sometimes I worry that I’m just saying the same thing over and over again . . . and I think maybe I am and I’m supposed to. What I think I’m supposed to say is summed up marvelously in a little book that I think we can all understand. I read it to you six years ago and I’d like to read it again.

It’s titled, *The Pirate Who Tried to Capture the Moon*.

[by Dennis Haseley, illustrations by Sue Truesdell]

[Some pages will be skipped, but most of it will be read.]

There was once a fierce pirate who loved nothing.

He lived alone on an island, where he strode about in armor, waving a broad sword. And he watched for ships to capture.

Through his glass, he spied the ship of flowers, with its daffodil flag and its sails of Queen Anne’s lace.

(And the pirate captured just about every ship you could think of. He captured the ship of flowers, ship of horses and ship of birds)...

But each time he’d look up in the sky and see the moon sailing as it pleased. He’d shake his sword and yell, “Some day I’ll capture you too!” (And the day finally came)...

The pirate knew it was time to capture the moon.

He climbed up his mast and waved his sword above his head, shouting, “Moon. Follow me!” Moonlight shone on his armor. But the moon drifted free.

So the pirate shot at the moon. The dark barrels of his cannons swiveled high— Boom boom boom—but the cannonballs fell straight back down and slid into the sea with hardly a splash.

And still the moon sailed across the sky...

The pirate paced back and forth in his rusty armor, back and forth, to and fro. He walked in circles, day and night, until he passed an old ship of books he had captured long ago.

He searched its broken decks and shredded sails until he found a book that told all about the moon. Then the pirate laughed.

He took that book and six horses and sailed for land. He harnessed the mares to his ship, and he ripped across the earth—he ripped over fields and streams, leaving a scar. Slowly, the pirate who loved nothing moved over the land in his ship, looking for everything the moon loved.

The moon loves to shine through curtains, said the book. It loves to float in pools of water. It likes to peek over small hills. The moon loves poetry.

The pirate slashed curtains from farmhouses and drapes from mansions.

He cut curtains from stages and he loaded them all onto his ship.

Into barrels he scooped frog ponds and reflecting pools and swimming holes.

He chopped at small hills with his sword and shoveled them into his hold.

He captured poets and everything else he knew the moon loved.

He swiped candles from the tables of Italian restaurants.

He grabbed sadly playing violins from under the chins of gypsies.

He kidnaped lovers as they gazed at each other softly, walking hand in hand. He netted baying wolves, and children who danced all by themselves in the middle of the night.

And the pirate sailed that bursting ship back to his island. And he waited. Clouds moved across the sky. The wind blew the empty sea.

And finally the moon rose.

We'll stop there for now . . .

I hope you realize the pirate was a lunatic.

Lunatic: derived from the latin *luna*, which means moon.

He was moonstruck—driven crazy by the glory of the moon.

Psalm 89:36-37 refers to the throne of the seed of David as the moon and it refers to the moon as the “faithful witness.”

The moon faithfully reflects the light of the sun upon the dark side of the earth.

In Revelation 1:5 Jesus is called “the faithful witness.”

Then John sees Him shining like the sun . . . and falls at His feet as though dead—until Jesus touches him and says “fear not.”
And then Jesus dictates seven letters . . .

Now Revelation 4:1: After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

“After this.” . . . After *what?* After the letters to the seven churches, which aren’t *actually* to the seven churches, but to the seven *angelos* (messengers) of the seven churches.

“After this...”

It’s important to note, that here in chapter four we are first beginning to read what Jesus in chapter one said is actually addressed to the seven churches.

In 1:11 John heard, “*Write what you see . . . and send it to the seven churches.*”

But for the last two chapters, John has been dictating what he has heard, which isn’t addressed to the churches but the seven angels of the seven churches, which appear to be the seven Spirits of God in the seven churches.

And yet, the seven churches are clearly expected to overhear what is said to the Spirit about themselves—the seven churches. They overhear that they each face some real challenges . . . and some incredible rewards, *if* they conquer.

1. Some need to restore their first love.
2. Some are to be faithful unto death.
3. Some must stand against false doctrine and idolatry.
4. Some need to renounce *porneia*—buying and selling Love.
5. Some are dead and need to wake up.
6. Some need to endure the syangogue of satan—Jews that aren’t really Jews.
7. Some think they’ve prospered and need nothing, when they’re actually trapped in Hell and need to open the door to Jesus.

All of them *need* to conquer. All of them have tremendous problems.
All of them must be very self-conscious “after this.”

And now, let’s have a little sympathy for John. John sees himself as their pastor.
What is he supposed to do or say, “after this?” ...after the revelation of all this need?

There is a huge variety of need in this room right now. Some of you are facing challenges that I can barely begin to understand. If I were in your place I think I would be utterly crushed. You're facing them with wisdom and grace . . . and I'm supposed to preach to you . . . about God, who continually baffles me because He's holy. Holy means set apart, different, awesomely strange. What do I say "after this"?

Well, the seven churches faced all sorts of problems and one common problem. It's very likely reflected in references to the teachings of the Nicolaitans, Balaam, and the Jezebel woman. It manifests in their apathy, immorality, and self-delusions.

After the seduction of Jewish legalism, historians view this to be the first great doctrinal enemy of the early church. I'm talking about Gnosticism. Gnostic means literally "one who knows." It refers to all sorts of groups and so isn't always a helpful term. But it usually refers to a corrupt melding of Christian theology with the philosophies of Greece... but Greece is not the problem. The problem with Gnosticism is this underlying assumption that you're saved by *gnosis*—that's Greek for knowledge.

Eugene Peterson writes:

The Gnostics gossiped about God. They claimed to know a lot about God (Gnostic means "one who knows"), but it was all about God. Gnostics did not pray. They did not worship.

All seven churches existed in a sea of Gnosticism. And we modern Americans exist in a similar sort of sea—a sea of ideas that took our culture by storm in the 18th century.

The Enlightenment was largely a rediscovery of Greek ideas.

To the Greeks, a man's crown was his ability to use reason to conquer all things.

To use reason is not the same thing as being reasonable.

Scripture says that Jesus is the Reason, the Logic, the *Logos*, the Word. And He must conquer us, if we are to be reasonable.

Many would argue that the modern era began in 1636 when Rene Descartes said, "*Cogito ergo sum*," – "I think, therefore I am."

Scripture testifies that, "*I am*" is, *therefore* we think.

But DesCarte argued "I think, therefore I am." It means something like, "Man is the measure of all things." ...including Reason, which is unresonable, if you really think about it.

"Man is the measure of all things."

Or as it's stated on my daughter's T-shirt, "It's all about me."

I just glossed over 3,000 years of philosophy and history and put it on my daughter's T-shirt. But, I think it's safe to say that the Gnostics and most modern people are pretty

much like the pirate who tried to capture the moon . . . saying something like . . .

“If you want to know the moon, don’t trust poets and lovers...”

“If you want to know the moon, you must conquer the moon.”

“Send a man to the moon, capture a piece of the moon, and bring it back and put it in a box.”

“To know a tree, cut it down and count its rings.”

“To know a frog, capture it, kill it, and cut it into tiny pieces.”

“To know a woman . . .”

Well . . . cutting her into pieces is illegal, but in some places, they can be purchased—that’s called *porneia*.

And now, I really should point out that if Gnosticism is faith in knowledge, then it’s far more than ancient Greeks and modernists that are Gnostic. And it wasn’t just the second great threat to the early church, it was also the first; it’s the philosophy of the “Synagogue of Satan.” I’m saying that all Phairsees (all legalists) are Gnostic.

Gnostics have faith in knowledge that they take from the natural world.

Pharisees have faith in knowledge that they take from Scripture.

In John’s gospel, Jesus says to the Jews, “*You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have life, and it is they that bear witness to me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life*” (John 5:39).

Remember the pirate who tried to capture the moon? He found a book about the moon and learned everything the moon liked. Then he captured all those things to get to the moon.

The Bible is a book about God. Maybe we read it to find out all the things that God likes: honoring the Sabbath, not using His name in vain, not murdering, permanent marriages . . . We learn everything God likes and try to capture those things in order to capture God.

In the Old Testament, God’s chief complaint to the Jews was that they played the whore. That’s *porneia*. They wanted to know *about* God, so they could *use* God, but didn’t want to *be known* by God and so surrender to God. They wanted an idol—a small controllable inanimate god—but not the living God.

“*You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have life, and it is they that bear witness to me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.*” They wanted words *about* God, but not the *living* Word that *is* God. So, when He stood in front of them, they plotted to capture Him, kill Him, and cut Him into little pieces of broken flesh and drops of blood.

I’m just saying that the Pharisees were Gnostics.

And the Gnostics were Pharisees.

And liberal New Ager’s are just like most religious conservatives.

And most Christian fundamentalists are just like most secular scientists.

I'm saying Gnosticism is the human condition. As if we all thought we could make ourselves in the image of God, by taking knowledge from some tree. So, like those Jews and Greeks in the seven churches, we modern people expect something "after this." After all our problems have been pointed out, we expect some practical advice on how we can conquer our problems.

And let's be honest, God is our chief problem. So how do we conquer God? How do we comprehend God, understand God, and so use our knowledge of God, to get from God what it is that we want?

So "After this," we expect someone to tell us what to do.

Well, this is so very hard for us modern people to take, but "after this," Revelation 4:1, we're really not mentioned, *as such*, in the rest of the book. I mean, the seven churches, *as such*, are not mentioned in the rest of the book. There is no, "Do this..." or "Don't do that..."—no instructions for us, no practical advice offered to us... So, we think it must not be about us.

In fact, the popular view in the American Church today is that we get raptured in chapter 4 verse 1. So, the rest of the Revelation really isn't about us (it's just gossip about others). We think it's not about us.

And that's strange . . . because, according to chapter 1, this part that doesn't seem to be about us, is the *beginning* of the very section that is *precisely* for us. Chapter 1:11 the voice says, "Write what you see . . . and send it to the churches."

Maybe it's for us, precisely because it isn't about us, meaning it isn't dependent on us. Maybe it's for us because *us*—the one that wants to capture the moon—is the *problem*, not the *solution*.

The Voice says, I will show you what "*must take place*."
Not what "*should take place, could take place, or might take place* if only you had the right knowledge and made the right choices."

Maybe that's why the part we understand—the directions for the angel—is not for us. And the part we don't understand—this crazy vision—is exactly what the doctor ordered.

I used to teach the Revelation to this point, Chapter 4:1, and then stop, saying, "*I don't understand . . . after this*." I can't tell you the number of people who have said to me, "I've always avoided the Revelation, 'cause I just didn't understand." We think it's so important to understand.

Guys, if you thought you had to understand a woman—before you ever married that woman—you'd be single the rest of your life.

I think I understand more of the Revelation than I used to, but I'm still just beginning to

understand . . . that I'm *not* supposed to understand everything! Maybe if I did understand, I'd be smart as God, and then God wouldn't be much of a God. And He sure wouldn't be holy, and I'd be forever disappointed.

At the start of the Revelation, I reminded you that there are different ways of knowing, and different things that can be known.

I read about a young woman explaining a search engine to her elderly mother. They sat at the new computer as she said,

"Mom, it can answer any question you have."

Her mom was highly sceptical. So the daughter said,

"Think of any question, we'll ask it, and you'll see."

Her Mom thought for a moment and said, "OK... *How is aunt Helen feeling?*"

There are different ways of knowing, and different things to be known.
There is one way to know objects, and another way to know persons.
There is one way to know facts, and another way to know Aunt Helen.

Maybe God is more like Aunt Helen, and less like a computer.

You can conquer, capture, and comprehend things less than you.
You can measure things less than you, but not things greater than you.

If you believe that "man is the measure of all things," then you must believe that "all things" are less than you, and can be comprehended by you. You must believe that you're the king of all things . . . and yet all things in your kingdom must be very disappointing, dead, unreasonable, and you must be utterly alone.

I've heard that if a tribal African wants to know something, he dances with it.
If a modern American wants to know something, he captures it and takes it apart.
SO:

To know the Bible, you cut it up and turn it into principles, values, practice application points, and laws that people can use to make themselves good.

To know the Revelation, you turn it into some sort of calendar to save your life and not lose your life in the Great Tribulation.

To know the Word of God, you go to seminary and master Divinity.

To know a frog, capture it, kill it, and cut it into little pieces.

To know a tree, cut it down and count its rings.

To know a wife . . . or a husband—a helper . . .

Well you could capture him, kill him, and reduce him to his constituent parts.

But then you couldn't dance with him. He'd be dead—body broken and blood shed.

You might know about him, but you could no longer know him or be known by him.

I wonder if in our lust to comprehend God, we might murder God.
I wonder if in our pursuit of reason, we might become unreasonable.
I wonder if in our desire to be good, we might crucify the Good.

I wonder if in our lust to know the Word, we might nail the Word to a tree in a garden... According to John, in his Gospel, John 19:41:

"In the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden."

I think John is suggesting that the cross was the Tree of Knowledge. In the Greek translation of Genesis 2 it's called "the *skulon* (which can refer to a cross or tree) . . . the skulon of *ginoskein* (that is knowing, from *gnosis*, that is knowledge).

See? Maybe it's not just Greeks and Jews, but every sinner, that is a Gnostic.

Wasn't that the sin in the Garden?—wanting the knowledge of God more than wanting to know and be known by God? We wanted the conquest of God more than communion with God, just like the pirate who tried to capture the moon.

If Revelation 4:1 is our first step back into the Garden since we left it back in Genesis 3, maybe we had better be prepared to drop "*The fruit of the knowledge of the Good,*" in order to know the One who is Good. Make no mistake, knowledge is Good, but the way we take it may be the definition of evil.

So, maybe we should give up having to understand . . . in order to know. Maybe God doesn't want to be understood, but *known*, like my wife wants to be known... And like I want to be known by my wife—the bride.

Well, in September I reminded you that there's an

- Epistemology of technology—it's how we know things less than ourselves.
- And there is an epistemology of Worship—

Maybe your chief need is to stop worrying about your needs.
Maybe your problem is your self, which can't be fixed with more of your self.
Maybe You need to forget yourself in something greater than yourself, so you might find yourself dancing.
Maybe you can only conquer, by being conquered, by God.

I used to subscribe to a series of preaching tapes from *Christianity Today*. On one of the tapes the host said something like this: "The sermon you are about to hear is so good because the preacher leaves the listener with many practical things to do. He doesn't just leave you with the sense that God is great."

I've thought about that statement a lot, and I need to say that I think "a sense that God is great" is pretty much *everything* that I want to leave you with.

From here on out, I think John is just going to leave us self-conscious, self-absorbed, needy, sinful, frightened, confused, Gnostic, modern believers with an overwhelming sense that God is great in every possible way!

When you see Him, you'll worship, and that is everything you need.

Revelation 4

*After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place [not should, must] after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven [*lampos*, in Greek] torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.*

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

*"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!"*

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

*"Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created."*

So John is like, out-carnated (rather than *incarnated*).

In Spirit, through the open door, he sees a throne.

- He sees something like the precious stones from the Garden of Eden.
- He sees a rainbow—the sign of the covenant given to Noah.
- He sees seven *lampos* that would be placed on lampstands, like those in the temple and like those that are the seven churches.
- He sees the sea of glass before the throne, like the molten sea in the temple before the Ark of the Covenant, God's throne on earth.
- He sees the Cherubim, like those that guarded the way to the tree of life and guard the way to the throne of God—as if, God's throne were a tree; a tree of knowledge transformed into a tree of Life (like the cross).
- He sees what Isaiah saw when he was called, and what Ezekiel saw at the Chebar Canal.
- He sees what has always been and will always be.
- He sees them praising the Holy One "*who was and is and is to come.*"
- He sees behind the veil in the temple.

- He sees the garden in the beginning.
- He sees *Reality*.

- He sees the throne, and someone seated on the throne,
Which is amazing, for it's John that wrote (John 1:8, also, 1 John 4:12),
"No one has ever seen God... the only begotten God, in the bosom of the Father he has made him known."
- In five more verses, John will see a slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne.
And around the throne John sees twenty-four *presbuterous*, translated elders.
It's where we get the word Presbyterian. He sees twenty-four Presbyterians.
But more than simply Presbyterians—elders, like the elders of Israel.

They're sitting on twenty-four thrones. Jesus told His disciples that they'd sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Elders have white garments, and in the Revelation, people get white garments by washing those garments in the blood of the Lamb.

Folks debate the identity of the twenty-four elders, but I can't avoid the conclusion that they are *at least* the twelve sons of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Lamb. In chapter 21, the twelve apostles form the twelve foundation of the New Jerusalem and the twelve tribes form the twelve gates.

The twenty-four elders are the twelve sons of Israel and the twelve disciples of Jesus. And check this out: *every* one of them had been a pirate.

Eleven of them had actually sold one of them (their brother) into slavery in Egypt. One of them, named Judah, actually impregnated his daughter in law, whom he mistook for a pagan cult prostitute, then planned to kill her until she revealed that she was pregnant with His child—the great great... grandfather of Jesus. Twelve of these guys abandoned Jesus the night He needed them most. This is not the twenty-four Bible scholars or the twenty-four super Zen masters. These are the twenty-four fishermen, shepherds, tax-collectors, and sinners. One of these guys might just be named Judas. One of these guys is certainly named Peter. And . . . One of these guys is named John.

So check this out, John sees himself, Eph. 2:6 *"seated with God, in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* He sees 24 pirates, but something is radically different about each one of them.

- Pirates are all about taking life, knowledge and whatever they judge to be good.
- Pirates are all about taking glory, honor and power.
- Pirates are all about crowning themselves.

But the twenty-four continually cast their crowns before the throne saying, *"Worthy are you to receive glory and honor and power, our Lord and God, for you created all things,*

and by your will they were created.”

If God created *all* things, then we are worthy of *no* things . . .
Unless it's God's will to give us those things . . .
But then, we wouldn't be proud of anything.
We'd be *grateful* for everything and start dancing.

God created all things, and with His Will, they were created.
His Will is His Word and His Word is Jesus.
Jesus is the Faithful Witness.
And we are the pirate who tried to capture the moon.

You cannot understand everything in Revelation chapter 4,
But if you don't yet understand the point of this sermon . . . just listen to the rest of *The Pirate Who Tried to Capture the Moon*.

And the pirate sailed that bursting ship back to his island. And he waited. Clouds moved across the sky.

The wind blew the empty sea. And finally the moon rose.

But when it looked down, it saw that everything it loved was gone. So it moved down to look a little closer. And the fierce pirate, sitting on his island, laughed. The moon looked again, but still it saw no curtains, it saw no small hills.
So again it came a little closer.

The pirate laughed again, and stood up to sharpen his sword. And the moon looked and saw nothing and came still closer. It looked and looked through streets and in villages and down empty wells. There were no pools of water. There were no poets, no lonely dancers.

So it came closer still.

And the pirate, seeing the moon come lower, yelled out, "Moon! I have captured every ship and everything you love, and now I will capture you!"

Then he threw open the hatch. And the moon saw everything it loved streaming out of the pirate's ship and onto the pirate's island. Kitchen curtains and long candles and violins playing sad music and moody poets and lonely wolves and dancers who danced in the middle of the night. It gave a little sigh and came closer to the island, and the pirate watched. Still the moon drew closer, and the pirate saw it grow.

"I didn't know the moon was quite so big," he thought. And still the moon came down, the moon came down, closer, still closer. And the pirate started to feel afraid. He tore through the book that told all about the moon, but he couldn't find a place that told how big the moon was. And the moon came down, growing larger, larger than the pirate's ship, larger than his island, larger than anything the pirate had ever seen.

The pirate trembled, and he thought, "If I return everything I've captured, that will surely stop the moon." So he cut the saddles and the bits from the wild horses, and the chain from the flowers, and they drifted out to sea. And a shadow passed across the giant moon; it was the birds streaming away.

And still the moon came down. So the pirate freed the madly playing violins and the howling wolves, the poets chanting and the pools bursting from their barrels, and he sent them sailing home.

Moonlight spread over the waves, it covered his empty island. The pirate lifted his trembling sword as the whole sky became the moon.

And then the moon stopped. And waited.

The pirate stared into its light and a wild shiver ran through him like a wave. He forgot about being afraid. He forgot about being fierce. He lowered his sword, he dropped his armor, and he whispered, "Moon, wonderful moon, it is you who have captured me."

And the moon glowed through him and above him. Then, slowly, it started back into the sky, growing smaller, growing distant, until once again it sailed as it pleased. It drifted over the sea and over the island where now there was someone new the moon loved, who loved the moon.

For at that moment, in the middle of the night, the pirate began to dance.

Any "good deed" that's not a part of that dance, isn't a good deed, but sin.
"*Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin,*" wrote Paul.
Faith is trusting God's great Love for you, and it looks like worship.

Worship is that old pirate's dance.

To Dance, you must lose yourself, and find yourself dancing.
If you make yourself dance, concentrating on every step, you're not really dancing.
And if you must make yourself worship, you're not really worshipping.
If you say, "Wow I'm a great worshiper, for I really know how to worship and I really work at worshipping," your not worshipping . . . God.
But you are worshipping yourself in the place of God.
You're a pirate trying to capture the moon.

You can't make yourself worship in Spirit and in Truth,
But you can be reminded to look at the moon.

That's what they needed in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—they needed a vision of the Moon, the Throne (Ps. 89—the throne of the seed of David is like the moon). They needed to look to the throne and see what John saw. They needed a Revelation of Jesus.

That's what we try to do each week here in our service of worship.
That's what you do whenever you give thanks in Jesus' name.
That's why we sing, and study, and meet, and do acts of kindness—we're hoping to get a glimpse of the throne, so all our dance steps become the pirate's dance.

The pirate who tried to capture the moon, and was captured by the moon. . .

Perhaps God creates pirates, who try to capture the moon
So *that* the moon can capture those pirates,
So *that* those pirates will dance forever in the light of His love.

John 12:32: "*And when I am lifted up from the earth [and He was speaking of His death, notes John] I will draw all people to myself.*"

[Peter begins to sing] "Dancing in the moonlight. Everybody felling warm and bright..."
You might be thinking, "Nice metaphor but the moon didn't actually come down. And to capture the moon is completely unreasonable."

Well according to Scripture, the moon is the "Faithful Witness."
And the *Faithful Witness* is Jesus.

Revelation 6:12-13: "*When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood....*"

According to Scripture, on the sixth day of the week, at the sixth hour of the day on what I believe was the sixth day of creation, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth. For Jesus, the Faithful Witness, had been nailed to a tree by all of us. He cried "*Father forgive them*" and at 3:00 p.m., He died. A Roman Centurion dropped to his knees and began to worship: he was *a pirate the moon loved . . . who now loved the moon.*

Fifty days later, Peter stood up on Pentecost and said, "*These men are not drunk as you suppose.*" (Not drunk...but, they were moonstruck.)

"These men are not drunk...This is what was prophesied by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days I will pour out my spirit on all flesh...and I will show signs in the heavens. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood.'"

Peter talked as if all those listening had *already* seen these things.

Many scholars date the crucifixion to the Friday before Passover, April 3rd 33 AD. And now, due to modern astronomy and computers, we know that around 3:00 p.m. on Friday April 3, 33 AD, the moon went into full eclipse below the horizon of the Judean desert and rose blood red the evening of April 3 as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus (the light of the world) and placed it in the tomb. That's art!

I don't know if the scholars and computers got all the calculations right, but I do know that all us pirates . . . captured the Moon.

We captured the Moon because . . .

The Moon had always planned to be captured by us,

In order that we might be captured by Him—the Moon,

That we might be captured by Love and dance in His Light forever.

You can only conquer, by being conquered by love.

You can only truly know because you've been known by Jesus.

So look to the throne—it's where you'll find the Lamb.

Communion

On the night He was betrayed He took bread and broke it saying, "*This is my body given to you. Take and eat.*" In the same way He took the cup saying, "*This cup is the covenant in my blood.*" For 1,500 years the Jews had been learning "*the life is in the blood.*"

Listen closely: we took the Life. But He *forgave* the Life, which is Himself.

You can't take the Life (like a pirate) if you know that you've already been *given* the Life (like a son).

And one last thing! Revelation 4 raises a fascinating little question: The twenty-four elders cast their crowns whenever the Cherubim say, "Holy, Holy, Holy." And the Cherubim never cease saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy," which means the twenty-four elders never cease casting their crowns...

And so this is the question: Who keeps putting the crowns back on their heads? Psalm 103:4 "*The Lord forgives all your iniquity [John, Peter, Judas, Judah, Israel, children of Adam] and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.*"

They cast their crowns and the Lord must crown them again, and again, and again.

It must look like a dance, and you see, it *is* a dance.

It's the Old Pirate's dance. And it's holy.

It's holy, for it moves in the exact opposite direction of the human ego and this entire fallen world.

They continually cast their crowns and the Lord crowns them continually. [Peter picks up cups from the communion table and as he says the following words spoken between

John (the author of Revelation) and Jesus, he pours wine back and forth between the cups.]

Jesus says, *“I crown you John with steadfast Love and mercy.”*

And John says, *“Jesus, worthy are you of all glory, honor, and power”* and then he casts his crown before Jesus.

Jesus says, *“I love you.”*

And John says, *“I love you”*

Jesus says, *“You’re awesome.”*

And John says, *“No, you’re awesome.”*

[Peter pours wine back and forth between the cups to show the process just keeps going, and going.] You see? All this steadfast Love, it never ceases.

This happens continually, and so, that Steadfast Love must form a river. That river is the river of Life that flows from the throne—through all of creation—and returns as praise. And that Dance is the Body of Christ rising from the grave.

Come to the throne and cast your crowns before Him.

Prayer

“Jesus, it’s liberating to confess that all week I’ve been trying to crown myself. We try to crown ourselves and worry about it all the time. Right now we come to the throne and say that you are worthy of all glory, honor, and power. Amen.

[Several worship songs are sung.]

Prayer

Thank you for opening the eyes of our heart just a little more and allowing us to see you. Then we can’t help but adore you.

Benediction

Do you remember that hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy”? There’s a line in it that says, “All the saints adore you.” Do you know what the word “saint” means? It means “holy one.” We say, “Holy, holy, holy,” and then somehow we are called “holy ones” or “saints”.

“All the saints adore you.” That’s what it takes to be a saint—to adore Him. But here’s the rub: you can’t just decide to adore Him. That’s not adoration. Adoration is something that happens when you see Him so I’m just reminding you saints, keep looking at Him and He will transform you. Just like the moon I as transformed by the sun. You reflect the glory of the light of the sun and you become a saint. So in the name of Jesus, saints of the living God, believe the Gospel.

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.

12

How to Conquer the World: The Meaning of Your Scroll

How to Conquer the World: The Meaning of Your Scroll

Revelation 4:8-11& Revelation 5

January 14, 2018

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

Peter Hiett

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Prayer

We thank you for who you are: overwhelming, endless, absolute Love. We pray that through the work of Jesus the Christ and the power of your Holy Spirit we would see you and that you would help us to preach. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Message

Since we stopped getting the paper, it’s become my habit in the morning to make some coffee, grab a protein bar, and watch the CBS morning news, which always begins like this:

CBS THIS MORNING “Eye Opener” Clip

Newcaster: “We begin this morning with a look at today’s eye opener—your world in ninety seconds.”

[Several headlines are briefly brought to the viewer’s attention accompanied by rapid images of each topic: views of the current president, issues of racism and immigration, potentially dangerous weather, updates about the search process of a local disaster, and highlights in pop culture.]

Newcaster: “All that, and all that matters.”

Announcer: “This morning’s eye opener is presented by Toyota. ‘Let’s go places.’”

“The Eye Opener: Your world in ninety seconds . . .”

“All that and *all* that matters . . . Toyota, let’s go places.”

And I wonder where are we going? Is that all that matters? And what does it mean . . . my world in ninety seconds?

I watch the Eye Opener, and then I have my own eye opener:

I think about my kids, my mom, and all their challenges.

I think about y’all and all the stuff you’re going through.

I think about the sermon and trying to figure out what God wants me to say.

I think, “Life is hard. My world is chaotic and filled with pain.”

It’s stressful and I feel like an idiot.

I wonder: “*What does it all mean?* And then, “*Can I quit?*”

In the summer of 1979, I got a job as a lifeguard at the Green Oaks Community Pool in Littleton. I use the term “lifeguard” rather loosely because safety wasn’t my strong suit. I was more into fun . . . and the diving board was a lot of fun. And the kids at the pool loved to share my joy—so to speak.

That year in Physics at Heritage High School, I had learned that momentum is transferable, which means that if a 200 lb. eighteen-year-old boy and a fifty pound seven-year-old kid time their steps correctly a whole lot of momentum can be transferred from one to the other through a diving board.

Momentum is mass times velocity. This means that if we both (a seven-year-old and I) jump together, but I quickly buckle my knees, a seven-year-old can experience all my momentum in the form of a greatly enhanced velocity.

In other words, I could bounce a seven-year-old twenty or thirty feet into the air and all the way to the shallow end... where they would often belly, back flop or side flop in a very big way.

It was chaos and pain.

- They would surface with this stunned look on their face—eyes wide open.
- Then immediately they’d spin around looking for me—their eyes begging for explanation.

I learned that, at that moment, I had incredible power. If I looked away in distress or if I panicked in fear—if I screamed, “Oh my gosh . . . Are you OK? I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have bounced you so high.” They’d all at once break into huge sobs, run home, and tell their mom. I’d get in big trouble and they’d quit . . . coming to the pool.

Sometimes, after the morning Eye Opener, I just want to quit. I don’t know what that looks like for you—maybe it means getting drunk, maybe it means turning to porn, or going shopping, or having an affair, or holding a grudge and refusing to forgive; maybe it means suicide.

I don’t know what exactly quitting looks like for you . . . But I think for all of us, quitting is giving up on Love.

You know all that God asks of us is love—it’s the entire commandment. And Love is like momentum—It’s transferrable.

“We love because he first loved us.”

And yet Love does not feel safe—learning to love is chaotic and painful.

If you love with all the momentum of Jesus, you will probably get crucified. But Jesus is a lifeguard—and not a bad one like me...

The name Jesus means, “God is Salvation.”

Well, like I was saying, the moment that the kids surfaced—after experiencing

my momentum and then a bunch of chaos and pain—the moment they looked at me, I had incredible power.

1. If I screamed, “Oh No!” they’d weep, wail, and quit.
2. But if I stood tall, looked in their face and screamed, “Yes! That was awesome. You flew like superman. It stings, I know, but . . . Dude! You were amazing!” Instead of crying, they’d laugh and scream back “Do it again!” And the other kids would yell, “Do me too. Do me too!”¹

I was probably a bad lifeguard, but I think I was a better father. And what I learned at Green Oaks community pool was also true with my kids. When they were little, every time they experienced a little chaos or pain, they’d come running to me or to Susan, weeping and wailing. If we panicked, it only got worse, and they’d quit whatever they were doing. But if we smiled and kissed whatever was hurt, if we blessed the pain, they would usually be like . . . instantly healed.

I remember one day after church, the kids were running around the Sanctuary while I was talking to some folks. One of them fell and then ran to me screaming, “Kiss it Daddy, kiss it! Kiss my owie.” I did. And immediately, she jumped up, kissed me back, and ran away laughing. The person I was talking to said, “Wow it’s like she was actually healed by your kiss.” Well, maybe she was . . .

John was on the island of Patmos in the Mediterranean Sea.
He had loved because Jesus first loved him, but now . . . chaos and pain.
All the other disciples were probably dead—tortured and executed.
John was imprisoned and the churches that he pastored were facing all manner of challenges.
I’m sure they were all tempted to quit.

In the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, John turned and saw Jesus.
Jesus then dictates seven letters—each is an eye-opener.
Jesus then says, “John, I have something to show you. Come up *here*.”

Through a door opened in Heaven, John sees what we began to preach on last week. He sees the throne and around the throne twenty-four elders who never cease to cast their crowns before the throne, which means that the One on the throne never ceases to crown them.

He sees the Great Dance that is Eternal Life and the unbroken Communion of Love... and Love is everything we’re commanded to do.
He sees worship—in Greek, *proskuneo*—it literally means something like

¹ 1. If I apologized, they quit.
2. And if I eulogized, it was a party.

bow and kiss, and it's everything commanded of us.
Love *is* what it means to conquer.

Revelation 4:10-11

...the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

They're worshipping Him for He created all things, with His will, which is His Word—"All things," not "some things."

Revelation 5:1-4

Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly [literally: mourn and wail] because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

John must've seen something like this:



I made this one for Easter two years ago. It's in the strong right hand of God, and it's sealed with seven seals. In that day, official documents were sealed with wax seals bearing official imprints in the wax, and when they were opened, you could discern the meaning of the scroll and the words of the scroll were enacted.

- Some have speculated that the scroll is a “last will and testament” to those that inherit the Kingdom.
- Some speculate it’s the Lamb’s scroll or Book of Life.
- Some say it’s the Bible or the rest of The Revelation.

Maybe it’s all that and more. Everyone is singing about God creating “all things,” and the scroll is sealed with seven seals.... God creates all things in seven days . . . or six days and on the seventh, He rests.²

Perhaps the scroll is creation... and John weeps, for no one knows what it means.

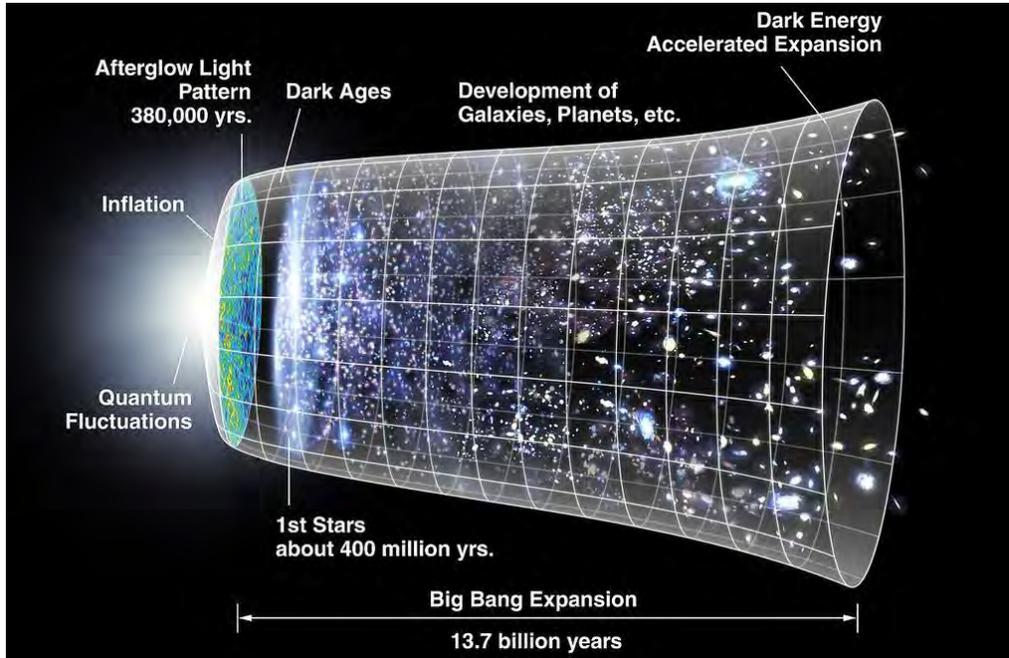


Figure 1 Image credit: NASA / WMAP science team

Have you seen this picture?

This comes from NASA and can be found on their website explaining the WMAP—Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe—a probe that was launched in 2001 to map all of the Cosmos or the universe, and now it’s work is complete. So, this is the best representation from the best scientists of the history and shape of our Cosmos.

The long horizontal axis represents time and the circles represent space. It looks kind of like a giant burrito.

The point on the left side is the beginning of space and time.

The inside of the giant burrito is all of space and time.

² God creates with His Word and the scroll is filled with words, written words, not Living Word, and nobody knows what they mean, for the scroll is sealed.

It's an incredible picture for it's a picture of all nature—all space and time. It's incredible for a million different reasons.

For **1.** It shows that everything natural is actually supernatural.

All physical laws are descriptions of cause and effect in space and time. The picture reveals that all cause and effect is the effect of an uncaused cause.

For thousands of years philosophers have called that God.

This is a picture of the creation of all things by something called God.

So **2.** What's outside of creation (this "giant burrito") is *not* actually no-thing...

It's that uncaused cause, that we call "God."

God is *not* nothing, but the absolute *something*. Yet...you could say that He's nothing like all the created something—He's Holy.

And **3.** This means that the Big Bang is not really an explosion of something in the nothing, but more like the explosion of nothing in the something. Think of an empty space in God . . . almost like a womb.

Then, into that nothing, God speaks His Word or shines His Light.

Scripture says that God is light... and His Word is the Light of the World.

God creates all things with His Word.³

So **4.** God creates all things. . . but evil is not a something, but a nothing.

Like darkness is the absence of light.

Like loneliness is the absence of Love.

Like lies are the absence of truth.

Like "I am not" is the absence of I AM

Like chaos is the absence of Logos—Which is God's Word, Will and Judgment.

So God's Judgment is creation. So *final* judgment is the finished creation.

5. The finished creation ("giant burrito") is like all things no-things, filled with all the fullness of God.

In the creation story, in each of the six days, we read that "there was evening and there was morning." Even a pre-scientific idiot would know you can't have

³ Scientist can't figure out what light is, but they know that light does not experience the passage of time, in fact space and time are relative to it.

Scientists ask what everything means, but they don't know what meaning is.

Scripture claims that everything was created with an idea, a meaning, a logos—which gets translated word.

Werner Heisenberg, Nobel Laureate in Physics, once stated: "The smallest units of matter are, in fact not physical objects in the ordinary sense of the word; they are... ideas." The diagram calls that a "Quantum Fluctuation," but Werner Heisenberg, father of Quantum Mechanics would call it an idea.

a sunrise without a sun. Well, the Hebrew word for evening comes from a root meaning darkness and implying chaos... and the word for morning implies order that comes through light. So, each day in the creation story there is order spoken into chaos until, on the Seventh day, all is filled with the goodness that is God Himself.

In Scripture there are six days of creation. But Scripture says that for the Lord a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day... and in ancient times "thousand" often just meant the highest denomination in which we count (you won't find the word "million").⁴

It was a common idea at the time of Jesus that God created in a Sabbath week of these creation days. That is . . . He created in six eons and in the seventh everything would be good.⁵

We begin to live in God's seventh day rest, when we have faith in God's Grace and submit to creation in the image of Love.

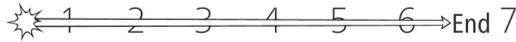
According to Scripture, this "giant burrito" could be divided into six complete eons or maybe seven.

The English word "eon" comes from the Greek work *aion*, which means age. The ages inside the burrito are *aions*, and the age outside the burrito, is an age unlike any of those ages inside the burrito. Scripture describes that age as *aionios*, which is an adjective meaning something like "of the age" and usually refers to God's age. *Aionios* is often translated eternal. God is Eternal. Light is eternal. Love is eternal.

So, all of time looks something like this:

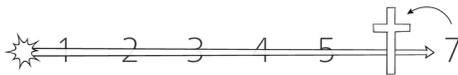
⁴ So, Church Fathers like Augustine taught that clearly these days of creation were not our usual twenty-four hour days.

⁵ The Church Father Irenaeus taught that humanity sinned on the 6th day and was redeemed at the end of the 6th day, as Jesus cried, "It is finished" on a tree in the garden.



The Seventh Day is a bit confusing. Scripture mentions no evening and morning on the Seventh Day. It's like the end that never ends; in Hebrew thought the Eighth Day is an endless Seventh Day.⁶ Scripture claims that we have come to the end of the *aions* in Christ Jesus; He is the End. At His cross eternity invades time and at His cross we inherit Eternal Life.

So maybe time looks something like this:



Or maybe it looks something like this:⁷ (See the next page.)

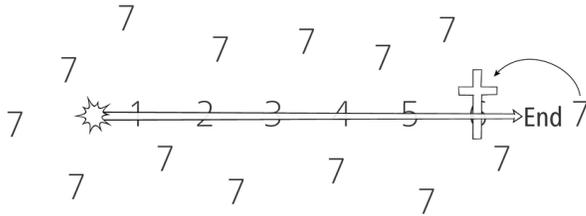
⁶ And on the Seventh Day everything is good.

So, the Seventh Day is the end of God's creation—it's like the presence of eternity in time. And Scripture claims that we can have *aionios* life, that's eternal life, now.

⁷ Jesus is the Beginning and End. He is the Word of God spoken into the void creating all things. And He is the Word of God spoken into you creating you in the image of God and you are finished at the cross, which is a tree in a garden, where we took knowledge of the Good and God gave us the life that is Himself.

Since the Enlightenment, most institutions of higher learning began teaching that space and time had no beginning and would have no end. About fifty years ago, schools just started teaching what science had just discovered—that space and time had a beginning and might very well have an end.

And not only that, space and time were relative somehow to light, and then with the advent of Quantum theory... even relative to meaning or idea.



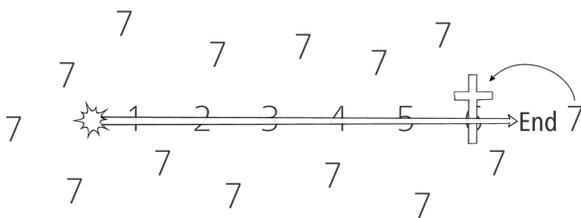
All of time exists in Eternity, like a scroll in the right hand of God Almighty.

About twenty years ago, Physicist Gerald Schroeder asked the question, “If the Cosmos is measured to be 14 billion years old from the standpoint of the earth, how old would it be from the standpoint of the big bang or quark confinement... in specific the Cosmic Background Radiation [Cosmos]—that’s the “afterglow light pattern” in this picture.

He did the math and came up with the answer of six to seven days. Not “your world in ninety seconds,” but your world in seven days.

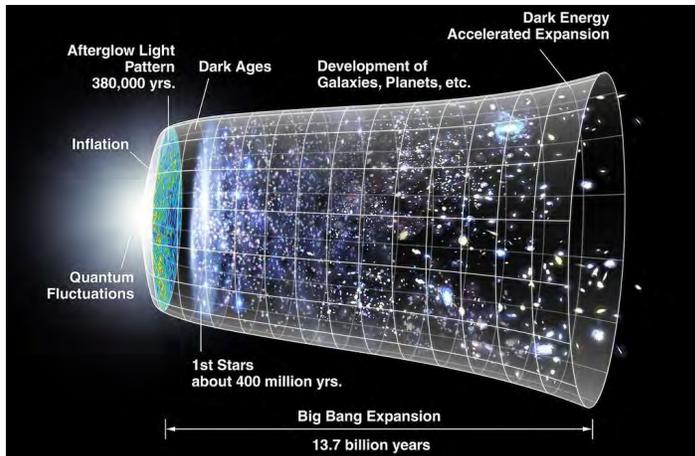
Whether he got his physics correct or not, all physicists would agree that depending on where you’re standing “A day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day.” In fact, if you’re traveling at the speed of light, there really isn’t time at all.

You see, I’m just saying that this:



Looks an awful lot like this:





In fact, if you tie seven strings around it and seal it with seven seals and it would look an awful lot like this:



6. I'm saying that the Cosmos is like a seven-sealed scroll in the right hand of God.⁸

⁸ Time does not exist, Barth concludes, apart from eternity's embrace. Eternity embraces time on all sides, preceding, accompanying, and fulfilling it. To say that God is eternal means that God is "the One who is and rules before time, in time, and again after time, the One who is not conditioned by time, but conditions it absolutely in his freedom" (II/1, p. 619). . . . God's eternity is so to speak the companion of time, or rather it is itself accompanied by time in such a way that in this occurrence time acquires its hidden center, and therefore both backwards and forwards its significance, its content, its source and its goal, but also continually its significant present. Because, in this occurrence, eternity assumes the form of a temporal present, all time, without ceasing to be time, is no more empty time, or without eternity. It has become new. This means that in and with this present, eternity creates in time real past and real future, distinguishes between them, and is itself the bridge and way from the one to the other. Jesus Christ is the way." (II/1, p. 627)

The real future that eternity creates in time is the future of eternal life in communion with God. The real past, in turn, is the past of sin and death as abolished in the cross of Christ. This old reality of sin and death is "continually opposed" by the new reality of eternal life, even as the new reality "comes breaking in triumphantly" again and again (II/1, p. 628). Jesus Christ stands between the

That raises an amazing question: where, and when, is John standing in Revelation 5?

- He was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.
- He was like, out-carnated rather than *incarnated*.
- He sees twenty-four elders and four living creatures and surely they were created in the Cosmos.

Jesus is the "first born" of all creation—but He's not the only one. It appears there are first born and latter born. And the Gospel is not just that we go to Heaven but that heaven comes to us.

You cannot understand all of that, but Scripture and science *both* can help you to believe. And this is what I'm asking you to believe:

[Peter begins singing:



"He's got the whole world in His hands."

"He's got the whole Cosmos in His hands."

"He's got space and time in His hands. He's got the whole world in His hands."

And yet John is weeping and wailing. . . because the scroll is sealed and no one is found worthy to open its seals. In other words, no one can tell John what it all means.

It's **one thing** to come to believe that the God of the philosopher's and physicists exists, but it's an *entirely different thing* to come to know who He *is* and what He *means*.

It's **one thing** to know that someone or something created you and launched you into all this chaos and pain, but it's *another thing* to know what it *means*—what *HE* means—just who it is that stands on the throne, diving board . . . or whatever . . .

A sealed scroll is creation without Meaning—chaos and pain with no purpose—a story with no plot.

old reality and the new. "In him the equilibrium between them has been upset and ended. He is the way from the one to the other and the way is irreversible. He is the turning" (II/1, p. 628).

George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, p. 205, 207

John is weeping for the same reason Mary wept outside the tomb. All her hopes had been crucified, and now the body was missing, and everything was absurd.

John is weeping because his friends are being martyred, in places like Smyrna & R He is weeping because all the other disciples are dead, he is exiled to a rock, alone in the Aegean Sea. **And** he doesn't know what any of it means.

- He is not weeping because he doesn't understand the *Left Behind* series or know dates of the great tribulation.
- He's weeping for He sees no purpose in Life.
- And if there is no purpose, there is not conquering, and there is no hope.
- He is weeping because he sees no "Logos," and so all is "chaos."
- He is staring into the void (what we loosely call Hell).

In the words of Bertrand Russell, before he died:

"I have nothing to hang on to but grim, unyielding despair."

"Despair is suffering without meaning,"

Wrote Victor Frankel.

All creation is that scroll and you are part of that scroll.
Your life is like a scroll; your life *is* a scroll.

Because I'm a pastor people will ask me to unwrap their scroll and I feel completely unable . . . and not only unable, unworthy.

Several years ago a woman came to me with hundreds of horrifying pictures stuck in her mind and heart. Each picture was a memory, which is like a slice of the scroll—a moment in space and time. She had been ritually abused and was being assaulted by demons. Since then I've met several women with similar stories.

In one picture, she had been dressed as a little angel on Halloween. She explained that as a child it had always been her dream to be an angel. Her mother had dressed her in little wings and gave her a halo . . .

But when her father found her, he grew furious, ripped off her costume and abused her in the most horrific ways.

How could I speak meaning into such chaos and pain?
I've never been abused; I'm not worthy.

In prayer, she had a vision and I asked Jesus to destroy that picture—to erase that slice of space and time—for I couldn't even begin to open that portion of her scroll.

John weeps for no one is found worthy to unwrap the scroll. Next verse:

Revelation 5:5-6

And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, [nikao is the verb] so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...

On the night that He was betrayed (which is the beginning of the day that He was slain), John records that Jesus said, "*In this world—Cosmos, in Greek—you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have conquered [nikao] the cosmos*" (John 16: 33).

See? The seven-sealed scroll is all creation.
And He conquered it that day as He cried, "It is finished," on the cross.

It's breathtaking . . .

Can you think of a greater tribulation, a worse slice of space-time than that?
. . . than the day that humanity took the life of the Good in flesh on a tree in a garden?

Can you think of a worse day?
But now can you think of a better day?
. . . than the day God gave His own life on that tree in the Garden?

The day we *took* knowledge of the Good, has now been transformed into the day that Jesus *gave* us the knowledge of Himself, and He is Life.

In 1373 Julian of Norwich had her famous encounter with Jesus. She claimed Jesus taught her this and I quote: "Since I (Jesus) have turned the greatest possible harm into good, it is my will that you should know from this that I shall turn all lesser evil into good."

Jesus is the Beginning and the End; He's the plot.
Once you get to the end of a book you know the plot.
And the plot gives meaning to every page in the book.⁹
Jesus is what God means.
Jesus is worthy to unwrap the scroll because He has conquered.
But what a strange, bizarre, and holy way to conquer—the Lion *is* a little

⁹ Daniel received some amazing vision but was told, "These words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end." Jesus is the End and He's giving meaning to the entire story—He's gonna break the seals and open the scroll. He's the Living Word that is the meaning of every written word in the scroll.

slaughtered Lamb, and that little slaughtered Lamb *is* the Lion.

Revelation 5:5 And one of the elders said to me (I wonder who that elder was? It could've been Peter, James, John? Is the New John speaking to old John?)

Revelation 5:5-10

And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." And between (or "in the midst of") the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,

*"Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth" (or "do reign on the earth,"
according to some ancient manuscripts).*

Whatever the case, John looks and sees an *arnion*, it means "little precious lamb."

But this lamb has seven horns—which symbolize all power.

And it has seven eyes—this lamb knows all.

And the seven eyes are the seven spirits of God sent into all creation.

Everyone worships the lamb just as they worship God. John tells us He is the Logos, the Meaning, the Word that was in the beginning *with* God that *is* God, *through whom* all things are created. And John knows him because He knew John. He became flesh and went fishing with John and loved John, such that John would even rest his head upon His breast at the supper.¹⁰

As the Lamb unwraps the scroll, He smells your prayers; they are eternal and so are you.

He is able to unwrap the scroll because He created the scroll. And He is worthy to unwrap the scroll because He bleeds for John, and He bleeds for *you*.

¹⁰ Jesus from the bosom of the Father—he has made him known. (John 1:18)
Literally "He exegetes the Father." He is what God means.

Verse 9-11

And they sang a new song, (in eternity everything is always new. And in Hebrews it says a sacrifice is constantly newly sacrificed) saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed (you purchased) people for God..."

It's not just that He has all power and all knowledge, but that He sacrificed it all for you. He bled for you and bleeds for you every moment of your life.

When my children were little, they always ran to me or Susan to kiss their owies—to give knew meaning to their chaos and pain.

If you would've lined me up next to Albert Einstein—who knew so many things, and Donald Trump—who has so much power, they would've picked me, or Susan, every time because they *knew* that we would bleed for them and in some ways already had.

They knew because they'd been known. They didn't understand, they only had to believe in me, and then they would know—and live. I was worthy, in a little way, to unwrap that part of their scroll.

But years ago, this friend came to me, and she wanted me to unwrap her scroll. And I was entirely unable and unworthy.

The pictures were so horrifying that not only would she be stuck, I would also get stuck—afraid to live, for fear that they had no meaning, that God was not the author of the scroll, and Jesus had not conquered all things.

One night as we prayed, Jesus appeared to her in this vision.

I asked Him to hold her and he would not.

She wept, "I just want you to hold me."

And she heard Him say, "You have to give me those pictures."

(She was utterly ashamed of the pictures, and I just wanted Jesus to destroy the pictures.)

I prayed, "Jesus, please show her how you see her."

And she heard Him say, "Those pictures are part of who you are."

I really wondered if it was Jesus that she was talking to, but we began to give Him the pictures. It was a battle: she'd have to choose to surrender, and yet each choice was a gift, purchased with His blood.

He had shown her that He cried her tears, felt every wound and that whatever was done to her was also done to Him.

And He sent His Spirit into her heart crying, "Abba Father."

So she handed Him each picture. One after another He'd reveal His presence in each picture; He'd fill each picture with Himself.

- Where there was darkness she would see a brilliant light.

- Where there were lies, He transformed them with truth that is Himself.
- Where there was death, she saw resurrection.
- And in the place of sin, He would reveal the beauty of His Grace.

Each time, He would take the picture, frame the picture, fill the picture and hand it back to my friend... each picture now like a frame in a movie telling a beautiful story.

The last picture was that Halloween night. Jesus entered like a warrior. He came to her, covered her, and tenderly dressed her in her angel outfit, which she realized was also a white robe.

He sat her on His lap, rocked her, and held her. He told her how He hurt for her. He told her how hard He, the King of Glory, had fought for her. Then He said this: "You are always and will always be my little angel." She told me this and I said: "He is holding you and telling you who you truly are." As she wept in gratitude, she heard Him say: "Your pictures are my pictures."

After a time, she looked at me and said, "How do you think it makes Him feel when we're ashamed of those pictures." I said, "I guess that means we're ashamed of Him."

You know? Jesus didn't just redeem one moment of your life when you prayed a prayer at camp. He redeemed *all* your life, past, present, and future. In such a way that your story is actually His story. He filled it with Himself when He offered His life on the tree. It's how He creates you in His own image. He fills all of you with Himself. You *are* His body.

So, "The revelation you receive will come to you as reality, rather than knowledge..." writes the French Mystic Jeanne Guyon.

That means the revelation will come to you through your own particular life, as you offer it up and Jesus fills it with His meaning.

"This is the way it was in the life of Paul." She continues, "He did not ponder the sufferings of Christ; he did not consider the marks of suffering on the Lord's body. Instead, Paul bore in his own body the experiences of his Lord. He even said, 'I bear in my body the marks of Jesus Christ'"—the wounds.

And I hope you see that those wounds can even be wounds in your past. With forgiveness, God transforms the past.

Your wounds become His scars.

Your sins are the stage that reveals His Grace.

With faith, He transforms the past.

With hope, He transforms the future.

With Love, He sets us free to LIVE right NOW.

In Romans 8:28 Paul wrote, "*We know that all things work together for good*

with those who love God and are called according to his purpose.” But we wonder, “are there some that aren’t called according to purpose?”

Then Paul wrote, “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors (hypernikao is the Greek word)—we are hyper conquerors through Him who loved us!*”

But we wonder, are there some that Christ doesn’t love? And could we choose to separate ourselves (from Him forever with out end)? Or maybe we’ve already chosen?

1 John 5:4-5, John writes “*This is the conquest that has conquered the cosmos—our faith. Who is it the one conquering the cosmos, but the one trusting that Jesus is the son of God.*” And we think, “See we have to have faith.” And we do. We do. We do. We do. But is it our faith that creates Jesus—that is God is salvation? Or is it Jesus that creates our faith?

I wasn’t a very good lifeguard, but imagine if I only saved kids who first professed their faith in me? And yet, by saving kids that didn’t have faith in me, I might create some faith in me in them. Actually, kids that had no faith in me probably wouldn’t even get in the pool or dare to get bounced on the board. They wouldn’t even try.

If you have no faith in Love, you won’t even try to live. In fact, you’re already dead—a slave to sin and trapped by hell. You need someone to push you into the pool. . . so you can get saved . . . and grow some faith.

I had a favorite kid that summer at Green Oaks pool. His name was Mikey. He was about five, and I saved him a lot. I tried to teach him to swim, but he always sank like a rock. Shallow end or deep end it didn’t matter—he was that short.

I’d give him these talks, “*Mikey, you could drown.*”
And he’d say, “*Does that mean I couldn’t swim anymore?*”

Routinely he’d get this wild look in his eye and just run into the pool laughing.
As he was drowning—He’d be laughing.
When I’d pull him out he’d be laughing.
When I gave him the talk he’d say, “*I’m sorry,*” but he’d smile.
He’d look at me . . . with these big trusting eyes as if to say, “*Peter why should I be worried, every time I start to drown. You save me.*”

That’s faith—faith in the wrong savior, but faith, and it melted my eighteen-year-old heart. My point is that Jesus is a better savior than me, and faith is what He’s after.

But it's not *our* faith that creates our savior.
It's our *Savior* that creates our faith.
In fact, that's what He's doing right NOW—in space and time.

Revelation 5:11-14

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea . . .

(Now let me just stop and say, there is no place else)

and all that is in them, saying,

*“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

That's called Faith and it manifest as the great dance of Love that is Life...

And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

So, most mornings, I drink my coffee and watch the morning Eye Opener. I wonder what it all means and I find myself tempted to quit. But then I usually remember to look at the throne. I'll shut off the TV, and I look to Jesus.

Lately, I've been picturing myself sitting next to Jesus on a beach. He's not worried. He's not stressed. When I think of things that stress me out, I don't say much but I just picture us putting these things in a boat and pushing them out to sea. He controls the sea, even though it looks like chaos

I don't need to understand; I just need to know that I'm known—by Him. I usually place my head on His chest for a time. And then I get up and live. Let's look to the throne:

Communion

On that night, which was the beginning of that Day, He took bread and He broke it saying, “This is my body given for you; take and eat. And in the same manner, after supper and having given thanks, He took the cup saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you.

I suspect that right now he's not sitting. He's standing.

He's standing the way I stood on the diving board.

His eyes are locked on you ... and He's speaking:

*That was awesome! Yeah! Way to go!
I know it stings... but you were flying like an eagle!*

Don't stop loving. Don't stop living. Don't quit!

We can do this.

Just look at my hands; look at my side.

I believe in you. I am the belief that's rising within you.

Come to the table.

Now feast on me and . . .

Let's go conquer the World.

Let's love and never stop—even if they nail us to a tree.

Amen

Closing Prayer

Lord God, we thank you! Lord Jesus, we thank you for the apocalypse that you are. Thank you that it was your flesh that was ripped like the curtain in the temple, revealing the heart of God, and what everything means; it means Love. You are the definition of love.

We thank you that you are good. We cast our crowns before you with the knowledge that I am not salvation. *You* are salvation. You are Jesus, and you are holy. May our worship continue with every breath we take, and with every move we make. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

Listen to this in closing. This is what Jesus says. Do you remember Laodicea, the seventh church, the lukewarm church? This is what He says at the end: "The one who conquers, I will grant Him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

And Paul writes this: "We are *hypernikao*." "We are *hyper conquerors THROUGH HIM who loved us*." May you believe the Gospel and get back on the diving board. Don't stop. Don't quit. Yes, this world is full of chaos and pain, but you are full of Jesus. In His name believe and live.

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.

13

The Soundtrack to the End of the World

The Soundtrack to the End of the World

Revelation 6

January 27, 2018

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

Peter Hiett

All images by Peter Hiett unless otherwise credited.

Introduction

Before we begin, I'd like to make an announcement. As you know, God is Love and Jesus is the Prince of Peace . . . And yet, Hollywood movies are laced with violence and suffering. So, I've formulated a petition for the production of wholesome movies and I've even provided some suggestions . . . for example:

1. Instead of *The Dark Knight*, how about the *Joy of Batman*, which focuses on Bruce Wayne's effort to sponsor a showing of Thomas Kinkaid paintings at the Gotham Art Museum.
2. Or how about *Thor: The Carpenter*, how to build things with a hammer, rather than tear them down.
3. We've been subjected to an endless string of Rocky movies in which we watch grown men pummel each other. How about, *Rocky Retires* and offers free yoga classes in a non-judgmental and inclusive atmosphere.

Now wouldn't you love to see those movies this summer?

Contact me if you'd like to sign the petition.

Let's Pray!

Prayer

Father, we ask that you would help us to preach your Word, in the name of Jesus through the power of your Word transform us with your Word, Amen.

Message

Revelation 6

Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Well, Revelation Chapter 6 makes Hollywood movies look pretty mild.

So, how do you feel? Do you have some questions?

Perhaps:

- What happened to Jesus? Or...
- Why would Jesus do that? Or...
- And doesn't He love us?

Many folks say, "Well, of course, He loves us . . . so this isn't about us. We're good and this is God's judgment on those that are bad—this is the Great Tribulation."

In Matthew 24, Jesus warned of a time of great tribulation, but then in verse 24 He says, *"This generation will not pass away until all these things take place."* If you read the text carefully, I think you'll find that everything He describes before verse 24 happened just like He said it would, and culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple, in 70 AD.

But then, after verse 24, Jesus says, *"Of that day and hour, no one knows..."*

I think *"that day and hour"* is the end of all things.

Well, many have said that Revelation 6 and most of the Revelation describes the forty years after Jesus' death and the destruction of the temple, which was the end of the Old Covenant Age. "Christ is the end of the law" (Romans 10:4).

These folks are called "Preterists." And I think they're right—
The Revelation is about that, but not only that.

Jesus promised tribulation for everyone: *"In this world you will have tribulation."*

And John writes, *“Blessed are those that hear the words of this prophecy.”* I think that must be because it’s not only about folks in 70 AD; it’s about you in 2018.

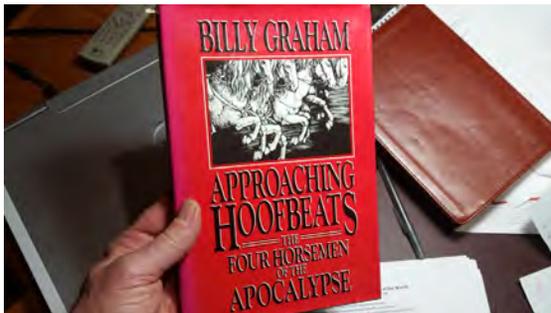
Well, some say the Revelation is *only* about the past.
Some say it’s *only* about the future.

In 19th century England, a fellow named John Darby used the works of an obscure Jesuit priest to argue that the prophecies of Daniel 9 and Matthew 24 had been postponed by about 2000 years. And he formulated a previously unheard-of doctrine called the “Pre-tribulation Rapture.”

The doctrine was popularized in America by a rather questionable figure named Cyrus I Schofield who published the *Schofield Reference Bible* in 1909. His End Times scenario took America by storm in the last century, such that folks can now write books like *The Left Behind Series*, and Americans think that this stuff is what Christians have always believed, when in reality no one had ever even heard of it 150 years ago.

The doctrine has proved to be a very effective tool for “evangelists,” trying to get people to come forward at meetings. However, I don’t think it’s proved to be such a great tool for getting folks to trust Jesus—the Lamb on the throne.

In the 20th Century, pastors would read Revelation 6 and preach about the *“Approaching Hoofbeats of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.”*



They would say:

- *“This is God’s Judgment against a disobedient creation...”*
- *“And it could be God’s judgment against you unless you raise your hand and come forward...”*
- *“In which case, you’ll be raptured before the Great Tribulation...”*
- *“Which means, you’ll be saved from the Judgment of God...in the future by your good judgment now.”*
- *“You’ll be saved from the Judgment of God because you won’t be around when the Lamb of God turns into the Lion of Judah...”*
- *“You wouldn’t like Jesus when he’s angry.”*

[Image of a Jesus-looking Hulk breaking away from the cross]

See? With our End Times theology and our lust for growing institutions, we have painted a really weird picture of the Savior.

You may say, "Fine Peter, but look at what we just read: *'Everyone runs screaming, "Hide us from the wrath of the lamb...'"*"

That's right! That is what they say . . . but did you notice?

The Lamb hasn't turned into a Lion—He's still a Lamb.

They're running from the Lamb, not the Lion.

Sorry to do this to you, but to the world, we modern American Christians must sound just like Tim The Enchanter in Monte Python and the Holy Grail.

Clip from *Monte Python and the Holy Grail*

Tim the Enchanter points a group of knights in search of the king toward a cave where he claims the king is. Hiding in the rocks, the knights tentatively look towards the cave in search of the king. They see nothing. Tim points at a small white rabbit declaring the white rabbit as the king. The knights get angry with Tim for trying to make them believe the king is a rabbit. Tim the Enchanter explains it is no ordinary rabbit: "That's the most foul, rude, and cruel rabbit you've ever set eyes on...it's a killer!" The knights respond in disbelief. Looking at the tiny "innocent" white rabbit, they determine he is not a king. Having no fear of the rabbit, the knight approaches the rabbit in order to turn him into soup. Within seconds of moving towards the rabbit, the rabbit ferociously attacks the knight removing his head. The clip ends with one of the knights gasping out in disbelief: "Jesus Christ!" Tim the Enchanter replies, "I warned you!"

"Jesus Christ!"

"I warned you..." Is that the Gospel?

Is this Evangelism: *"Jesus looks like a lamb, but bites like a lion, so you better join our group???"* Something is not quite right with the way we've preached the Good News.

And yet, it is Jesus that opens the seven seals.

So of course, we want to ask, "Why would Jesus do that?"

Well, maybe because John asked him to do that... Remember?

It's what we've been preaching on the last several weeks:

After the letter to the angels of the seven churches and the call to conquer, Jesus calls to John saying, *"Come up here."* John sees the throne of God, which is the judgment seat of God and someone seated on the throne, someone who holds in his hand, a scroll, sealed with seven seals—seven seals, like the seven days of creation.

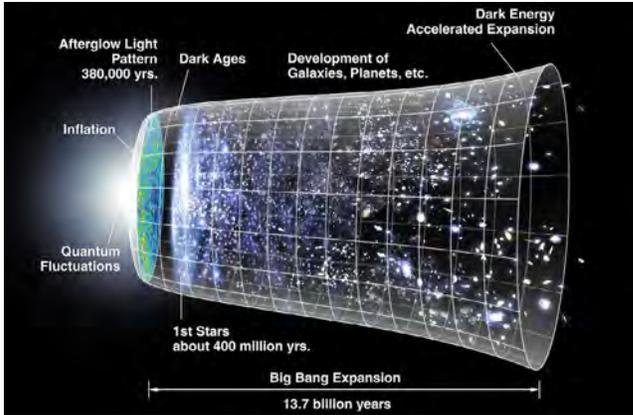
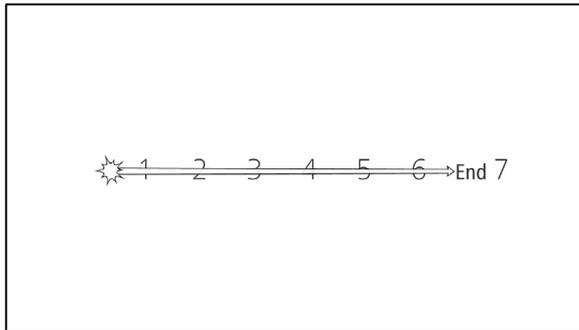


Figure 1 Image credit: NASA / WMAP science team

It is the Cosmos.

Jesus even said, *“In this cosmos, you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer I have conquered the cosmos.”*



Ancients divided the Cosmos into six or seven *“aion”*s in Greek, seven eons, which Genesis refers to as seven *“yom”*s—translated *seven days*.



So the sealed scroll is like the seven *“aions”* of creation in the strong right hand of God who is *“aionios”*—that is, eternal.

John has been out-carnated into eternity, where he sees all of creation in the strong right hand of God and yet, He doesn't know what any of it means.

The scroll is creation and the scroll is the Judgment of God.
Creation is the Judgment of God. Judgment means "decision."
In Genesis chapter one God decides; God speaks a Word; creation happens...
And on the Seventh Day, absolutely everything is Good & everyone worships.

AND YET... when John looks at the scroll, it's sealed

Why does Jesus open the scroll?

Maybe because John asked Him to open the scroll...

Maybe we all ask Him to open the scroll...

Maybe Eve and that first Adam asked Him to open the scroll...

They wanted the knowledge of Good and evil.

And now, in this world, we are coming to know evil . . .

Perhaps we'll also come to know or be known, by the Good.

"The Light shines in the darkness," wrote John

- We look for the Way when we realize that we're lost.
- We long for the Truth when we've been assaulted by lies.
- We learn to love the Life when we discover that we're good as dead.

God told them, "*The day you eat of it you will surely die . . .*"

You are, or were, "*dead in your trespasses and sins,*" according to Scripture.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life shine in death, lies, and darkness.

- We look to the Light in the darkness.
- We come to know the Savior when we know we need saving.

Well, John weeps. And Jesus opens the Scroll, as *every creature in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and all this in them,* sings His praise to the One on the throne.

It's quite a picture:

The first four seals release four horsemen.

Seven is the number of creation and four often refers to this world: four seasons, four directions, the four winds. The four horsemen are not unfamiliar. Zechariah saw four horsemen. They patrol the earth (Zech. 1:10. 6:7).

The first horsemen is crowned and seated on a white horse. He rides out conquering and to conquer, but we don't know what kind of conquering is implied.

- So, some have argued that this is a picture of Christ, for after all He is the Light and the very Word, which creates all things, that God speaks into the void in the beginning.
- But because He's part of the four horsemen, others have argued that He's not the Christ but the imitation Christ—the antichrist—not the Truth but the lie. And that

makes some sense for all earthly conquerors advertise themselves as the savior in one form or another.

The second rider takes peace from the earth. He is chaos.
But now ask yourself,

“Is God’s Judgment chaos or Logos?”

“Is God’s Judgment Truth or Lies?”

The third rider brings famine.

A quart of wheat was considered sustenance for a day.

And a Denarius was a day’s wage for a laborer.

There is enough, but only if no one hoards it, refusing to share—refusing to love.

Ask yourself, *“Is selfishness God’s Judgment or is Love?”*

The fourth rider is Death followed by Hades—Hades is where people hide.

“Is darkness God’s Judgment?”

Was it God’s Judgment that made Adam and Eve Hide in the Garden?

Or was it fear of God’s Judgment that made them hide?)

“Is God’s judgment darkness or Light?”

“Is God’s judgment death or Life?”

The four horsemen are deception, warfare, poverty, and death.

Jesus releases these “things,” but He is not these things.

Modern Americans seem to be utterly terrified that these horsemen might come riding in our country one day . . . But most people for most of time, and in most of the world, would probably say, “I’ve seen the horsemen—they rode through my village last week. Who hasn’t seen deception, warfare, poverty, and death?”

You know, if they are just a threat in our future, they fill us with terror. But if this is a description of what we experience now, it might fill us with something else.

At the opening of the fifth seal, John sees martyrs under the altar where the priests threw the blood of sacrifice. These witnesses have been slaughtered like lambs, on the altar, in the temple.

In Matthew 23 right before Jesus prophesies the destruction of the temple, He says to the Scribes and Pharisees, *“I send you prophets... whom you kill and crucify... so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth... from Abel... to Zechariah, who you murdered between the Sanctuary and the altar.”* These martyrs are already literally under the altar.

Then, in Matthew 27, as Jesus yielded up His Spirit, there was a great earthquake, tombs were opened and the bodies of saints were raised from the dead. I think these

witnesses are those that had died for the Word of God, before the Word of God, yielded up His life on the tree.

Whatever the case they cried out, *“How long oh Lord?”*

Which means they must not have read *The Left Behind Series* or had access to one of those end times charts... or maybe that’s all a bunch of bunk.

They cry, *“How long before you will judge?”* Which means, the horsemen must not be the Judgment. If they ask, *“How long until you judge?”* then, what *has happened* must not be “The Judgment,” or they can’t yet see the meaning of the Judgment.

Take a look at this scroll:



Anyone in John’s day would know that if a judge were sitting on a judgment seat holding a sealed scroll in his hand, opening the seals would not be the judgment; opening the seals would be a necessary step in order to reveal His Judgment.

If it was a seven-sealed scroll, and you got six seals open, you might begin to see the Judgment, but you probably wouldn’t understand it’s meaning.

The martyrs cry out, “How long until you judge . . . and avenge.”

Avenge is this fascinating Greek verb, *ekdikeo*.

Ek means “out” and *dikaio* means “make right.”

Ekdikeo means something like “bring our righteousness.”

We usually translate it with the English word, “vengeance.”

Scripture makes it clear, that vengeance belongs to God. Paul quotes that scripture in Romans 12 and then adds, *“So be kind to your enemy and in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head”* (See Is. 61:2, Luke 4:19, Romans 12:19ff). We don’t understand God’s vengeance or His Judgment.

In John’s Gospel (John 3:19), Jesus says, *“...This is the judgment:* There’s one judgment just as there is One Word, which means every judgment scene in Scripture is the same Judgment described from a different angle.

“... This is THE judgment: the light has come into the world...”

John 8:12 Jesus says, "I AM the Light of the world." Light is eternal. Jesus is the Eternal Judgment. He is the Light, the Word, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

... This is the judgment: the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been done by God" (John 3:19-21).

At the sixth seal, behold there is an earthquake, the sun's light fails and the full moon became like blood. On the sixth day of creation, on the sixth day of the week, at the sixth hour of the day, Jesus is crucified on the tree in the garden on Calvary.

The Gospels record that there was a great earthquake, the sun's light failed . . . and according to Peter in Acts chapter 2, and according to modern astronomers, the moon rose blood red in full eclipse that night.

As we preached: Jesus is the Faithful Witness & the faithful witness is the moon. On Good Friday, John saw the Faithful Witness rise from the earth blood red.

A clip from *The Passion*

[Jesus, covered in blood—"blood red," is lifted up on a cross.]

John saw the Judgment of God, and he wept for he didn't know what it means.

Now you might say, "Well, I want to know about *final* judgment—the *End*." Jesus already told us, "*I am the End*"... and on the cross, He said, "*It is finished*."

And yet in Matthew 24, when Jesus describes the fall of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the temple, He paints the same picture:

- Sun and moon will be darkened and the stars will fall from the sky.
(And please note: the stars fall several times in the Revelation.)
Sun, moon, and stars, and "*you will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven*," says Jesus... verse 34, "*This will happen in your lifetime*."

Then in Matthew 27:64, At His trial Jesus says, "*From now on, you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven*."

Do you understand? Since His crucifixion, Jesus, who is the End, has been coming all the time.

Remember how we talked about Flatland in a former sermon? Remember we live on this timeline? Jesus can say, "*Behold I come on the clouds of heaven*."



And His coming is one moment from the standpoint of eternity . . . and yet, billions and trillions of moments from the standpoint of space and time.

So that could look like this with the scroll:



“Behold I come.” And one event in eternity would be all of these different experiences in space and time.

Or maybe it could be like this:

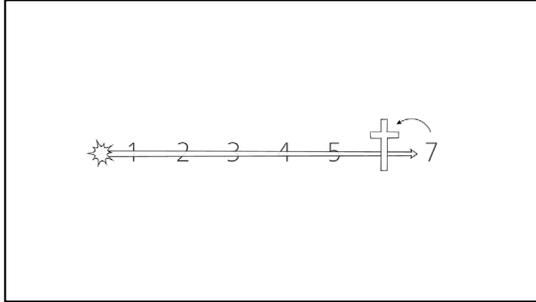


“Behold I come.” And He could come at like, the sixth seal to the seventh seal, but one event would be experienced in all these different ways.

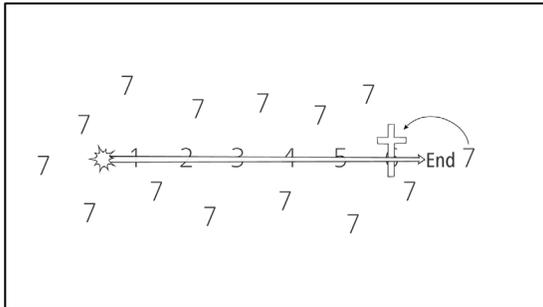
- So on Good Friday, He descended into Hades, Old Testament saints and martyrs saw Him; tombs were opened and they came out.
- In 70 AD, He came to Jews in Jerusalem who didn’t receive Him forty years before, the sun and moon went black, the stars fell, and they saw Him as He is.
- And the day you die you will see Him coming on the clouds of Heaven.

It’s all one event experienced at a Gazillion points in space and time.¹ It’s so important that you come to know who He is—which is what God means—before you see Him coming OR you might run in terror and try to hide in the depths of space and time.

¹ 1 Thess. 4:17—It’s one Judgment and one rapture, from a gazillion points in space and time.



Understand? At the cross, God's Eternal Judgment invaded time.



It is the End and it is the Beginning.

Jesus was crucified at the end of the sixth day and raised on the eighth, which in Hebrew thought is an eternal seventh—the endless Sabbath that is the End

In Genesis 1, at the end of the sixth day of creation, which is the beginning of the seventh day of creation, "everything is very good." Everything!
 And that's exactly what John saw before Jesus began to open the scroll. The End is the Beginning and we are surrounded by the Judgment, which is everything filled with the Good—the Good, that is God.

God's Judgment is "Everything good!"

And God's Judgment is how God makes everything good.

God's Judgment in His Word. And His Word is Jesus.

God's Judgment is Good and God's Judgment is Life.

"I know that His commandment is Eternal Life," said Jesus.

God's Judgment is creation, salvation and absolute Grace!

Now, listen very closely for I'm about to expose a lie from the pit of Hell:

Jesus did not save us *from* God's Judgment.

Jesus *is* God's Judgment that saves us from our own judgment—what the Bible calls "sin".

Our judgment is to take the Life of the Good on the tree.

Our judgment is deception, warfare, greed, and death.

Our judgment is to choose darkness, and so we run from the Light Eternal.

- We run from the light, to save our judgment, which is our ego, which becomes a prison of pride and shame in which we hide.
- We hide, like Eve and Adam hid, from the judgment of God that came walking in the cool of the day, calling to us, “Where are you?”

At the sixth seal, everyone cries the great day of their wrath has come.
Well, if God is angry, He’s angry at the place in which you hide.

At the sixth seal, everyone runs from the face of Him who is seated on the throne.

[“We’ve seen the glory of God shining in the face of Christ,” writes Paul.]

At the sixth seal, everyone runs from the slaughtered lamb and begs the mountains and hills to hide them in the depths of the earth.

Scripture refers to that place as *Hades*.

English Bibles often translate that word as “Hell.”

Hell, is trusting nothing but your own judgment.

God hates Hell—And so Revelation 20:14, He destroys it with Holy Fire.

That’s His Judgment.

Well, chapter six ends with this question, “*Who can stand?*”

In the next chapter, we find out:

- It’s people that have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.
- It’s people that cry out, “Salvation belongs to our God.”
- It’s people that have confessed their judgment—which is sin—and received God’s Judgment, which is Absolute Grace.
- It’s people that have come through the Great Tribulation.
- It’s people that have died to their own ego and begun to live to the Glory of God
- It’s people that have joined the eternal symphony around the throne as all creation worships God for His Judgment is Good—Jesus is the Good hanging on the tree.

They know the Good, but only because the Good knew them in this world that is evil . . .
“*The Light shines in the darkness,*” wrote John in His Gospel. God’s Judgment is not darkness, lies, chaos, greed, and death. But perhaps darkness, lies, chaos, greed, and death, reveal the Glory of the Light, who is Truth, Logos, Love and Life—our Savior, the Judgment of God.

In Chapter 8, the Lamb opens the seventh and final seal.

- Seven angels begin to blow seven trumpets.
- I think it means that the End is proclaimed throughout space and time.
- It means the Judgment is proclaimed throughout space and time.
- It’s Hope, and it’s why people hope: they hear the trumpets.

This may not have occurred to you, but the entire time that John is watching Jesus open the scrolls, all of Heaven is singing.

- Revelation 4:8, they never cease to say “Holy, Holy, Holy.”
- Revelation 5:8, the elders have harps and sing an eternally new song.
- Revelation 5:13, all creation joins in.

The Revelation is like a great symphony of Logos being sung into chaos, until at last the last trumpet sounds and the Heaven that John saw in the beginning, descends to earth as the end. But the entire time, even in moments of silence, there is an eternal symphony of praise . . . a soundtrack, if you will, from the beginning to the end . . . of space and time.

I remember sitting in a movie theatre as a young man watching incredible violence on the movie screen; it really disturbed me; in fact, it scared me:

- There was a man on the screen with dark hair and dark eyes . . .
- He looked as if he were of Mediterranean descent . . .
- He was covered in blood, near naked...
- An angry mob thirsty for violence cheered as he was beaten beyond recognition—He was *“as one from whom men hide their faces.”*
- In his pain, he cried out for his beloved—*“Adrian, Adrian, I did it for you Adrian.”*
And just when I thought chaos, death, and destruction had won.
Just when I thought he was dead for sure, I heard trumpets.
I heard this: [The Rocky theme song is played]
I heard the *soundtrack*. I heard the *theme song*.

When you hear the theme song that changes things.

It tells you:

- This is a story. There is an author. All the suffering serves a purpose.
- All the suffering is worth suffering, for it reveals the beauty of the Plot—and once you trust the Plot it transforms the meaning of all the suffering.
- In other words, the theme song tells you: *You are about to receive a revelation of glory, the glory of Rocky Balboa!*
- The theme song tells you: *“It’s about to get good. It’s glory time!”*

It’s about to get Good, BUT you couldn’t even recognize the Good,
Unless you had first encountered the bad.

Without Apollo Creed, we would never see the glory of Rocky Balboa.
Without the Joker, we would never know Batman. (We’d only know Bruce Wayne).
Without evil infecting the Cosmos, we’d never sing the praises of Thor & his hammer.
Without the fall, we could never be saved, and come to know the Savior.
Without the cross, we’d never know Easter.
Without those horsemen, we’d never know the meaning of the scroll.

Romans 8: *God subjected creation to futility in hope... the Hope of Glory.*
Romans 11: *He consigned all to disobedience that he may have Mercy on all.*
That’s His Judgment; that’s the new and eternal song.

But without tribulation, we’d never learn the song.

Our hearts know this. That’s why we go to movies.

We just don’t have the stomach for it in real life.

So, we become voyeurs of other people's sufferings in movies, Scripture, and theology. But voyeurs of suffering can only be voyeurs of glory. And Jesus, the Rock, wants you to share His glory. (In Revelation 21:11 His Bride has the Glory of God.)

You were born into this fallen world to see the Judgment of God, learn to trust the Judgment of God, fall in love with the Judgment of God, and become the very Body of the Judgment of God, such that His Judgment and your Judgment would be the very same Judgment . . . not because they have to be, but because you want them to be.

After a great movie, you don't have to try to change, you just do change.
After watching Rocky you just go around punching stuff 'cause you want to.
And after watching Jesus you begin to Love in Freedom.
That means you love because you want to love.

Well, He isn't calling you to just watch His movie.
You *are* His movie.

At the third seal, there is a famine, and a voice says, "*A quart of wheat for a Denarius... But, do not harm oil and wine.*" Did you notice that? The voice comes from the middle of the four living creatures and it must be Jesus. The only other place "*Oil and wine*" appears as a phrase in the New Testament, is in the story of the Good Samaritan, who pours oil and wine, upon a wounded Jew that must've hated him.

Read it closely and you'll realize that the Good Samaritan is Jesus.
And He wants us to be Good Samaritans too—actually, His Body.

The voice says, "There will be a famine, but I will always provide the equipment for Love." ("my Spirit and my Blood") for my Body.

Some think our job is to eliminate all suffering.
But we are here to learn love, and then, live Love, in the midst of suffering.
Love is the Judgment of God.

Our job is not to eliminate crosses but to learn to carry them.
No one ever suffered as much as Jesus suffered when He bore the sins and sorrows of this World on the tree... my sins and sorrows upon the tree.

The Slaughtered Lamb reveals the meaning of *History*, and the meaning of my history, and your history. And . . .

History and your history, and my history reveal the Glory of the Slaughtered Lamb.

He suffers your history and makes it His Story on his tree.
He suffers your darkness and reveals His Light.
He suffers your chaos and to fill it with Logos.
He suffers your evil and so reveals the Good
He suffers your sin and gives you himself—He is Grace.

He suffers your judgment and gives you God's Judgment, such that when you finally believe it, you will no longer *try* to be good, you just *will* be good—you'll start singing because you want to more than anything in this world.

I'm saying that at the cross you learn the soundtrack to the end of the world . . . and your particular part in the symphony of unending Glory that is eternal Life.

You know John had been at the cross and he wept for he didn't know what it meant. Jesus appeared to John, and said, "Come up here and listen to the sound track."
It changes things.

A clip from *The Passion* (but accompanied by music inserted by Peter Hiatt)
[Jesus, covered in blood, is lifted up on the cross. John watches in wonder. Suddenly the theme Song from *Rocky* begins to play while various scenes of Jesus enduring the cross play out before our eyes.]

We come to worship in the midst of tribulation to listen to the soundtrack of Heaven, find courage, and begin to sing along . . .
AND YET . . . That didn't feel quite right, did it?
- I mean that wasn't really the correct theme song...
- I mean Rocky Balboa was like a lamb that would turn into a lion and pummel his enemies—that's how he conquered. He was like the rabbit in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

But in Revelation chapter six, they don't run from the Judgment of God because the Lamb has turned into Lion. They run from the Judgment of God because the Lion is a slaughtered lamb. They run from the Lamb... and the Lamb's not chasing them!

They don't run from the horsemen, from warfare, greed, death, and hell.
They're not terrified of them; we're very familiar with them; they are *our* judgment.

They run from the Prince of Peace, who is Love, and Life, and Light.
He is God's judgment.
They run from the slaughtered Lamb... and hide in "Hell."
Not because God's Judgment is evil, but because God's Judgment is Good.

They run from the slaughtered Lamb...
Who do you suppose slaughtered that Lamb? We all did.
"Everyone slave and free" run from the lamb (Rev. 6:15).
We run because He is categorically different. In Biblical terms: He is Holy.

So "Rocky" isn't the right theme song, but maybe this is.

A clip from *The Passion* (but accompanied by music inserted by Peter Hiatt)

[Jesus, covered in blood, is lifted up on the cross. John watches in wonder. Suddenly, the hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy” by Reginald Heber begins to play in the background while various scenes of Jesus enduring the cross play out before our eyes.]

*“Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in
earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!”*

That is God! If most of us suddenly saw Him as He is, I think we’d drop like flies or go up in a puff of smoke... for we’d see:

Although we’ve always tried to be first, the first are last and last are first.

Although we’ve always tried to exalt ourselves, the humble are exalted and the exalted are humbled.

Although we’ve always tried to save our lives, we must lose our lives to find them.

We’ll see that with every bad choice we crucified the Good.

And every good choice was not our choice, but His.

We’ll see that whenever we think, “This is my life,” we take His Life.

He is the Good and He is the Life, hanging on the tree in the Garden.

We’ll see our sin; our sin is our Judgment.

And unless we’ve learned to trust God’s Judgment—we’ll run.

We’ll see that we’ve always crucified the Good and taken His life.

And unless we trust that He’s always *given* His Life, and that’s the Good—we’ll call to the mountains and hills to cover us in darkness,² but unless we’ve learned what He means—I think we’ll try to hide in Hell.

God’s Judgment is Jesus, and it means: “I create you, I save you, I redeem you, and I love you for I Am Love.” Salvation is agreeing with the Judgment of God—not avoiding the Judgment of God.

The Good News is that although . . .

- Rev. 6:15—every person hides from the Judgment of God and although,
- Rev. 19:18—every person will be cut by the Judgment of God and have their flesh consumed according to the Judgment of God.

² We will all see God’s Judgment. Scripture says, “All eyes will see him.”

Every person will worship the Judgment of God standing on the throne (Rev. 5:13), for this is the Judgment of God, “Behold I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

Like I said, the Judgment of God is Creation, Salvation, and Eternal Life. But wouldn't it be best if you learned to love the Judgment of God right now?

Listen closely: within one generation (within your lifetime), the sun will fail, the moon will turn red, the stars will fall and the sky will roll up like a scroll. Within one generation, you will see the Judgment of God coming on the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. And yet, you can see Him and fall in love with Him right now.

Communion

For on the night He was betrayed by us “He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you.” 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 of God. And now, I know, Jesus definitely knows: life in this world is very hard. Don't run and hide, come to the Judgment, walk into the Judgment. Listen for the music. What does all this drama mean? It's time . . . for the Revelation of Glory.

All I'm saying is believe the Gospel. Amen.

Listen children of God. Fear does not save you; Love saves you from fear. God is Love and another word for fear is faithlessness. So, in the name of God, in the power of His Spirit, through the authority of His shed blood no more fear. Have faith. In other words, believe the Gospel—in a Word Jesus, which means God is Salvation. That's Good News! Believe it. 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.

14

What's So Great About the Great Tribulation? (The Omen)

What's so Great about the Great Tribulation? (The Omen)

Revelation 7

February 4, 2018

#14 in our series "The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation"

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

Lord, would you cause us to preach? And I pray that you would help me not to lie about you. That's a terrifying thought to me. I thank you Lord that you send your Spirit, and I pray that your Spirit would impart your Word to our hearts and that we would see you truly—not falsely. Lord God, we pray that we would join in with those heavenly creatures, the twenty-four elders, and the people around your throne singing the new song. In Jesus' name, we ask it. Amen.

Message

Clip from *Damien: Omen II*:

A man cuts a boy's hair while he sleeps. Scary music plays in the background. The man continues to cut until he sees the numbers 666 on the boy's scalp. The music intensifies as the camera zooms in on a man's concerned face.

Well, that's kinda freaky. (I showed that clip a couple years ago)

That was Gregory Peck in the 1976 film *The Omen*. He's shaving his son's head because they've been having some discipline problems, and he needs to check for the mark of the beast. It turns out that Damien is the Antichrist; that would explain the discipline problems.

After the movie, I almost shaved my head for fear that I was the Antichrist . . . or at least marked by the beast. It was the 70's. Our youth pastor had shown the movie, *A Thief In the Night* at youth group. Hal Lindsay had published his best seller *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

Hal Lindsay believed in the pre-tribulation rapture and implied that it would happen in 1988 because that was one forty-year generation after the founding of the modern nation-state of Israel. That was important because folks, like Lindsay, believed there was a "prophetic gap" in the prophecies of Daniel chapter 9.

In Daniel 9, Gabriel says to Daniel,

“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place”

—Daniel 9:24

It’s a remarkable prophecy, for seventy weeks of years, 490 years¹ brings us to just about the time that Jesus is crucified for our transgressions, putting an end to sin and anointing us as the new holy place—the Sanctuary.

Well, dispensationalists like Lindsay postulate a prophetic gap of at least 2000 years between Daniel’s sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week.ⁱ

- They argue that the seventieth week hasn’t happened yet...
- And that when Jesus said, “This generation will not pass away until you see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven,” He didn’t mean that generation but rather a generation at least 2000 years in the future...
- So the temple will need to be rebuilt, and re-destroyed, by some sort of reconstituted Roman Empire before Jesus returns to do what He didn’t finish the first time around. It is “not finished,” it would seem.

And that’s why the fans of the *Left Behind* books are also supportive of the nation of Israel, talk about the European Union, and get so worked up about news from the Temple Mount. They think it’s all necessary for the second coming of Christ.

Many will argue outright, or implicitly, that when Jesus comes again He’ll do things differently the second time around; He won’t look the same: His Mercy will have come to an end and He won’t get Himself crucified like a slaughtered lamb.

Well, like I said, in the 1970’s I saw the movies, read the books, watched the *Omen*, and I was stressed, for at least three reasons:

Firstly, I began to secretly dislike Jesus, even though I publicly professed Jesus.²

Secondly, I wanted to save myself *from* Jesus . . . and His Great Tribulation.

¹ [a jubilee of decades]

² I was distressed with Jesus and scared of Jesus for it seemed that He’d changed. I’d fallen in love with the Jesus I met in my dad. But I was appalled at the Jesus I learned about in the movies. He wasn’t Jesus, but almost anti-Jesus.

And thirdly, I thought, “What if I’m the Antichrist?”

I knew the Anitchrist was predestined to be, but what a bummer to be him. Just the thought turned me into a Grinch. And a Grinch is an antichrist; He doesn’t think God is salvation, he believes *he* is his own salvation. He even hates Christmas.

Well, that’s why I almost shaved my head; I was worried that I was the Antichrist. I was looking for the omen.

Well, last week, we looked at Revelation chapter six, in which the Lamb opens the first six seals of the seven-sealed scroll.

Preterists believe that chapter six describes the Great Tribulation leading up to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, and it makes sense.

Futurists (like Hal Lindsay) believe that it refers to a seven-year Great Tribulation sometime in the distant future.

But last week, we noted that it seems to describe what we see every night on the evening news: deception, warfare, greed, famine, death, and Hades. We also noted that those things are not *the Judgment*, but necessary steps in the revelation of *the Judgment*.

And yet, at the opening of the sixth seal, everyone does begin to see the Judgment, even though most folks don’t know what it means.³

They see the thing that comes from the judgment seat of God.

They see Jesus, and all run in terror, and now listen very closely:

They run in terror but not because they see that Jesus has changed.
They run in terror because they see that Jesus is eternally *unchanged*.
(Hebrews 13:8 “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*”)

They run in terror, not because Jesus has changed . . .

They run in terror because *they* must change, for The Truth will *never* change.

They see that ultimate reality is not the survival of the fittest—like the reality of a

³ At the opening of the 6th seal, everyone sees the face of him seated on the throne, which is the judgment seat, and they see—the slaughtered Lamb—that’s Jesus Christ and Him crucified, we see the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

beast; ultimate reality is Sacrificial Love.

They see a slaughtered lamb standing on the throne of God—the Judgment Seat.

And so:

- The first are last and the last first; the humble are exalted and the exalted humbled.
- The human ego is an illusion, and everything that's anything is Grace.
- They see the light, and it obliterates the shadow, that they think they are.
- They see the Judgment of God:

This is the judgment, the light has come into the world and people loved darkness rather than the light... everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light... but whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been done by God. —John 3:19-21

Revelation 6:15-7:1-10

Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"⁴

Who can stand? We're about to find out. Next Verse:

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,

12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,

⁴ When the glory of God filled the temple in the Old Testament, none could stand.

"The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple... and who can stand?" asks the Prophet Malachi in the 5th century BC

*12,000 from the tribe of Gad,
12,000 from the tribe of Asher,
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,
12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,
12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,
12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.*

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Who are these guys?

The 144,000, and then, *the multitude that no one can number?*

The answer matters...⁵

⁵ At the end of WWII most people in the world were utterly horrified at the Nazi atrocities committed against people of Jewish descent. But two countries were particularly supportive of the idea of creating a renewed Jewish state in a place that hadn't been a Jewish state since 70 AD.

Those two countries were Great Britain and the United States, and it was in those two countries that this New End Times theology of John Darby, CI Schofield, and now Hal Lindsey, and Tim LaHaye had taken root.

Now I know this is very controversial territory and you may have all sorts of legitimate reasons for supporting, or not supporting, the modern nation-state of Israel, but if your view of the Revelation matches that of, Scofield, Hal Lindsay and the *Left Behind Series*, you probably want to support the modern State of Israel with finances and military aid because they need to rebuild the temple, so the Antichrist can destroy it, so Jesus can come back, set everyone straight, and inaugurate the Millennium.

In Genesis 12:2 God says to Abraham, “*I will make of you a great nation... I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*”

Some say that this means, you’ll be cursed if you criticize the State of Israel. And blessing the State of Israel will get you blessed. So, the nation-state of Israel is your judgment.

In Galatians, Saint Paul argues that the blessing and cursing refer to Abraham’s Seed, who is Jesus—The King of the Jews; Jesus is your Judgment.

No matter what, Israel is blessed to be a blessing, to *all* the nations, *all* the peoples, *all* the families of the earth.

I know there are a million questions and concerns. But for now, I just hope that you’d see: theology matters. It matters to foreign policy, but more importantly it matters to your heart.

“How does the King of the Jews conquer?”

And... “Who are these guys: the 144,00 & the multitude that can’t be counted?”

Let’s pause a moment and review:

“Peter’s Principles for Interpreting the Revelation”

1. The interpretation should be relevant to the people to whom it was sent.

So, it probably isn’t simply about stuff in the *distant future*.

2. The interpretation should be relevant to whomever reads the words of the prophecy, for John said, “Blessed is the one who reads...”

So, it probably isn’t just about stuff in the *distant past*.

We are currently in two foreign wars as a result of 9-11, and our enemies say that it has something to do with the way we back the nation-state of Israel.

No matter what, you must love every Jew, the way you love Jesus.
But how that love manifests may change based on your theology.

3. The Revelation is a *kairology*, not a *chronology*.

(Rev. 1:3 “*Blessed are you who read... for the kairos is at hand*”)

Chronos is calendar time. *Kairos* is Meaning-full time.

- In chapter 10:6 an angel will say, “Chronos will be no more”.

- In chapter 13:18 John writes that the number of the beast can be calculated, for it’s a human number. It can be calculated, and we’ll do that, but it implies that the other numbers are not to be calculated and placed upon a calendar. Jesus said, “*No one knows the day or hour,*” AND we’re talking about the boundary of temporality and eternity—the numbers are not to be placed on a human calendar... but they *do have* profound meaning:

- ✓ So, when you read 7, don’t just count to seven, think of the days of creation, think of the Sabbath, think of the Jubilee—49, and a perfect Jubilee of decades—490 years; think of the fact that “it is finished.”
- ✓ When you hear 6, think the creation of Adam and of the second Adam, and a tree on a hill, the earth shaking and the sky growing black when the sun is covered in sackcloth and the moon rises blood red.
- ✓ When you see 12, think of 12 disciples, 12 tribes, and the 24 elders. Remember: $12 \times 12 = 144$, and remember that 1000 is the largest denomination in the Hebrew language; think big, and think in pictures.

4. All of Scripture is the context of the Revelation.

Basically, everything in the Revelation has already appeared in Scripture . . . often times, over, and over, and over again.

So, if you just go read The Revelation, without knowing your Scripture, you’ll likely become a nut job . . . a very dangerous nut job.

5. John and Paul give us our theological paradigm.

I believe that John the Revelator is also John the disciple (for several reasons), but it means the things John says plainly in his gospel and his epistles inform what John reveals in pictures in the Revelation.

And this is also true of Paul.

- In Acts 19 we read that Paul taught for two years in the Hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus, and “*all the residents of Asia*” came to hear him.
 - Asia is the Roman Province in which the seven churches are located and John arrived in Asia after Paul.
 - So, when John refers to people that get “sealed,” for instance, he would know that his listeners would think of Paul’s reference to people that get “sealed” in his letter to the Ephesians...

So back to our question:

- ✓ Who are these guys?
 1. Who are the 144,000?
 2. Who is the multitude that no one can number? And . . .
 3. What is this crazy seal—"the seal of the living God"?

Most Preterists say that it refers to Christian Jews who took the advice of Jesus in Matthew 24 and fled Jerusalem, taking refuge in the city of Pella.

In the *Left Behind Series*, they postulate that the seal is this cool cross tattoo that appears on the foreheads of the "Tribulation Saints." It actually has some precedent in Ezekiel chapter 9.⁶

But in Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul writes:

In [Jesus] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

- I think "the seal of the living God" is the Spirit of the living God, which fell on the disciples at Pentecost⁷ and people⁸ from every nation heard the disciples singing praises to God in their own language.

- The Seal is the Holy Spirit.

I pray in tongues, and I believe all the gifts of the Spirit are active today. But I *don't* believe that's how you are to know that you've been sealed or know that you have the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote: "*When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*" (*Abba* means "daddy.")

The seal is faith that God is your daddy, and you are His beloved child. It's knowing that He loves you and nothing can change that.

⁶ In Ezekiel 9, an angel marked Jewish believers on the forehead before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC.

⁷ [Pentecost is The Feast of Weeks, 7x7 days, and the Feast of First Fruits. Rev. 14:4—the 144,000 are "first fruits"]

⁸ [Jews and proselytes—newly, newly converted Jews]

In that day, a seal was often a signet ring pressed into wax bearing the family name. To be sealed is to know “*Salvation belongs to our God,*” and so no one can take it away from you; you belong to Him.

When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him⁹ in order that we may also be glorified with him.

-Romans 8:15-17

You see, the seal doesn’t protect you from tribulation; it guards your *heart in the midst* of tribulation.

- The seal guards a heart against the lies of the devil, delivered by demons in Rev. 9:4,
- And yet the saints are conquered by the beast in Rev. 13:7.
- But even if killed by the beast in 13:7, these saints rise with the Lamb in Rev. 14:2 . . . where the saints discover that they have learned the new song.

So who are the 144,000?

The Preterists say that they’re Christian Jews that escaped from Jerusalem before 70 AD.

Futurists say that they are ethnic Jews in the nation-state of Israel that convert to Christ after they realize that they’ve been left behind by Jesus the King of the Jews.

And yet, the 144,000 aren’t really Jews. *Technically*, they are only 1/12th Jews.

Jews are primarily descendants of Judah, which is only one of the 12 tribes.

And now John sees 12,000 from *each* tribe.

At one point, it became common to refer to all Israelites as Jews, but that was only after most of the tribes had been dispersed through the nations. At the time of the Revelation, most of the tribes had been lost for 750 years—except for those that had been left behind and had intermarried with foreigners, and were now called “Samaritans.”

Jesus—King of the Jews—treated them like brothers.

⁹ (*psympascho*, experience the passion with him, get tribulated with him)

In Ezekiel 37, God says, “*Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel... therefore prophecy to them saying, ‘I will raise you from your graves, put my spirit within you and bring you into the land.’*”

Even so, Israel is not just ethnic Israel. According to Rabbi Paul, in Romans 11, Gentile believers have been grafted into the family tree.

Susan and I are waiting to get our results back from DNA testing. I sincerely hope they show some Jewish ancestry, but whether they do or not, I am of the house of Israel and, even better, I’m a Jew.

- The blood of the King of the Jews flows in my veins.
- His Father is my Father—not metaphorically, but *actually*.
- And on top of all that, I’m married to the King of the Jews by covenant.

To be anti-Semitic is to be anti-me, anti-Jesus, and anti-Christian.

In Galatians, Paul refers to the Church as the “*Israel of God*.”

Some people in the US and Britain call that “replacement theology.” But think about it: isn’t replacing “the whole house of Israel” with Judah replacement theology? More than that, it’s exclusion theology.

I’m preaching full inclusion theology (ala Romans 11:11-36).

- I’m saying that Jesus is the King of the Jews.
- And Jesus is the Promised Seed of Abraham.
- And all who curse Him will be cursed, for they will have excluded themselves.
- And all who bless Him will be blessed, for they are sons of the Living God.
- And through Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, for He Himself became a curse for those who cursed Him; He includes even those that exclude Him by being excluded and included on their behalf.

It’s astounding, but just as John says, “*He is the atoning sacrifice, not only for our sins, but the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). He really is the Savior of the *whole world*!

At the end of the Revelation, we’ll watch the kings of the earth who have been cursed and judged—cut by the Judgment of God—bring their glory into the New Jerusalem, through 12 gates that are always open.

They are 12 gates bearing the names of the 12 tribes of Israel . . . built on 12 foundations bearing the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb...

All of them are Christians who would be appalled if you suggested that they were *not* Jews; they didn't replace anybody, they fulfilled everybody.

So who are the 144,000 (144,000 is like 1,000x12x12, the perfect number) that are so carefully numbered—just as the tribes of Israel were carefully numbered before they conquered the Promised Land?

I suspect that they are what theologians have always called, *the church militant*, but not militant like folks in the *Left Behind* movies or the US Armed Forces.

- They are militant like those in Ephesians chapter six, who *battle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness.*

- They are soldiers who take *the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, gird their loins with truth, shod their feet with the Gospel of Peace, take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and the shield of faith to quench the flaming darts of the evil one.*

- They are people sealed with the Spirit and clothed in Jesus. (Eph. 6:10-20)

- They are people called to declare the Good News that God in Christ Jesus has *broken down the dividing wall of hostility* (Eph. 2:14).

- For *this is the plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him* (Eph. 1:10).

You may say, "Nice idea, but people like that get themselves crucified in places like that in the Middle East." Exactly... Rev. 14:4: The 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They are "first fruits," and they have learned and do sing, "the new song."

Do you remember the chief sin of Israel, and then Judah, and then Judas?

Wasn't it the rejection of their calling, that in them, through their seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed?

Israel didn't trust God for Salvation and then refused to extend Salvation to all nations.

It's true that Israel was commanded to slaughter people in towns like Jericho,

- But it's also true that these people were to be offered to God (as *cherem*),

- And it's also true, that God promised to bring all people to His holy mountain and make them all new—He's saving each one of us from ourselves, for each one of us is our own prison—walled city in which we suffer. ¹⁰
- Over and over the prophets criticize Israel and mourn the fact that Israel, Judah and Jerusalem trust political alliances, idols, and themselves . . . for salvation, but not God.
- They think they save themselves and so are offended at the thought that God would save any body else.
- So, when *God is Salvation, Ye-ho-shua, Yeshua—Jesus—King of the Jews*, rides into town, they shout "*hosanna*" for His miraculous gifts, and then, crucify Him for his love of Samaritans, Romans, and sinners.
- They trusted in their own strength, and then, hid behind immense stone walls.
- But the walls of Jerusalem did not save them; they imprisoned them in a Hell of their own making until they saw the King of glory coming on the clouds with power and great glory . . . the Lamb on the throne.
-

The sin of Jerusalem was to believe that salvation belonged to her.

The sin of the Jews, was to exclude the last and least of these, their brothers, which was to exclude Jesus, their King.

The sin of Israel was to think "we are salvation," and so, they rejected "God is Salvation," *yehoshua, yeshua, Jesus*.

Don't you suppose, Israel of God, that we are still tempted with the very same sin?

Maybe, even in the very same place with the very same walls?

Or even bigger walls, for we don't simply exclude the last and least of these, some of us even say that God will torture the last and least of these forever without end...

We say, "*God is salvation*, but He belongs to us, not them..."

We say, "Salvation belongs to us..."

¹⁰ It's also true that Israel was commanded to treat foreigners dwelling in their land as their own.

It's true that all the prophets prophesied a day, when, in the words of Isaiah, "All flesh" would come worship God in a New Jerusalem... and this would happen through the seed, the root and son of David, the slaughtered lamb, the messiah. But Israel rejected her calling to bring salvation, for she forgot that she had been saved.

To believe that you possess Salvation, and therefore dispense Salvation, is to be an imitation Christ—the antichrist.

The beast is the one that believes *“Salvation belongs to me,”* and will compete with others in order to possess it.

There’s so much to say, but I think we, the Church, are the 144,000. We are the “New Jerusalem” coming down.

So, who is the multitude that no one can number?

They come from every nation, tribe, and people...

They are standing before the Lamb on the throne, singing and shouting,
“Salvation belongs to our God.”

Do you suppose they learned this song from the 144,000, who were blessed in order to be a blessing, to all the nations of the earth?

In Revelation 7:10-17 they sing,

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

*“Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

This great multitude, that no one can number, sounds just like the folks in the New Jerusalem coming down, for God says of them, in Revelation 21:

“I will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death will be no more... behold I make all things new” (Rev. 21:4-5).

And that’s a quote right out of Isaiah 25, *“On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast... He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.”*

This is what we see coming down at the end of the Revelation,
And what John saw in chapters five and six, in the beginning. Remember?

He saw *“Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them worshipping the Lamb on the throne.”*

This is like, the Seventh Day when everything is good for “it is finished.”¹¹

This is the End; this is the Eternal Judgment of God . . .

but coming down in space and time.

Notice that they *are* before the throne of God serving Him . . . in His Sanctuary

-But they *will* hunger and thirst no more,
Which implies that they may hunger and thirst right now.

-And the Lamb *will* wipe away every tear from their eyes,
Which implies that they may be crying those tears right now.

Crying tears right now and yet they’re singing, *“Salvation belongs to our God.”*

. . . Who are these people?

Where have you ever seen something like this? . . .

¹¹ This is the end of the sixth seal and the edge of the seventh.

Just as Jesus cried, “it is finished at the end of the sixth day” and the beginning of the seventh—the Sabbath.

The Elder says, *“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. **Therefore...**”*

“Therefore”—so we must ask what is the ‘therefore’ there for, ‘cause it must be there for something.

In other words, *The Great Tribulation*, whatever it is... has a purpose.

It is not an end in itself:

Death and Hades are not an end in themselves.

They are not the End. Jesus is the End.

Death and Hades serve the End, who is also the Life.

Jesus referred to a time of great tribulation—which *did* happen in that generation—but this is The Great Tribulation.

Jesus promised us, *“In this world you will have tribulation.”*

Acts 14:22, *“We must enter the Kingdom through many tribulations.”*

2nd Cor. 4, *“These tribulations”* (torture and imprisonment) Paul calls “slight.” *“These slight momentary tribulations, prepare us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all compare.”*

- If we avoid tribulation, maybe, we also avoid glory.
- Maybe it’s unwise to work so hard at avoiding tribulation.
- Maybe if we got raptured before the Great Tribulation . . . we would actually be, the ones left behind, or the ones that never started.

The elder says, *“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation...,”* which means they were *in* the Great Tribulation.

And he doesn’t say, “these are those that *have come out* of the great tribulation”

Or “these are those that *will come out* of the great tribulation”

But “these are those that *are coming out* of the great tribulation.”

Maybe our journey through this wilderness world *is* The Great Tribulation. Life is hard.

And . . .

You may not have noticed that we will all die.

And we will each see Jesus coming on the clouds with glory.

And you will run in terror . . . unless you’ve learned a new song.

Instead of *“Salvation belongs to me,”*
“Salvation belongs to our God”

So, what’s so great about the Great Tribulation?

What’s so great about getting kicked out of the Garden of Eden?

What’s so great about a creation subjected to futility?

What’s so great about the Great Tribulation?

Well, it’s in great tribulation that we learn the new song:

“It goes like this the fourth, the fifth, the minor fall, the major lift.”

- It’s through the fall on the sixth day of creation, that we learn the glory of the 7th day when everything is good because of the Logos sung into the chaos.

- It’s in tribulation that we come to believe, *“Salvation belongs to our God.”*

And now, I don’t mean salvation (which means deliverance or help) in a small way because it’s not a small world. I mean it in a very big way. You know this:

- There are no good stories, that don’t include tribulation.
- And there are no good people, gracious people, grateful people, humble and beautiful people . . . that have not been through great tribulation.
- All the best sermons . . . were preached out of great pain.
- All the best paintings . . . were born out of great grief.
- All the best songs . . . were written by slaves and servants who experienced tremendous suffering.

Faith, Hope, and Love grow in doubt, despair, and loneliness.

Life is born out of great tribulation—Jesus called the tribulation “birth pains.”

In order to worship the Savior, you must believe that you have been saved through great tribulation.

What’s so great about the Great Tribulation?

It destroys the lie that, *“Salvation belongs to you.”*

And it reveals the Truth: *“Salvation belongs to God.”*

The lie is a prison in which you’re trapped—like the pirate who tried to capture the Moon; it’s your ego. The Truth destroys the prison—just as the Moon captured the pirate, set him free, and He began to dance. He captured the Light, and the Light captured him, and set him free.

To sing or to dance, you must surrender your judgment to a greater Judgment. You must lose control, and then find yourself controlled by the logic of the song—the Logos that fills the atmosphere all around you. You must lose your life, and then, find it—singing and dancing. You must lose your self—such that your deeds are done by the Logic of the Song.

What's so great about the Great Tribulation?

It allows you to see the Judgment of God, surrender to the Judgment of God, and then begin to sing and dance along...

The Judgment of God is the Logos of Love.

And now I must mention my 6th and 7th principles of Interpretation:

6. Any interpretation of the Revelation, which leads you to NOT do, something that Jesus has clearly commanded you to do, is the wrong interpretation.

So, if you think the Revelation is leading you to NOT love your enemies, your interpretation is wrong.

7. It's the Revelation of Jesus . . .

And you already know who He is.

He doesn't change. He is not Love and the opposite of Love. He is sacrificial Love.

And His name means, "*God is Salvation.*"

Well, John sees the True Church—the 144,000—and they begin to morph into a multitude that no man can number, all singing, "*Salvation belongs to our God.*"

And how does this happen? It appears to be miraculous.

It *doesn't happen* through legislation, armies, global politics or any of the weapons of the principalities and powers of this present age.

It *happens* through people singing a new song in the midst of great tribulation.

- You might remember that in several places, Israel was commanded to place the choir in front of the army...
- It was on the seventh time around, on the seventh day, at the blast of seven trumpets as Israel, led by Joshua, worshipped God before the throne . . . that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.
- Jesus (Joshua) sang Psalm 22 in the midst of great tribulation, upon the cross at the edge of the Seventh Day, just outside Jerusalem . . . and the walls are still tumbling down.
- Paul and Silas sang in the Philippian jail, the earth shook, and the doors flew open, and they conquered Europe with the Good News—the Gospel of Salvation.
- It's like the Christmas truce in WWI when the German and English soldiers started singing Christmas carols in their trenches, but soon joined in no-man's land to celebrate the birth of the Messiah.
- It's like all those stories from the persecuted church, where believers worship though beaten and chained, they worship Jesus for who He is, though all the gifts have been

taken away they still sing, “Salvation belongs to our God.” That’s who He is. God is Salvation, and the Church in those types of places grows like wildfire.

- It’s like what I witnessed in Romania when Christians joined hands around the house of a persecuted pastor, Laszlo Tokes. They started singing Christmas carols and would not stop. Though Christmas was illegal and the bodies of thousands were piling up in the street, having been gunned down for singing Christmas carols, they didn’t stop, and on Christmas Day Romania was free.
- It’s like you . . . some of you are facing immense tribulation. I can’t even begin to imagine, and yet you come here and sing, “*Salvation belongs to our God.*”
 - You think your life is inconsequential, but I’m telling you that God is using you to change the world—*not* the Democrats, *not* the Republicans, *not* the Israeli government or the US military, BUT YOU—those that sing the song in the tribulation. Walls crumble, maybe not in your lifetime, maybe you won’t see it; I mean, the seven churches didn’t see it, and yet we’re reading about them today. Walls crumble and angels long to look into your salvation. They long to look at what you’re singing about.
- I’m a pastor, who wanted to do something else, but I watched my dad sing to Jesus in the midst of great tribulation, and I couldn’t help but sing along.

- Am I the Antichrist? Well, I think that maybe my ego is the antichrist.

- John writes that the spirit of the antichrist is already in the world.

- Actually, Revelation 13:8 says, “All who dwell on the earth get marked by the beast.”

- Antichrist means “imitation Christ,” and my ego believes that salvation belongs to me—that’s why I compete with others, behave like a beast, and have a hard time singing and dancing to any tune other than my own.

But I thank God for The Omen: it’s killing the antichrist and setting me free.

Phil. 1:27-28 “*...Stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.*”

When you sing, “*Salvation belongs to our God,*” in the midst of great tribulation, you become an omen from God that destroys the antichrist and exhibits Jesus Christ to a watching world.

I know this has been a rather technical sermon, I may have lost you at points, and now you’re wondering what is Peter trying to say . . .

I’m saying,

This is the Omen that destroys the Antichrist and sets each one of us free:

Clip from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*

[Image of the Whos holding hands and singing]

[The Whos are singing.]

This sound wasn't sad!

Why, this sound sounded glad!

Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small,
Was singing without any presents at all!

He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming! It came!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!

[Image of the Grinch with a huge grin on his face
And what happened then? Well, in Whoville they say
That the Grinch's small heart grew three sizes that day!

And then the true meaning of Christmas came through,
And the Grinch found the strength of ten Grinches, plus two!

Continued on the next page...

[Image of the Grinch on his sled ready to return all the gifts and decorations he'd stolen.]

With a smile to his soul, he descended Mount Crumpet

Cheerily blowing "Who! Who!" on his trumpet.

He roared into Whoville. He brought back their toys.

He brought back their floss to the Who girls and boys.

[Image of Grinch dispersing gifts to the Whos]

He brought back their snuff and their trinkets and fuzzles,

Brought back their pantookas, their dafflers and wuzzles.

He brought everything back, all the food for the feast!

And he, he himself, the Grinch carved the roast beast!

The Grinch sees people holding hands and singing around the Light that has come into the world . . . *even though* all the gifts have been taken away. It breaks down the walls of his heart (it blows it up from the inside), he joins the party, and he carves the roast Beast with a knife.

In chapter 12, we'll see Christmas. Then in chapter 17, we'll begin to watch the Lamb (and those with Him) conquer the Beast with the Judgment of God. It cuts like a knife. This is the Judgment of God.

Communion

On the night Jesus was betrayed he took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you; take and eat; and do this in remembrance of me.” And in the same manner, 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. And do it in remembrance of me.”

This is the Judgment of God. This is the Light that has come into the world. This is the Judgment of God that has descended into great tribulation and is now enthroned in our midst.

Who are those that are washed in the blood of the Lamb and cry out, “Salvation belongs to our God”? They are the Omen.

In Jesus’ name, believe the Gospel and live. Amen.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you that from the foundation of the world you paid it all. And you exhibited it on a tree two thousand years ago, for all to see that you paid it all. Through your Spirit, during worship, you whisper into our hearts, “I paid it all. I’ve got it. Believe me.” Lord God we sing a song in the midst of great tribulation. And we thank you that nothing is stronger than the song because the song is a manifestation of the Word. And the Word is a Word that comes from the throne: “God is Salvation”—Jesus. We worship you, Lord, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Benediction

Now, because we are an institution and I am a pastor, it’s tempting for me to say, “Do the stuff I told you. Go to the class; join us and you probably won’t have any tribulation. But that’s a lie. Jesus said, *“In this world you will have tribulation BUT be of good cheer, I have overcome (have conquered—nenikeka in Gree) the world.”* That’s why you can sing.

The evil one whispers in your ear: “He doesn’t love you. He hasn’t overcome the world.” But Jesus is calling you to sing. Even if you don’t believe Him, you will see He has conquered; He has overcome. In His name, 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

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The Other Side of Silence

The Other Side of Silence

Revelation 8:1-6

February 18, 2018

#15 in our series “The Other Side of Silence”

Peter Hiatt

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Message

We’ve been studying the Revelation since September, and hopefully, you’ve noticed that it’s a rather strange book. It begins with 7 letters to 7 angels in 7 churches. But the Revelation is primarily a vision sent to the *people* in those churches, and in the vision everything is determined. [Peter picks up a scroll and holds it in his right hand.]

In fact, we see what appears to be all of space and time in God’s right hand. In chapter 4, Jesus calls to John saying, “Come up here.” John is out-carnated to a place where everything is good and everyone that’s anyone worships the One who is on the throne.

In the right hand of God is a scroll sealed with seven seals, like the seven days of creation. I think John is looking at all of space and time from the perspective of eternity. That means that everything is set: earthquakes, famines, wars, the kings of the earth, the beast, the great harlot, the dragon, the New Jerusalem coming down.

Everything is determined, but as Jesus prepares to open the scroll—revealing the meaning of all space and time—the 24 elders fall down around the throne each holding a harp *and* something else . . . And I think the something else is really quite odd:

“And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8).

You are the saints. The stuff in the bowls is your prayers—*proseuche* in Greek.

It literally means “prayer wish,” “prayer desire” or “prayer request.”

It’s odd because it appears that God’s will is set...

Just look: all of space and time is in His hand...

But look! There are your prayers outside of space and time . . . stinking up the throne room as God unwraps the meaning of space and time...

Are your prayers determined by space and time or do they create space and time?

In John 14:12-13 Jesus says, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”*

Ever since I learned the magic formula in junior high, I've prayed saying, "In Jesus' name Amen." But I haven't gotten whatever I've asked... And yet, I've witnessed numerous signs and wonders, several healings, and experienced one myself—but it hasn't been whatever I want, whenever I've said, "In Jesus' name."

In Mark 11:24 Jesus says: *"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*

"Whatever you ask... believe that you've received..." which makes me wonder, then why would you ask, if you already believed that you've received it? Why would you ask, unless you just enjoyed asking . . .

"Believe that you've received it (perfect tense) and it will be yours (future tense)."

Well, I've tried, and it doesn't seem to work. So I think: I better try harder! I try to work up faith; I use more words and better words.

Jack Lou was an old friend and fellow Presbyterian pastor in California.

One day, a fellow approached him after the service and said,

Speed prayer has revolutionized my life! I'm planning to open an academy and teach it to others, and I want you, Jack, to be a part. With speed prayer, so much more can be said!

I have developed a system of designating requests with symbols. For instance, family concerns are designated "F." Arguments with my wife are category "3." That's an "F-3." A workplace argument is a "W-3"; African missionaries are "A-7." So you petition God saying, "A-7, W-3, F-3. In Jesus' name, amen." What do you think, Jack?

Jack realized the guy was serious, so he said, "Wow . . . that's really great. You should also develop speed fasting. That way you could fast between breakfast and lunch, and you'd never have to miss a meal!" The guy just looked at Jack and then said, "You're not taking me seriously...?"

Sadly, we do take guys like that seriously. Actually, every human word is a symbol like A-7, W-3, F-3. We think we'll be heard for our many words and better words. And we wonder, "Does prayer work?"

Asking the question, "Does prayer work?" is a little like one of my children asking another of my children, "Does your conversation with Dad work?"

You know when they were little children, I almost always knew what they wanted before they asked it, and yet, I still wanted them to ask . . .

But if they tried to ask with more words and better words, it usually didn't work: "Please please, please! You said. I deserve. I want. I need...I'm telling Mom."

If I were God, I think I might get sick of all our prayers...

You may remember that Bruce Nolan wanted to be God, in the movie *Bruce Almighty*, and God Almighty granted Bruce's request. Bruce got the job and then didn't know what to do with all the prayer requests.

Clip from *Bruce Almighty*

Bruce: *This creepy whisper thing has to end!* [Acting quite overwhelmed, flustered, and annoyed.] *Prayers. Prayers . . .*

[With newly found resolve.] *Okay prayers.*

[Looking up at God in frustration] *I need a script, something concrete, concentrate... Files!*

Let all prayers be organized into files. [Suddenly, the entire room fills with innumerable file cabinets. Bruce is hidden in the midst of them.] *Well...that takes care of the voices. Not exactly a space saver though!*

I know... [the filing cabinets quickly disappear from the room] *prayer post-its!* [A barrage of post-its fly towards Bruce. He, the entire room, and his dog are all covered in post-its.]

If I were God, I think I'd get sick of all our prayers. To be honest, I get sick of my own prayers. In fact, there are certain kinds of prayers that can just totally stress me out—to be specific, *proseuchome*—prayer requests.

If I try to pray through a list of requests before I go to bed, it can get me so worked up I'll never sleep... I'll pray something like, "God help Mom with this, and give peace to so and so in the hospital...etc. etc."

And then I'll start thinking, "If I were a better son, I'd remember to call mom in the morning, and if I were a better pastor I'd go visit so and so before I meet with that family for breakfast... I better get up and make a note in my calendar... And God I prayed for peace and I'm not feeling any peace—how long until you give me peace? And oh yeah, in Jesus' name, amen..."

Remember Revelation 6:9? At the opening of the 5th seal, the witnesses who had been slain for the Word of God, under the altar, pray, "How long Oh Lord until you judge and avenge our blood?"

Avenge is the word *ekdikesis*, which means to make right.

And that's really all our *proseuchome*: every prayer request is that God would make it right; we might not be sure what that means, but we want God to make it right—*ekdikesis*.

Well, the witnesses cry, “How long oh Lord?” The witnesses are Old Testament saints like Jeremiah and Ezekiel (that have been slaughtered for the Word), and they’re crying out, “How long until you make it all right?” They do that in the Bible; you can read about it. And they’re still doing it wherever they are: “How long oh Lord until you make it all right?” It’s like they can’t sleep ’cause (do you remember) they’re each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, chill out until more folks are martyred just like them. That’s weird—crazy.

Well, I just wonder if God gets sick of the incessant chatter—our many words.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, “When you pray, go into your room and shut the door. Don’t make it a show... your Father will reward you in secret. And don’t think you’ll be heard for your many words... your Father already knows what you need before you ask him...When you pray say, ‘our Abba, our Father in Heaven...’”

A while ago, I found an old videotape in the front hall closet. It’s a tape of my parent’s backyard before they moved... I’m taping, and there is this incessant chatter in the background; my three-year-old son, Coleman, following me around constantly saying “Daddy, Daddy, Daddy” and asking me all sorts of questions, to which I would say, “Yes Coleman, maybe Coleman, sure Coleman, OK Coleman...”

I don’t remember the questions. But just hearing “Daddy, Daddy, Daddy” on the tape almost broke my heart. I remembered. It was like sweet incense that filled the air and informed everything I did.

So anyway:
Does prayer matter?
Does prayer work?

In John 14:14 Jesus says, “If you ask ... anything in my name, I will do it.” Then in John 16:24, during the very same conversation at the last supper, Jesus says, “Henceforth, until now, you have asked nothing in my name...”

Holy Cow! They’d lived with Him for three years through thick and thin. They’d seen—and done—some mind-bending signs and wonders, but still hadn’t asked one thing in Jesus’ name.

What does it mean to ask in Jesus name?
And why would we ask if we already have?
Saint Paul writes, “*All things are yours, you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s*” (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

Now I’m not saying that I understand this stuff, I’m just hoping that the Revelation will help us *believe* this stuff.

Revelation 8:1-8

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at [In the Greek, literally “on”] the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Revelation 8:1 “*When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence...*”

That’s not what I would have expected... This is the pinnacle—the 7th seal.
Now the Scroll is open... and silence... *all* of Heaven is silent.
Yet, all of Heaven is a symphony.
Remember the four living creatures never stop saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy.”
And God constantly upholds all things with His Word.

It’s silent but maybe God is still speaking...

Remember Elijah’s cave.
The wind rent the mountains, but God was not in the wind.
After the wind an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake.
After the earthquake a fire, but God was not in the fire.
And after the fire a still small voice...
Or as it says in the ESV footnote “the sound of a thin silence.”

I once heard God speak with human words . . . so I know He can do it.
He speaks to my wife with human words. She has the gift of the words of knowledge.
I know that God can use human words... To be honest, I get really mad at God that He doesn’t do so more often.

But you see that assumes that human words, clarify the Divine Word.
But think about it, human words must always be a reduction of the Divine Word.
Like taking Love, nailing it down, and turning Him into law (knowledge of good and evil on a page).

The Divine Word must always be emptied to be understood by us . . .
But perhaps not to be *known* by us or to *know* us.

Sometimes, I can just sit with Susan in silence and far more is communicated in silence than a million human words on a page.

Revelation chapter 8 verse 1 . . . silence . . .
But maybe God is still speaking...
Or maybe He’s waiting for us to speak...
Like a new father waits for his baby to say, “Abba...Dada...Papa...”

Soren Kierkegaard wrote, "...One is speaking when he remains silent in order to show the listener that he is beloved. One is speaking... when he listens."

There's this great scene in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, when Aslan reveals himself as the one who's always been with the boy Shasta in a million different forms, in a million different situations.

Shasta asks this presence in the dark, "Who are you?"
And the voice in the darkness responds, "One who has waited long for you to speak."
As if everything had been arranged so that he would speak.

So does prayer matter?
Well, here in Revelation 8, it's like, the only thing that matters...
It's the sweet incense that rises before the throne.

But in verse one, all of Heaven is silent, which I think would imply that all of us, the 144,000 and the great multitude around the throne, are silent. And all those chattering witnesses under the altar are silent.

Many commentators argue that all of Heaven is silent because the witnesses under the altar are silent because God has answered their prayers for vengeance by throwing fire on the earth in the form of lightning, thunder, and earthquakes . . .

But the lightning, thunder, and earthquakes don't happen until *after* the silence . . .
They're not the reason for the silence. All that the witnesses would have seen, after their prayers for vengeance and before the great silence, would have been the opening of the 6th seal, which revealed some slaughtered Lamb.

And isn't it a weird idea that Jesus would answer their prayers for vengeance with *that* sort of vengeance,¹ when over and over Scripture says that vengeance belongs to God, and Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those that persecute us?

When the Lamb was slaughtered He cried out: "Father forgive."
And then, there was an earthquake; the sky grew black and the earth shook.
Maybe that was vengeance? "Father forgive."
Maybe it was vengeance, but not a vengeance of this world.
Maybe their prayers were answered, but not in the way they would expect.

The thing that moves the earth and shatters every wall of stone is forgiveness . . . *as if* forgiveness *is* vengeance as if kindness to enemies is like burning coals on their head.

Well, at the opening of the 7th seal, every tongue is stopped, for something is revealed.
At the opening of the 6th seal, some may have caught a glimpse, but they couldn't fully understand the meaning.

¹ Romans 12:19-21

At the opening of the 7th seal, the meaning would be revealed to all.
What do they see at the opening of the 7th seal?

Well, now I'll try to put human words on something, for which, all human words fail. And only an encounter with the Divine Word will do. They see the Judgment of God

Let's review:



John sees a scroll sealed with seven seals in the strong right hand of God.
Seven is tremendously important because the Bible begins with the seven days of creation and on the Seventh Day everything is finished—all of space and time.

So the seven days of creation reminded us of this: (See next page)

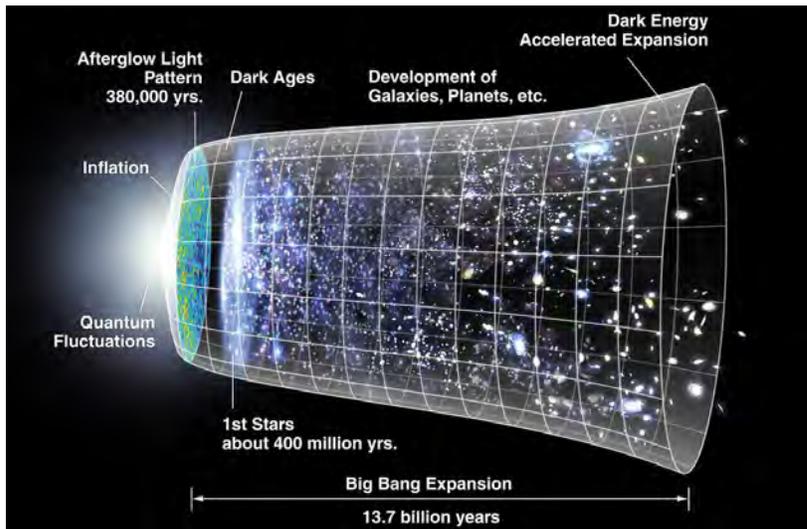


Figure 1 Image credit: NASA / WMAP science team

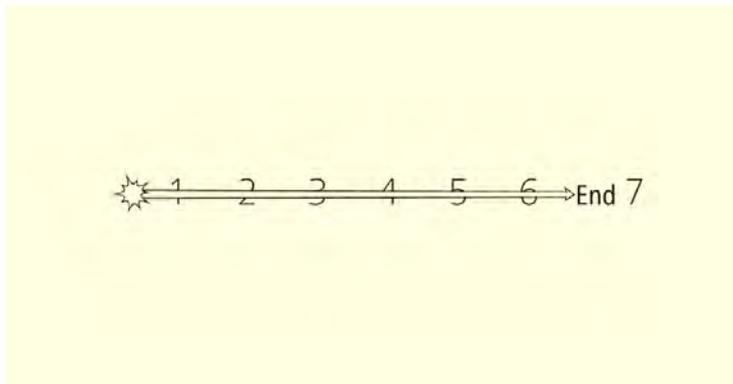
This is a diagram of all space and time from NASA.

In Jesus' day it was the common idea that God created all things in a Sabbath week of creation days that were each at least a thousand years long. So, God created all things in six eons or ages.

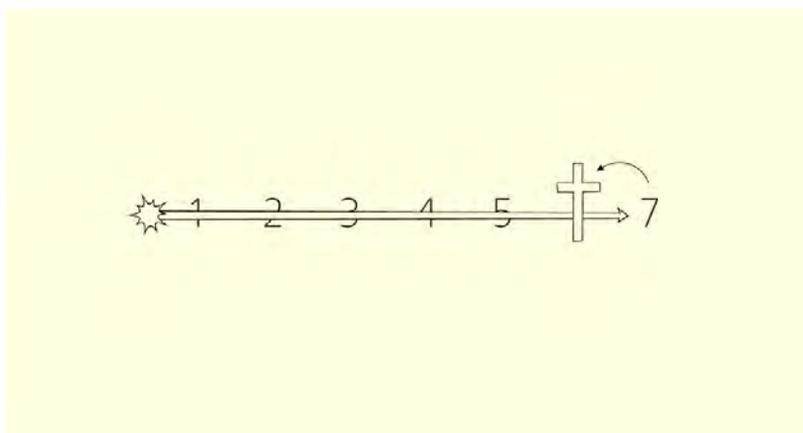
Some physicists would even argue that 13.8 billion years from the standpoint of the earth is 6 days from the standpoint of creation or the CBR (Cosmic background radiation).

Whatever the case, the ancients thought that this Seventh Age would be different from the six ages for on the Seventh Day everything would be good. And the Seventh Day was an endless Sabbath Day (no evening and no morning).

They thought time looked something like this:

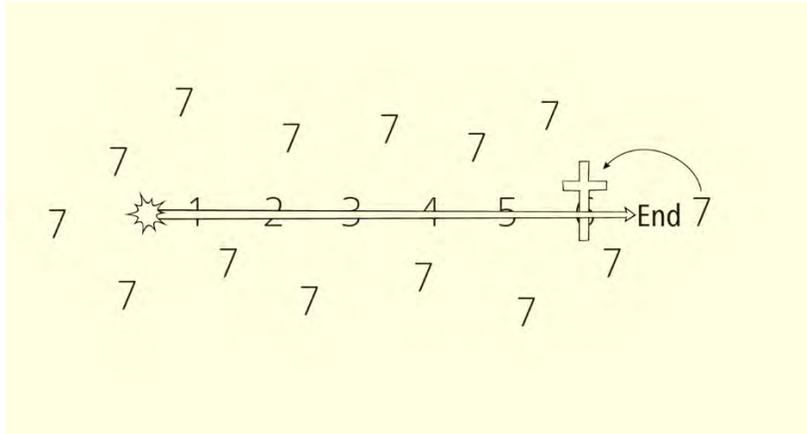


Or maybe something like this:



For on the 6th day of creation, on the 6th day of the week, at the 6th hour, eternity invaded time as Jesus hung on the cross, the sky grew black, the earth shook, and Jesus cried “it is finished.” It was the end of the ages and the beginning of eternity, and so . . .

Maybe time looked something like this:



Since Jesus is the Beginning and the End. He is the presence of God and in Him we live, move, and have our being. Space and time are in His hand, like the scroll is in the hand of God.

And so, what they see at the opening of the seventh seal is the Seventh Day of creation, which is the revelation of eternity, which is the Judgment of God.

Genesis 1:31 “*And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*” *Everything—very good.*

(You know if you saw that everything was good, you probably wouldn’t beg God to make anything good. You wouldn’t demand *ekdikesis*...)

Genesis 1:31b-2:2

Everything... was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

At the opening of the 7th seal, they see God’s Sabbath Rest.

Throughout the Scriptures God’s people are commanded to be very good at not doing things—that is *sabbath*—it means stop. Six days they are to work, and on the seventh, they are to stop.

There are three places in the Old Testament where God explains why:

- ✓ Exodus 20: You will stop because *I* created you.

- ✓ Deut. 5: You will stop because / delivered you.
- ✓ Exodus 31: You will stop because / sanctify you... / justify you.

At the opening of the 7th seal, they see the Judgment, the 7th Day, the Sabbath, and the Jubilee.

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

- ✓ The Judgment of God
- ✓ The 7th day of creation
- ✓ The Sabbath
- ✓ The Jubilee

They see the Jubilee. The Jubilee was the Sabbath of Sabbaths, to be celebrated after 49 years in the 50th year—a Pentecost year. In the Jubilee, prisoners were released, all debts were forgiven, and people returned to their homes. You'll remember that Jesus came after the 490 years in Daniel's prophecy.

You may also remember that He stood up in the synagogue in Luke 4 and read from Isaiah 61, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind... and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (that's the Jubilee)."*

Isaiah 61:2 *"The year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God."*

That's weird, but read Isaiah and you'll see it's a weird and holy kind of vengeance; the Messiah will bring out righteousness, and make righteous, by trampling the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God, which makes blood that is wine and wine that is blood. He will do it alone. You see? I think He *did* it on a cross.

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

Jubilee begins with the Day of Vengeance, which is also the Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 25: On the Day of Atonement the Israelites were to sound the trumpet *throughout* the land [So, it will probably take more than one trumpet (maybe like 7)]—atonement had been made and the Jubilee would begin.

Atonement, Vengeance, and Jubilee are all the same event somehow. It seems strange but makes sense. It was on the seventh time around on the seventh day at the blast of the seven trumpets that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. God hates the walls which separate and behind which, each of us hides.

- Atonement means “at *one*-ment.” To proclaim Jubilee is vengeance upon all the walls that we hide behind; it’s vengeance upon all self-centeredness, shame, and pride.
- Atonement is vengeance upon the self-righteous prison of the human ego.
- Atonement is what Christ accomplishes on the cross. And . . .
- Atonement is what’s described in Revelation 8:1-6.
The 7 angels are given 7 trumpets.
And then another angel (and remember “angel” means messenger) comes with a golden censor for offering incense.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest (and *only* the high priest) would offer incense and then go behind the veil to sprinkle the blood of sacrifice upon the Mercy Seat, which was the throne of God on top of the Ark of Covenant.

This angel offers incense and mediates our prayers.

Jesus is the Angel of Yahweh.

He is also our High Priest. He is the only mediator between God and man.

He mediates the new and eternal covenant and...

He offers up our prayers.

The Book of Hebrews describes how He goes into the Holy of Holies on our behalf—but not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with His own.

In verse 3 of Revelation 8, this Angel doesn't just stand *at* the altar.
He literally stands *on* the altar.

And He is given much incense. Who gave Him the incense?

Well . . .

- How about three wise men from the east who gave Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh?
- How about the prostitute, or Mary of Bethany who anoint Him with fragrant oil?
- How about the woman in the house of Simon the leper who pours a bottle of pure nard (worth a year's wage) over Christ's head a few days before He's offered up? It was a fragrance that would've still filled His nostrils as He hung on the tree.
- How about Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who anointed His body with seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes before they placed it in the tomb.

Do you see? The picture is absolutely breath-taking:

For 1500 years they'd been sacrificing lambs and the Lord is the Lamb.

The Witnesses cry from under the altar, how long until you judge and avenge our blood on the earth? And then they see that God avenges their blood with His own blood.

It's always been His blood. The Life is in the Blood... and He is the Life in *all* blood. He's the life in *your* blood.

Perhaps the Lord says, "Vengeance is mine," because all the blood is His, and He chooses to bleed for all... once and for all—all of space and time.

Hebrews 7,8, and 9 describe how Jesus is our High Priest who has secured for us an eternal redemption by means of His own blood, in an eternal covenant.

Hebrews 9:26 *"He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages (the aions) to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."*

The end of the ages (the *aions*) is the end of time and the edge of eternity.

They see eternity.

They see the way that things truly are.

They see themselves worshipping the Lamb on the throne.

They see when and where I Am is.

They wake up from the illusion of their own sovereignty;

And see that God is and always was sovereign.

They wake up from the illusion of their own control.

They see "God is Salvation."

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.

And “it is finished.” Actually, it’s eternal. The Gospel is Eternal (Rev. 14:7).

At the 7th trumpet, in chapter 14 an angel flies across the sky proclaiming an Eternal Gospel to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.

They see “God is Salvation.” And *everyone* falls silent.

Why are they silent? Well . . . why do people normally speak?
Why do you normally speak?

You might have to think about this a while... but,

Don’t you normally speak to make things right... *ekdikesis*

The world needs your judgment to be right... and so you speak your word.

Don’t you normally speak to create your world?

Don’t you normally speak to create yourself in the image of God?

Don’t you normally speak to atone for yourself?

To save yourself... even if you call it saving others?

Don’t you normally speak to create yourself, redeem yourself, save yourself, and justify yourself?

Well, what if you saw that you were already justified and everything was “very good?”

You might stop speaking for a time—*shabbat* in Hebrew.

Romans 3:19-24

...that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law [You know? That’s the knowledge of good and evil, written down on a page in black and white] no human being will be justified in his sight... But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... the righteousness of God through [the faithfulness of] Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift...

You can’t justify yourself if you’ve already been justified.

Why do you speak? Why do you pray?

Isn't it usually to improve your self, justify yourself ...or save yourself?

So you use the creator to create yourself, use the judge to justify yourself, and use the savior to save yourself.

Which means you say that you pray in Jesus' name.

But you're actually using Jesus name, using it in vain, and praying in your own name.

Jesus' name means "God is Salvation," but you think *you* are salvation.

We all do; we all think we are saved (created, justified, and made right) by our own will, our own judgment. But we are saved by the Judgment of God. [Peter points to the communion table.]

That thing that thinks you are salvation is your ego.

In the Light of "God is Salvation," your ego must die—stop, *shabbat*.

Clip 2 from *Bruce Almighty*

Bruce: *I don't want to be God. I want you to decide what's right for me. I surrender to your will.*

[Bright light envelops Bruce's body. He then realizes the light is actually a semi truck coming at him full speed ahead. The scene changes to heaven.]

Bruce: *(Talking to God) Am I?*

God: *Can't kneel down in the middle of a highway and live to talk about it son!*

I love that clip. And it's true. But I'm serious as a heart attack. The Revelation of Jesus, which is the revelation of "God is Salvation," which is the revelation of the Judgment of God will destroy your ego, the illusion that you are salvation, that walled city in which you hide. It will destroy that old man that you so often think you are. That can be terrifying, but it is absolutely Good, for it is the presence of *the* Good: "God is Salvation"—Jesus.

Well, the 7th seal is opened and everyone falls silent for about half an hour. Some say that's how long it would take the high priest to make atonement behind the curtain, on the Day of Atonement... I don't know.

Everyone is silent. They cannot speak, and maybe, God will not speak, for He's waiting for all of us to say something . . . new . . .

All are silent until the angel that stands on the altar, who had been given much incense, mixes His incense with our incense and the fragrance rises before the throne...

Hebrews 7:25 *"He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."*

Romans 8:26-27 *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”*

On the altar Jesus mixes our prayers with His prayer:

“Father forgive them, they know not what they do.”

On the cross He prayed our prayers:

“My God my God why have you forsaken me...”

That’s our line. That’s the first line of Psalm 22 and I believe He prays it all the way through to verse 31:

“They shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it... It is finished.”

Then . . .

“Into your hands, I commit my spirit.”

That’s the very Spirit that descends into us crying, “Abba Father.”

Romans 8:15 *“When we cry Abba Father, it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God...”*

He descends into the temple that is our heart and cries, “Abba”...

He stands on the altar and mediates my prayers.

I pray, “Give me money.” And Jesus prays, “Father help Peter to rest in you.”

You pray, “God, I hate you.” And Jesus prays, “Abba, she longs for you.”

Brennan Manning used to tell of a minister friend, for whom prayer no longer seemed to work ’cause God didn’t “work” for him. He resigned his church, abandoned his family, and fled to a logging camp in Canada.

One winter afternoon, as he sat shivering in his aluminum trailer, the portable electric heater suddenly quit. Cursing this latest evidence of a God-forsaken world, this minister shouted, “God, I hate you!”

He sank to his knees weeping. And then, there in the silence, he heard Christ say: “I know; it’s okay.” And then this shattered man heard The Lord weeping within him.

He stood up and started home.

God will silence our ego, but perhaps we can humble ourselves. I think that’s the meaning of the Sabbath commandment. I think that’s why we need to come here and sit before the table of the Lord. I think that’s why David wrote: “I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul like a child quieted at its mother’s breast, so is my soul” (Psalm 131).

John 3, Jesus said, *“This is the Judgment, the light has come into the world...”*

You know Light is eternal—ask a physicist—for a photon of light it is always now.

Physicists, philosophers, and theologians have always said now is the point that time touches eternity.

In John 12, Palm Sunday, Jesus, the Light, lifted His head and said, “Now is the Judgment.” See? I think your ego can only exist in time—*chronos*—chronological time.

We will soon read that the beast “was, is not, and is to come.” The Beast is an imitation Christ, and antichrist and so is your ego. It’s powered by shame and pride from the past and your anxiety for the future. It’s all about what you have done or think you can do. But it’s not about the Truth that is now.

Eckhart Tolle wrote, “For the ego to survive it must make time—past and future—more important than the present moment.”

You see? If you really had faith in Grace, I mean if you really could trust in the depths of your being that you were right now justified, sanctified, and created in the image of God . . . *now*, I suspect . . .

You would have no ego. And I think you would be free.

You would be awake in the New Creation.

You would see, what John saw, the New Jerusalem coming down.

You would know, in other words, that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

And it would change the way you spoke... and the way you prayed.

The words might be the same, but the will behind the words would be holy.

You wouldn’t pray in anxiety and fear, but in faith, hope, and love.

You would know that...

You can’t achieve faith, you can only *be* faithful.

You can’t manufacture hope, you can only surrender to Hope right now.

You can’t make love, you can only let Love make you and all around you.

You can’t control Love; you can only dance to Love as if it were a song in the atmosphere all around you and the only way you can dance to it is to surrender to it—right now!

Faith, Hope, and Love are an eternal Kingdom that is all around you. That means that you don’t pray things into existence. Instead, you pray existence into things.

You say, “**Let your kingdom come, let your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.**”

You pray existence into things; your prayer connects Eternity to time.

If you really believe “It is finished,” I think . . .

- You would believe that all things are yours, you are Christ’s and Christ’s is God’s.

- You would ask for whatever you desire, believing that you already had it, and knowing that you will have it... because you actually do.

-You would ask for whatever you desire, but whatever you desire would be God’s desire. It would be Good and right.

-You would ask in the name of Jesus, for you would know “God is Salvation.”

I don’t know, but I think maybe this is what the contemplatives and the mystics have been saying all along. So, this last year I’ve been working at taking time for silence. That is just being still and present to God in the now.

I may speak some anxieties and fears in the beginning, but then I sit in silence trusting that I don't need to defend myself from God with words. And then after about a half-hour of silence, I speak, and I think that those words are somehow different; they're eternal.

God has created all things that I would speak those words. And speaking those words I am involved in the creation of all things. So, are those words determined or free? Perhaps they're both, for in that moment, the Creator and I are somehow one. I am.

"We need prayers of words, yes," writes Madeleine L'Engle, "the words are the path to contemplation; but the deepest communion with God is beyond words, on the other side of silence."

Your life is to be a prayer spoken from the other side of silence.

I think I can probably best explain with one of my favorite stories. It's a true story. It happened about twenty-four years ago. It was the first time that I ever saw Jarek Conelly sit still.

Jarek was four at the time, and I was performing a marriage ceremony for his mother Janielle and her boyfriend Andy. Janielle was white. Andy was white, and Jarek was chocolate brown. His flesh said, "Andy is not my Father." And now Andy was taking his mother.

I suspect that's why Jarek was always moving. Always lookin' for trouble. He was restless and couldn't sit still. During the ceremony, he was everywhere, out of control. He started out as the ring bearer, but by the time we got to the vows, someone else was holding the ring and Jarek was imprisoned between two relatives in the front row.

Janielle said her vows; Andy said his vows. Jarek was squirming in his seat. I was starting the ring ceremony when suddenly Andy stopped me. In front of everyone, he turned around, fixed his gaze on Jarek, and said, "Jarek!" And Jarek froze; everybody froze. Then Andy said:

Jarek, I love you with all my heart.
And I will always be your daddy.
And you will always be my son."

Jarek Conelly did not move; he did not make a sound for the rest of the service. I didn't get to hear it, but I bet the next word he spoke was something like, "Daddy, Abba, Father."

Last I heard, Jarek was doing well and planning to graduate from West Point—where they do demand a little bit of self control.

Well I'm just saying, I hope y'all take time to be still before the Judgment of your Father. Be silent... and then speak.

Communion

This is the Judgment of your Father. This is the eternal covenant. On the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying this is my body given for you; take and eat, and do this in remembrance of me.” And He took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. This is the Judgment of God. [Peter looks at the Communion table]. Look around you. All of this is temporal; it’s fading away; it’s illusory. And this is Eternal.

[There is silence as Peter prepares communion.] The Father is calling you to come to His table and place the eternal in the temporal. Be born again, eternal life in Jesus’ name. Pray with me and say, Thank you Father.

Benediction

I hope that you take time just to be silent before the Lord...

There is one last verse in Revelation 8 that you might have thought I forgot about. Listen to this: *“Then the angel [I think that’s Jesus] took the censer [in which had been our prayers] and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake (Rev. 8:5).*

You kind of think: “Why would He do that?” Well, the Gospel doesn’t change. It’s been there all along. Listen to Zephaniah 3:8-9

“Therefore wait for me,” declares the LORD, “for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.

“For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.

May you watch, and wait . . . and then speak.
In Jesus’ name, 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.

16

Hope...in a God Damned World

Hope . . . in a God Damned World

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

February 25, 2018

#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.

⁴ *shofar*, which means ram's horn and comes from a root which means something like glory.

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.

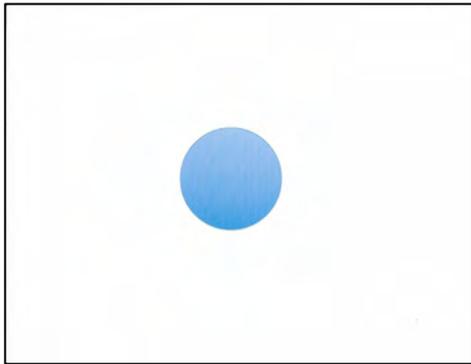
What’s with you and the walls?

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.

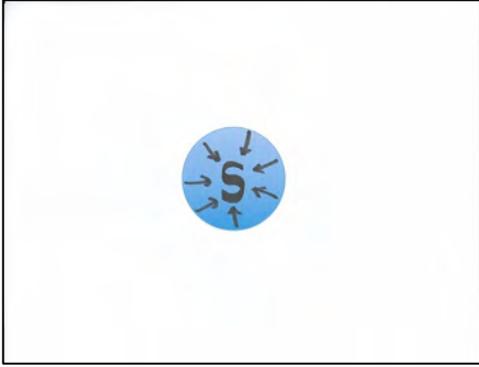
He says, *“Do not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, for the day you eat of it ‘dying you will die.”* The devil tempts the soul saying, *“Dying you will not die, but you will be like God knowing Good and evil.”*

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.

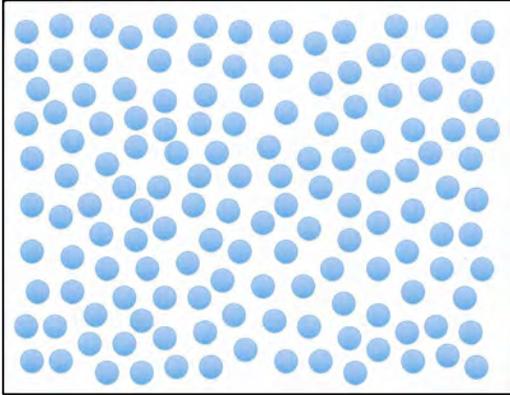


They made clothes.
Clothes are like a wall behind which you hide, safe . . . and alone. (Necessary in this world, but alone.)

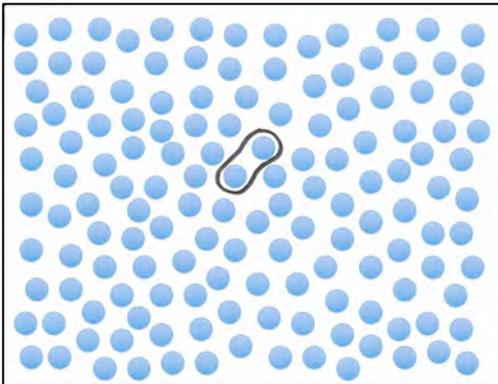
The Lord found the man and the woman and kicked them out of the garden and barred their way to the tree in the middle of the garden, lest they eat, or continue to eat of the tree of life, and remain that way forever.

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.



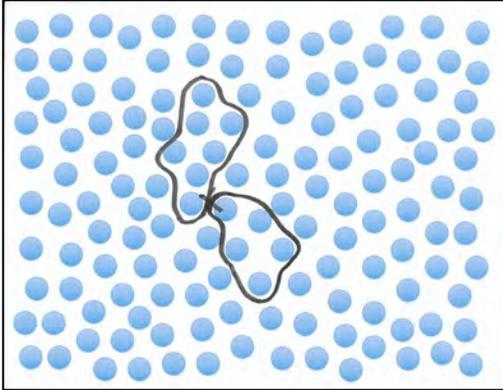
Suppose two of them formed an alliance... realizing that they could each best protect their own interests from the interests of others with a wall around them both.

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.

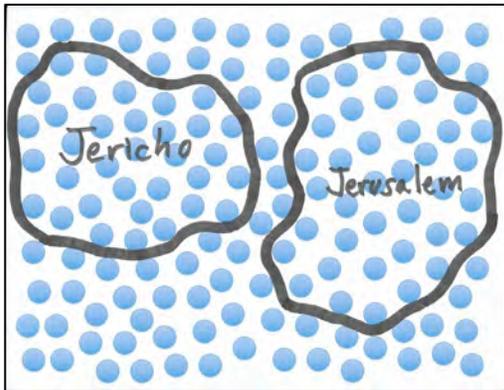
It's a sign that God created in their flesh, before the fall, to give them hope.

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.

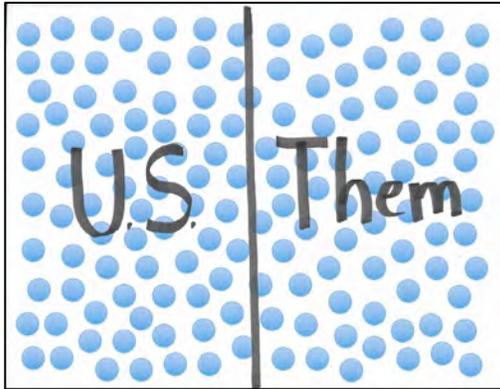
Jericho was a Canaanite city.

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.

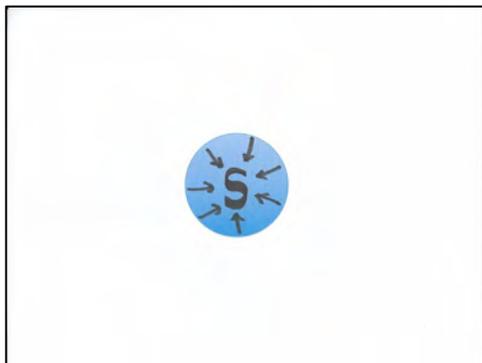
As the trumpets sound, the walls of civilization and even the walls we refer to as our own flesh—they all start crumbling. We prayed, "God save!" And now He is.

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.



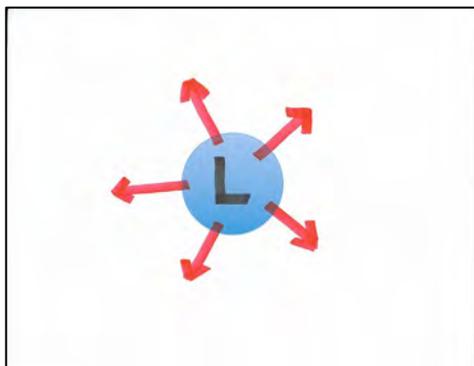
When human judgment reigns in the human soul, it looks something like this: self-consciousness, self-interest, shame, anxiety, pride, and fear.

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.

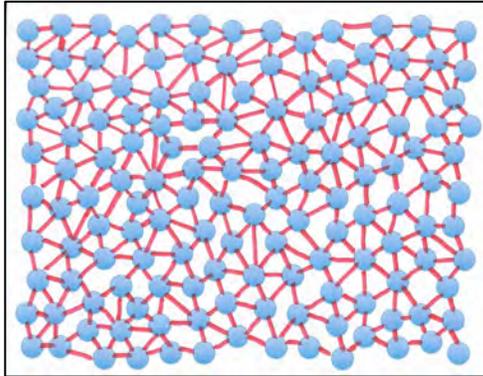
You lose yourself and then find yourself in worship.

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.

17

Three Woes and a Great Kindness

Three Woes and a Great Kindness

Revelation 8:13-9:21, 11:15-19

March 11, 2018

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

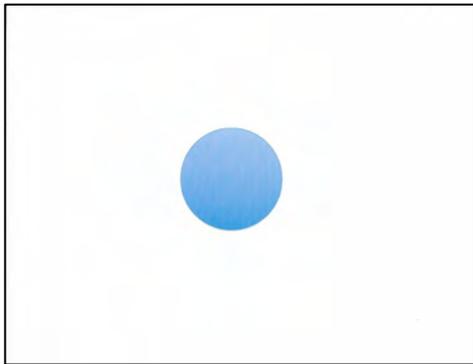
Peter Hiett

All images by Peter Hiett unless otherwise credited.

Message

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

Remember the trumpets? We’re still talking about the trumpets. We started two messages ago. They are the trumpets that sound back through space and time at the opening of the seventh seal, on the seven-sealed scroll in the right hand of God. And now I’d like to pick up right where we left off, at the opening of the seventh seal.



Remember this picture? Last time I said: “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* knowledge of the Good (and God alone is Good).

The soul takes knowledge of the Good from the tree, and becomes self-conscious, for now, the soul knows that it is not Good; it is alone.

Before the fall God said, *“It is not good for the Adam [ha adam—the man] to be alone.”*

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

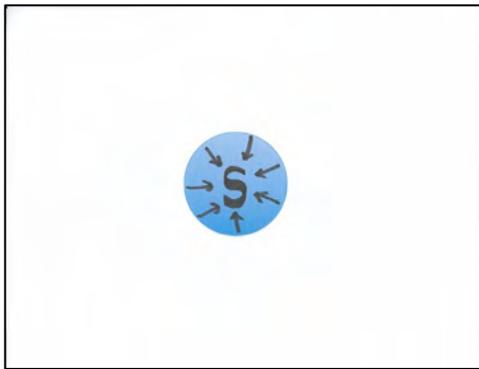
A self-conscious soul grows a self-conscious body that only feels its own pain and pleasure. It’s called the flesh. My flesh knows only its own pain and pleasure.

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

And so, they hid from God in the trees...

And they hid themselves from each other with leaves from the trees in the garden.

They tried to save themselves from God and the other.



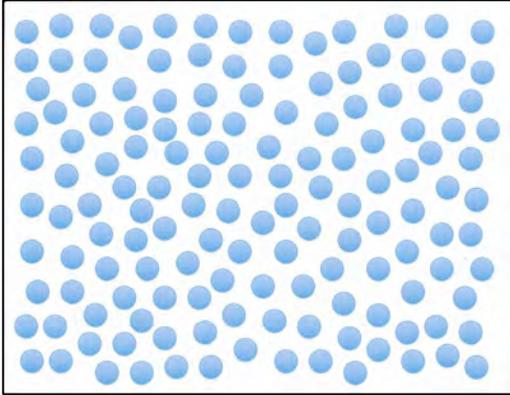
They made clothes.

Clothes are like a wall behind which you hide, safe . . . and alone.

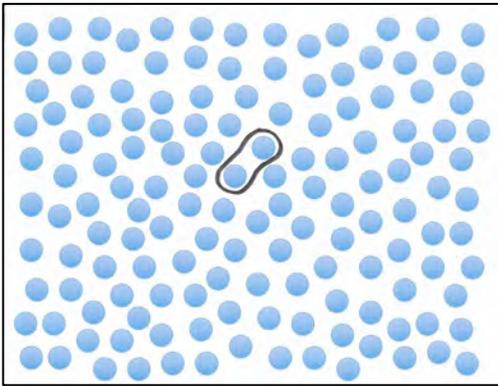
(They are necessary right now, however.)

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 of the tree, or continue to eat, and remain the way they were forever—alone.

He kicked them out of the garden and cursed the world. Perhaps creation had already been subjected to futility. Whatever the case, the curse is like God’s first act of redemption—it means that Eve and Adam could not endlessly hide behind walls of their own construction; they could not remain endlessly alone.

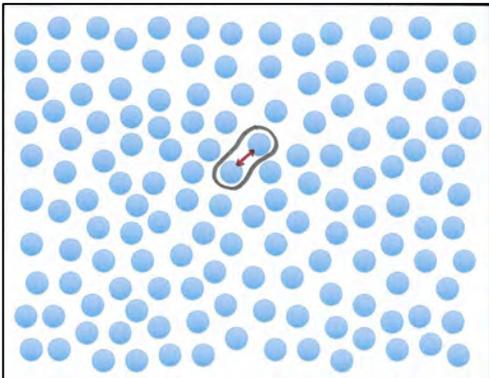


Now imagine the surface of the earth covered with a world of these self-conscious and anxious souls.

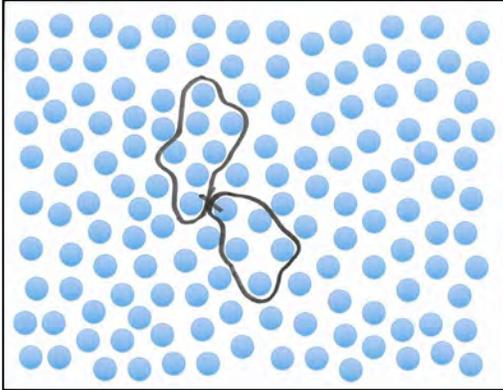


Suppose two of them formed an alliance . . . realizing that they could each best protect their own self interests from the interests of others with a wall around them both.

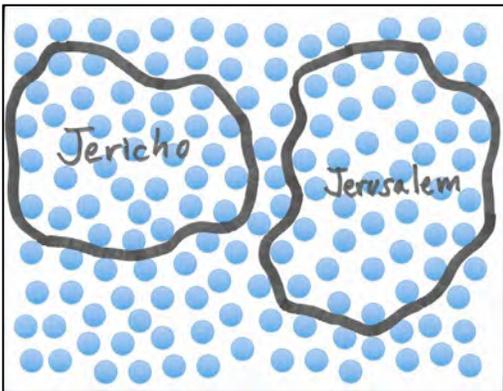
Now if they didn't just protect the self, but sacrificed the self . . .



Something truly otherworldly could happen, but now we're getting ahead of the game.



Sometimes several individuals form a contract to secure self-interest.
 It's often called a family, a clan or a tribe.
 They develop traditions and rituals with which they create walls.
 Sometimes (maybe even often times), they go to war with other tribes that uphold different traditions and rituals.



If several of these tribes live in one location they call it a city, and they create laws to protect individual rights, which is a nice way to say “self-interest.”
 Laws are walls of protection.

Some walls are better than other walls, but they're still walls.
 In ancient times, they would actually build a stone wall around the city

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.
 As we've noticed several times while preaching through the Revelation, the Revelation is like a recapitulation or retelling of the entire Bible, and in particular the story of the conquest of Jericho at the edge of the Promised Land, which is a picture of Eden.

You'll remember that it was on the seventh day, the seventh time around, as the seven priests blew the seven trumpets before the Ark of the Covenant . . . it was *then* that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.

In the Revelation at the opening of the seventh seal, as the High Priest makes atonement, the seven angels blow seven trumpets, and the walls of this Cosmos, this world, start tumbling down.

As the first four trumpets sound, we watch what appears to be natural disasters. As the last three trumpets sound, we watch some even more troubling disasters. And all these disasters appear to be the result of our prayer—our prayer that we prayed as we watched the High Priest make our atonement. At the opening of the seventh seal, we prayed, “God Save.”

We often pray “God Save,” but we're often not so clear as to what it is that God is saving us from.

However, Scripture is very clear about what God is saving us from. God is saving us from our own bad judgment (which Scripture calls sin). He is saving us from our bad judgment, which causes us to construct walls, and remain alone: “*It's not good for the ha adam to be alone,*” said God. “Not good” is “evil.”

It's ironic, isn't it?

We think we're saved by walls . . . but maybe we need saving *from* walls.¹

As Israel crossed the Jordan, entering the Promised Land and preparing to march on Jericho, they met the Angel of the Lord, the Commander of God's Army, the God-man, who is the Word of God and the Judgment of God. He's not on the side of the Israelites or the Canaanites, but he has a drawn sword, and he's going to war. He's not going to war against people, but against the walls of Jericho.

Inside the walls of Jericho is a Canaanite harlot named Rahab. She is the great, great, super great-grandmother of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).

And outside the walls of Jericho is a Jew named Salmon...

Salmon is the great, great super great-grandpa of Jesus.

Salmon and Rahab will enter into a covenant that is a picture of the covenant between Christ and His body—the church—a covenant of communion. It's not a covenant of self-interest, but a covenant of self-sacrifice.

¹ We think we're saved from God's judgment by our own judgment, which we then call good...When we're actually saved from our own judgment by God's Judgment, which is the very definition of the Good.

They will commune and produce a life named Boaz and eventually a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and placed in a manger just outside the walls of Jerusalem in Bethlehem.

I'm saying that the Body of Jesus, the Commander of the Lord's Army, and the One who is now giving this vision to John . . . the Body, of that Jesus, is literally dependent on the destruction of the walls of Jericho, but not just the walls of Jericho, *all* dividing walls of hostility that divide one person from another person and all persons from God.

"For this is the plan for the fullness of time to anakephalaio, (to bring together under one head), all things in Christ Jesus" (Eph.1:10).

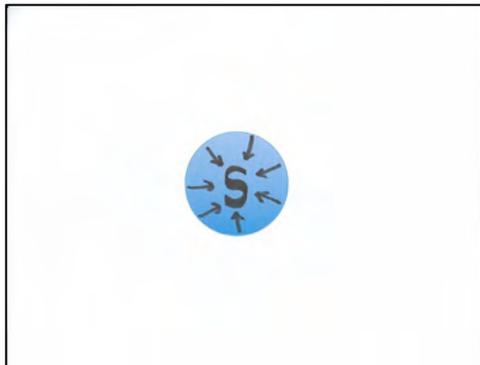
We are the Body of Christ Jesus. It's the astounding truth that the modern American church has almost entirely missed. We're not *"like"* Christ's Body. We actually *are* Christ's Body. In fact, everybody that's anybody is most truly Christ's Body.

Righteousness is literally putting Him on like a garment (as Paul describes in Ephesians and Colossians). It's putting off the old man, and putting on the New Man—just like Rahab put on Salmon, and gave birth to Life.

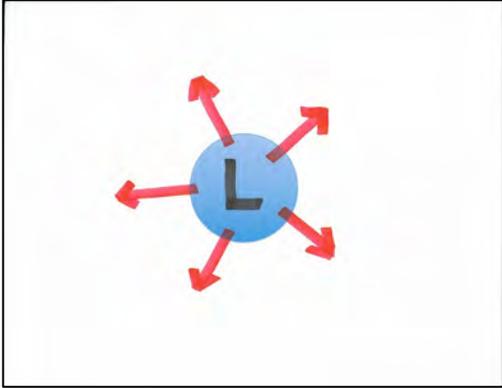
The name Salmon means garment. Well anyway, the trumpets are sounding, Bride of Christ, and the walls of this world are crashing down. Is that bad news or good news? Well . . . that depends on your perspective. It depends on your hope.

Romans 8:20 *"Creation was subjected to futility... in hope. . . "* hope of what?

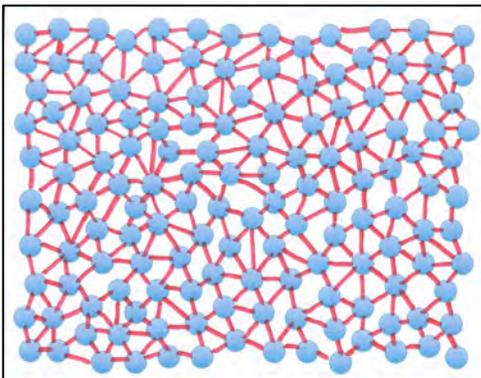
Last time, we observed that when human judgment reigns in the human soul, it looks something like this:



Self-consciousness, self-interest, shame, anxiety and fear.
It's a soul pre-occupied with safety and never sacrifice.



But when God's Judgment reigns in the human soul, it looks something like this—it's called Love.



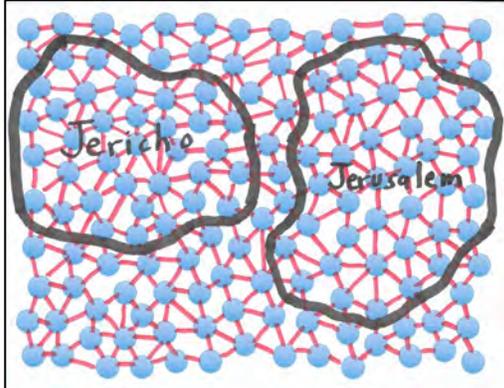
Now imagine the surface of the new earth covered with a world of these unself-conscious and loving souls. See? It would look something like this.

Not six billion lonely souls only banding together to protect their individual rights and thereby preserving their own death. . . but six billion cells all interconnected by one judgment, sacrificing themselves as one life in one Body—the Body of Christ. You can think of each red line as a nerve or a blood vessel circulating love and life in one happy body—the Body of Christ.

The Body of Christ is the Kingdom of God manifesting on earth.
Jesus came preaching "Repent! The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

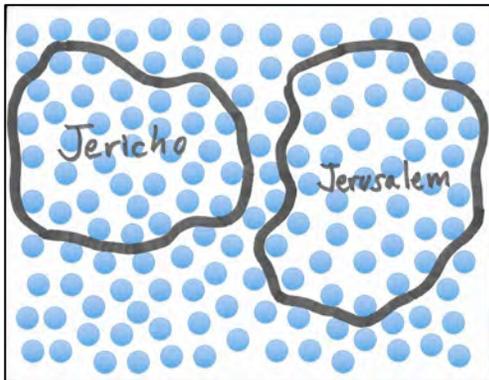
"Repent," does not mean, "Try harder." *Metanoia*, literally means change your *noia*, your thinking. It means something like "wake up."

Wake up! The Kingdom of Heaven is right here, at hand, if you only had eyes to see.



Do you see it? Can you even conceive of it?

Or Jericho, Jerusalem, Children of Adam...



Can you only see walls?

Revelation 8:1-12, the first four trumpets, and it's like creation itself turns against us—weather, mountains, sun, moon, and stars seem to turn against humanity as if to destroy our illusion of control and expel us from this world—like a baby from a womb or a butterfly breaks free from the walls of its cocoon . . .

Revelation 8:13 *“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.’”* Let me paraphrase: “Woe to those who consider Jericho to be their home... or Jerusalem to be their home—old Jerusalem, that is.”

Revelation 8:13b-9:12

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!” 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. 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. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were allowed to torment [God isn't doing but allowing] them for five months, [the lifespan of a locust is about five months] but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.

In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. (Apollyon means "destroyer")

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

People have had all sorts of theories as to the identity of these locusts. Some have argued that they are Arabs, others that they are Catholics released by the Pope (who seems to have a key to the bottomless pit) and still others say Lutherans—watch out for the Lutherans.

Futurists, like Hal Lindsey, have suggested Black Cobra helicopters spraying nerve gas from their tails.

Preterists point to Ezekiel 9 and the mark placed on the faithful before the first destruction of Jerusalem, saying this must refer to the second destruction of Jerusalem.

Preterists often quote Josephus the ancient Jewish historian. Josephus records that for about five months, during the siege of Jerusalem, there were Jews who had rejected Christ and His warning to flee the city. They had locked themselves behind the city walls to save themselves from the Romans and were afflicted by roving bands of possessed men who dressed in women's clothing and then raped and murdered their fellow Jews.

Men's faces, women's hair, and teeth like lions—a plague of possessed Jewish End Times cross-dressers . . . You didn't see that one comin' did ya?

Well, no matter what you think of Josephus and his history of the Jews, a walled city under siege becomes a living hell.

These locusts are released from the abyss. They remind us of the plagues upon Egypt. They're described just like the locusts in Joel chapters one and two—the locusts that accompany the Day of the Lord.

I doubt that this has anything to do with Jewish cross-dressers, but everything to do with the fact that these locusts can hide behind beautiful female hair and under the crowns of kings and behind the faces of the children of Adam.

They have been released by a star, an angel, fallen from heaven. They have as king over them, *Apollyon*, the Destroyer from the Abyss... These locusts don't afflict plants, but people, and when they do, I suspect that it can look something like this:

Clip from *The Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers*

Saruman: [Cackling laughter.] *You have no power here Gandolph the great.*

[Gandolph dramatically reveals his white robe. Saruman is now aware of his authority.]

Gandolph: *I will draw you Saruman as poison is drawn from a wound.* [Eowyn enters and watches.]

Saruman: *If I go, Theoden dies.*

Gandolph: [Gandolph authoratively holds Sarumen back with his staff.]
You did not kill me; you will not kill him.

[Saruman lurches toward Gandolph; Gandolph holds him back with his staff.]

Gandolph: *Be gone!*

[Theoden collapses and Saruman leaves Theoden. Theodon begins breathing deeply. Eowyn runs toward him. Color and life return to Theoden's face and he becomes younger. He begins to look around at those surrounding him.]

Theoden: *I know your face.* [Eowyn looks into his eyes and smiles.] *Eowyn? Eowyn!*

I think the locusts in Revelation 9 are demons. And what John saw is what Jesus saw, and what Jesus describes in Luke 10:18

"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." [Says Jesus to the seventy-two disciples]
"Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall adikeo you—that is harm you."

I think the locusts are demons. The demons inhabit the places wherein we have believed lies. They tempt us to build walls, which separate us from God and others. We think the walls are salvation, and in reality, they're damnation. They literally damn the flow of life, and the life is in the blood. We think the walls preserve life, but they are a living death. We think they make heaven, but they are a prison that turns into Hell.

I think the locusts are demons and at this point, my sermon becomes almost impossible for me to preach.

- For some of you have never seen anything like that scene in *The Lord of the Rings*.
- And others of you have even experienced what Theodin experienced when he was possessed in *The Lord of the Rings*.
- According to Scripture, we all battle something like the thing that afflicted Theodin; we all battle malevolent spirits called demons.

Scripture doesn't really use the term possession, but it does use a Greek verb that would best be translated "demonized." And if I understand correctly, we're all afflicted—or demonized—by demons to some extent.

However, in some people, a demon, or demons, can take over the psyche for a time, in such a way that the demon controls the body of its host. I've prayed for innumerable people battling demons. And in a few instances, I've prayed for people that would manifest those demons and react violently to the name of Jesus—"God is salvation."

In every instance, I've realized that most of the lies that the demons speak are lies that I hear in my thoughts almost every day. And every lie basically amounts to this: "God is not Salvation." That is, "God does not want to save." Or "God is not able to save." In other words, God does not love you, Peter Hiett; you better hide."

In every instance, where I've seen a demon manifest in a person, I've also learned that they were horribly abused in their past. Actually, every one of us has been abused to some degree. But these friends have been abused to a profound degree, and through the above the demon implants a lie and then inhabits the lie.

It's made me realize that I'm utterly incapable of judging anyone. And it's made me realize that no man or woman is my enemy, but evil is my enemy. It's made me realize that I can't judge anyone, and it's given me compassion for everyone; sinners are not my enemy; they are fellow prisoners, trapped by my enemy who abuses us all.

For about fifteen years, Susan and I prayed repeatedly for one of these friends. She had been raised by a Satanist, ritually wed to the serpent, and sold as a harlot—like Rahab. She had been like Rahab, and Jesus revealed that she was—and always had been His bride... the Bride of Christ. Nothing is more beautiful or pure than the Bride of Christ, who is the Mother of the Living.

See?

The greatest beauty is revealed in the place of deepest darkness. But now, this is important: verse 4 states that the locusts were only allowed to harm those that didn't have the seal of God on their foreheads.²

² [Ezekiel 9:4 Just before Jerusalem is destroyed a "man clothed in linen" (who looks like Jesus) is told to put a mark on the foreheads of the people who "mourn" the abominations of Jerusalem. These people were not to be killed but saved.]

A few weeks ago, we learned that the seal is the Holy Spirit.
And the Holy Spirit gives us faith.
And faith is counted as righteousness.

The word translated “harm” in verse 4 and Luke 10 is *adikeo* from *dike*, which means *righteous*—*adikeo* means unrighteous or take away righteousness.

Now, in every person in which I’ve witnessed a demonic manifestation, that person has also confessed Christ, which means that they had faith and they were sealed. And yet, they were only sealed to the extent that they had faith. The true self was sealed, but not the false. In other words, the demon would gain access or power through a memory, or portion of their psyche, that didn’t believe “God is Salvation.”

Often times, it was a memory of abuse that they had walled off or sealed up, like a city under siege. They walled off the memory but in the process trapped themselves in that memory believing the lie that God is not salvation—a lie, which then manifests as fear, shame, anxiety, isolation, resentment and a refusal to forgive.

Demons can only exist in that darkness, like snakes and scorpions that dwell underground in garbage and darkness. But once a person sees the light shining in the darkness, the demon cannot return; it has to flee. What my friends have seen is Jesus in that place—bleeding for them.

Jesus has given us authority over the evil one and his demons—and I’ve used it. It’s really quite astounding; it can blow your mind, but unless a person has faith in God is Salvation . . . the demon can return to that place that lacks faith.

See? I think that’s true for all of us, whether or not a demonic spirit ever manifests or not. It’s true for all of us that struggle to love our enemies.
It’s true for all of us that struggle to forgive.
It’s true for all of us that struggle to believe we’re forgiven and thoroughly loved.
It’s not an option that you believe (that you trust) God’s Relentless Love for you.
It’s the Command of God, and the heart of your battle with the ancient serpent.

In Ephesians, Paul wrote, “*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this aion (this age), against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (Eph. 6:12).

We all battle demons . . .
They tempt us to build walls around our souls like a city under siege.
They tempt us to darkness and then haunt us in that darkness.
They tempt us with a false salvation—a bit of heaven that turns into hell.

Folks used to call it idolatry. Now, I think we often call it addiction. It’s not just a mental illness—it’s a mental illness empowered by evil that afflicts us all. It’s sin.

We all wonder, "Why would God allow such a thing as sin?"

We'll address that question over time.

But if you wonder:

Why would God allow stinging locusts to inhabit our sin?

Why would God let snakes and scorpions inhabit the place we hide?

Why would God allow demons to infect our darkness?

Well, the demons do make you hate the darkness . . . don't they?

They make you hate the darkness, but that's not the same as loving the Light; that's still not repentance.

Revelation 9:12-21

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,

[That's where we saw our high priest who stood on the altar as if sacrificing Himself for our atonement.]

...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 [that's 200 million]; I heard their number. And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur [theion], and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur [theion] came out of their mouths. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound. 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.

Chapter 9 is followed by an interlude—full of some strange and outrageous preaching. Then in 11:14 we read: "*The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.*"

The fifth trumpet and the sixth trumpet are the first two of three woes...
And no one repents.

At the sixth trumpet, John sees 200 million from “over the Euphrates”—not from the Abyss, like the locusts, but from over the Euphrates like an army. Armies usually attacked Israel from over the Euphrates...

Some have argued that they were the Romans, for the Roman legion that destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD had been stationed beyond the Euphrates. Others have argued that these are the Turks attacking Constantinople in the 15th century. In either scenario, the 200 million would have to be symbolic of “a lot.”

Hal Lindsey argued it must not be symbolic but literal and that this must refer to the Chinese, for who else could ever field an army of 200 million. But it is not just soldiers, it's 200 million horses. Lindsey says the horses are tanks—200 million tanks crossing the Euphrates; that's hard to believe.

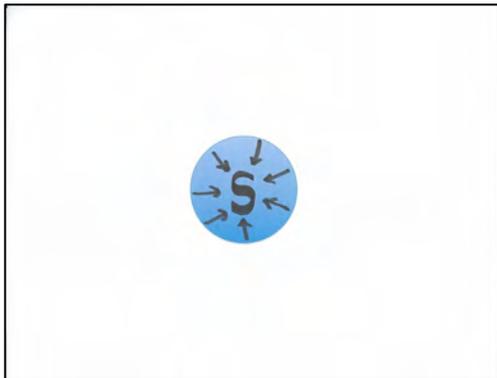
Maybe it's every army that ever marched? At the next trumpet loud voices in heaven Psalm 2. “*Why do the nations rage?*” Answer: “*The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Messiah*”—that's Jesus, which means God is Salvation.” Every ruler in this world advertises himself as salvation—and marches to prove it.

Maybe it's every army that ever marched. The fact that they're prepared for the hour day month and year suggests that it all happens according to plan.

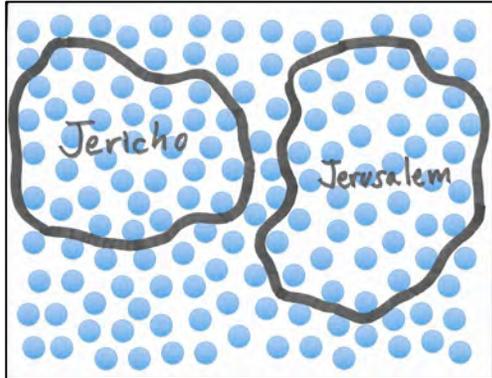
Whatever the case, the mounted troops look a bit like the demons we just saw. Actually, they look like a lion coming and a serpent leaving. It's like they pretend to be godly—sapphire is the color of the pavement under the throne of God in Exodus. And it's *theion*—divinity or holy fire that comes from his mouth in the Old Testament.

At the fifth trumpet we see demons and at the sixth I think we see armies demonized by demons and rulers pretending to be God.

Saint Paul wrote, “*We battle not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, the world rulers or rulers of this present age (aion) of darkness*” (Eph. 6:12).



You see? It's not just individuals that are "demonized" but institutions, patterns of thought, psychologies, social systems and *all* the governments of this world.



It's not just individuals, but societies that bind themselves together with covenants of self-centeredness.

And so of course, societies and nations are always at war with each other.
They worship idols that aren't actually gods, but demons.

And now I know some of you may be nervous . . . for my diagram shows Jericho as a Canaanite city that stands condemned. And Jerusalem looks just like Jericho.

There is a bizarre stream of thought in American Evangelicalism; it teaches that to criticize Jerusalem is a great sin and even to be cursed.

It's an utterly bizarre idea, promoted by people that seem to be unaware that those who most criticized Israel and Jerusalem were named Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Jesus.

In Matt. 23 Jesus issues seven woes to the religious leaders of Israel and then says,

"I send you prophets... whom you will kill and crucify... so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth... Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate."

In Revelation 11, He will refer to Jerusalem as Sodom.

And in chapter 18 she appears to be Babylon, in verse 2 *"the dwelling place of demons."*

Make no mistake: Jesus loves Jerusalem. He absolutely adores Jerusalem.

He loves her so much that He will not allow her to remain as she is.

As we preached a few weeks ago, Israel was “*blessed to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth,*” but Israel did not trust “God is Salvation.” She believed that she was her own salvation. And so she crucified “God is Salvation” just outside her city walls on a tree. She was a covenant of self-interest, only worse, for she did it in the name of God.

I wonder if the worldly institution that we call “the church” could sometimes be nothing more than a covenant of self-interest that is a *covenant with death*?

In Isaiah 28, Isaiah prophesies the coming of the Messiah to the city of Jerusalem and then in verse 18 we read, “*Then your covenant with death will be annulled and your agreement with Sheol will not stand.*”

Do you understand? Sheol (Hades in the Greek, often translated “Hell” in English) is a covenant with death, and death is to be cut off from The Life. Sheol begins on the surface of the earth . . . and Sheol can continue under the earth after the body dies... It’s like self-consciousness and only self-consciousness, a continuous consciousness of being utterly alone—even if harassed by demons.

In Rev. 9:6 we read that, “In those days people will seek death and will not find it.” I think that may be a reference to Sheol... AND to the fact that we can’t save ourselves from death, with more death, which is seizing control of our own life or death.

We need the death of death—the second death, which must be Eternal Life.

Well, according to Scripture, it appears that death is being trapped in a covenant of self-centeredness infected with demons under the direction of *Apollyon*—the destroyer.

I find it incredibly troubling that the Modern American Church usually pictures Heaven and hell as something like this.



Do you see?

We think that Heaven, the New Jerusalem, is just a *new covenant* of self-interest. And the wall between Heaven and Hell is the boundary between those that have agreed to this covenant before the cut-off date and those that have not.

We think Heaven is a covenant of those that have chosen to save themselves with their knowledge of good and evil. And Hell is a prison for those that have not taken this knowledge and made themselves in the image of God.

We think Heaven is a covenant to protect our own self-interest, and we like the idea that Hell is a covenant with death that can never be annulled. And so, we think the Judgment of God is not the defeat of evil, but the eternal preservation of evil and all the destroyers of the earth in a place called Hell.

We think Heaven in “liking” the idea of hell, which is profoundly unkind. Do you see? This picture is not half Heaven and half Hell. ***It’s all hell.***

But now hear the Gospel:

“I will annul your covenant with death.”

“The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

“Jerusalem look; the King is right outside your city walls, hanging on a tree,”

Jesus was crucified at the sixth hour of the sixth day of the week, on the sixth day of creation, just outside the walls of Jerusalem as he made atonement for all the children of Adam. No one recognized Him. No one repented . . . until His blood began to flow . . .

And a thief cried out, *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”* (Luke 32:42)

And a Roman centurion dropped to his knees and confessed, *“Surely this man was the Son of God”* (Matt. 27:34).

- He repented and the children of Adam are still repenting.
- The earth shook, and the walls are still tumbling down.
- That was the end of the sixth day and the beginning of an endless Seventh Day.

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.

Notice that at the seventh trumpet . . .

#1 The kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

#2 The scene in the throne room in chapters 4 and 5 is now happening on earth; His Kingdom has come and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

#3 The destroyers are destroyed.

The seventh trumpet is the death of death, not the preservation of death.

1 Cor. 15: 26 *"The last enemy to be destroyed is death."*

#4 The seventh trumpet is the last trumpet,

1 Cor. 15:51 *"Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body **must** put on the imperishable, and this mortal body **must** put on immortality."*

#5 At the last trumpet—The ark of the covenant is seen in His temple.

The Ark of the Covenant is the Judgment of God.

And His temple is the human *psyche*—in Greek. In English, the soul.

At the last trumpet, everyone that's anyone repents... And how did it happen?

Well, if you're a Christian you know that it happened on a tree just outside the walls of Old Jerusalem at the end of the sixth day, a Friday.

And it's glory was revealed on a Sunday, an eighth day, which in Jewish thought is an endless seventh day, the Sabbath day. It's also the third day—Easter.

The Revelation specifies the first two woes, but not the third woe. It leaves that one for you to figure out.

- The first woe upon Jerusalem is a plague of demons—at the fifth trumpet.
- The second woe is a plague of armies—at the sixth trumpet.
- The third woe is that the One we all crucified just rose from the dead.
Is that Good News or bad news?

In the Lord of the Rings, Gandalf is able to cast the evil out of Theodin . . .

Because he's no longer Gandalf the gray but Gandalf the white,

And that's because he gave his life for his friends,

And was baptized with water and fire and then rose from the dead on the third day.

Of course, Tolkien was a committed believer and so Gandalf was a picture of Christ, and his death and resurrection was a description of the atonement.

We have all sorts of theories of the atonement and the Revelation is all about the atonement—that is what happens at the seventh seal, seventh trumpet, and seventh bowl. It is the Revelation of the atonement. We have all sorts of theories, but at it's most basic level, I think the atonement is this: It is the Revelation that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Commander of God's army is bleeding for you. In a word, it's "kindness."

It's the kindness of God that conquers the world and makes all things new.

It's the kindness of God that leads you to repentance.

In Romans 1, Paul describes the Wrath of God—all the terrifying verses.

Then in Romans 2:1 he writes: *“Therefore you have no excuse, o man—oh Adam—for in judging, you yourself are judged and stand condemned.”* v. 4 *“Do you think nothing of the riches of God’s kindness?” “Do you not know that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”* So, if you don’t repent, something must be keeping you from the kindness of God.

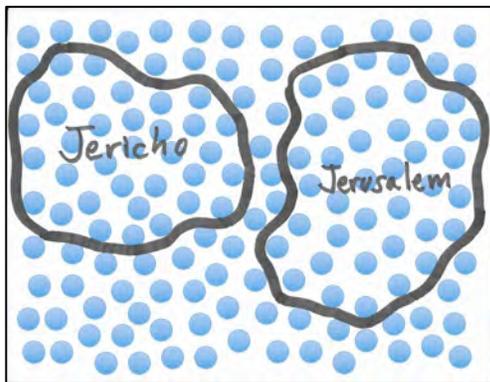
It’s the kindness of God that creates, in you, a new mind; *metanoia*. And when you are kind, Christ in you lays siege to the kingdom of Hell.

Romans 12:19 Paul writes,

“Beloved, do not avenge (ekdikeo) yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance (ekdikesis) is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; [Give him kindness] For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

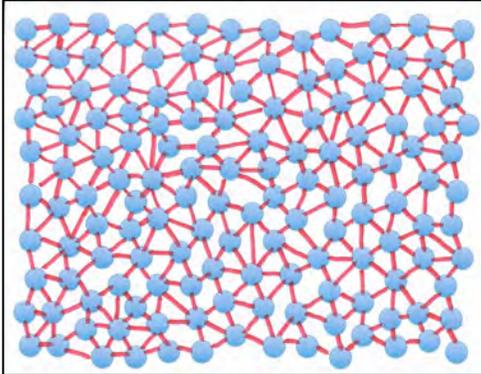
Kindness is the third woe, and the Judgment of God, that conquers this world. I really do grieve for the American Church for we often seem to no longer be kind. So, of course, we’ve lost our power—true power. We have political power; we have legislative power, but we don’t have much *real* power.

The New Jerusalem does not look like this . . .

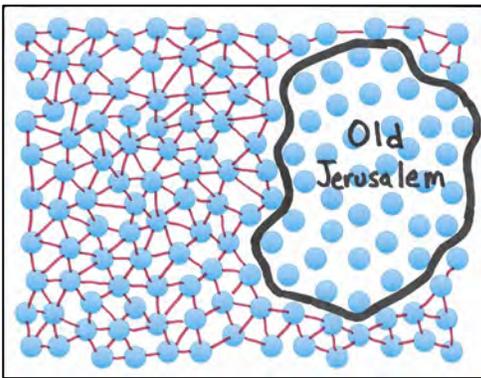


A covenant of self-centeredness.

The New Jerusalem looks like this:



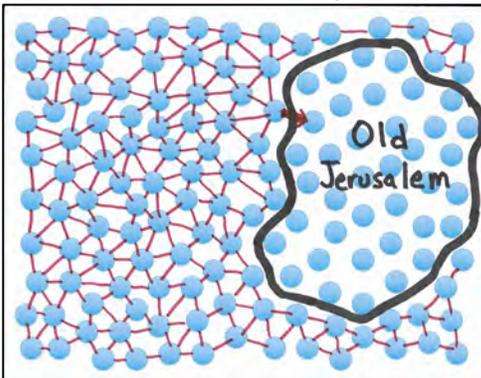
A covenant of self-sacrifice that forms a communion wherein each person bleeds for all and all for one.



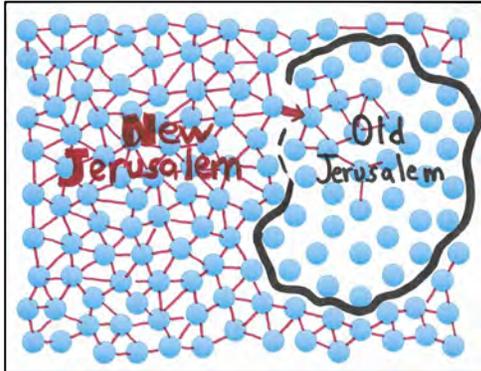
The New Jerusalem isn't dead; it's made of living stones.
She is a Body and a Bride and her gates are always open.

Zechariah prophesied: *"You will be a city without walls. I will be the fire around you and the glory in your midst."*

And so, how does the Kingdom of God conquer the kingdoms of this world?



One person on one side of the wall bleeds for another person on the other side of the wall...



And that in itself destroys the wall, for in the end, the wall is just the manifestation of an illusion in our own psyche. It's the product of believing a lie spoken by a snake in a garden by a tree.

And Jesus says, "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Communion

And in order that you would repent, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you." And He took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood poured out for you."

This is the Eternal Covenant.

And this is the Great Kindness of God.

This is the Judgment of God.

And all your judgments, all of the dividing walls that you have constructed in self-centeredness, fear, pride, and shame are all an illusion.

Repent.

Prayer

Lord God, we are happy to confess to you that we have believed a lie; the lie is that we are salvation. We have constructed walls to protect ourselves and yet the walls keep us from seeing you—the Judgment of God, which is God is Salvation—Jesus.

You are better than we thought; you are always better than we thought. Thank you for revealing yourself. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

I have a bunch of really amazing stories which we didn't have time for. I was a skeptic growing up; I was like a science geek so I didn't believe a lot of this stuff. But I have

seen some pretty freaky things. And I have seen the power of God. What really amazes me is that when I go back and analyze it, even in the moment, I realize the substance of that overcoming power is kindness.

May you believe the Gospel and be kind. In Jesus' name, 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.

18

To Prophecy the Mystery (The Sweet and Sour Gospel)

To Prophecy The Mystery (The Sweet and Sour Gospel)

Revelation 10

March 18, 2018

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

Peter Hiatt

All images by Peter Hiatt unless otherwise credited.

28 years ago, I was a youth pastor in Northern California. Our youth group meetings usually numbered well over a hundred raucous and hormonal teenagers—the worst would sit in the back. I tried just about everything to get the kids in the back row of the youth room to shut up and listen to the Word of God.

I shaved my head and ate a live goldfish; I refereed a live chicken-wrapping contest; I told entertaining stories. I tried to entertain them. I threatened them and promised to reward them. I made a golden throne out of an old toilet; if they were good they were granted a seat on the golden throne, holding the golden scepter that looked just like a plunger spray-painted gold.

I entertained them; I made deals with them, and most importantly I presented the very best arguments to them—and still, the kids in the back row wouldn't shut their mouths and listen.

They didn't listen until one Monday night when they did listen.

But not to me, to Jeff—one of our volunteers.

If you saw Jeff you'd think, “Well, there's a model citizen.”

He had been a high school football star with great grades . . . had a wonderful wife . . . the kind of person you'd want your high school kids to model themselves after.

But this night, he stood in front of the youth group, and with tears in his eyes, he told about a time in his life when he lay on the floor of his apartment for three days and did not move. He did not eat. He had surrounded himself with knives, pills, and instruments of death because he longed to die.

He had never told anybody the story, not even his wife, until just a few days before this night when he told us. He shared that although he had professed Christ in High School, a friend in college enticed him into selling a little cocaine, and he did.

Jeff said that before long he found himself strapping cocaine to his body and flying back and forth between San Diego and San Francisco, enthralled with the money, the power and the adventure. He had made himself king of his kingdom. He felt like the King of the World . . . until one particular day about eight months into his newfound occupation.

He sat in the back of a limousine talking to a supplier behind smoked glass and sitting in the front seat. He told the supplier that he was having trouble collecting on one of his accounts. The supplier began to lecture Jeff on the need to enforce discipline.

Jeff said he didn't really know what the guy meant, so he spelled it out:

"Well Jeff, if you'd like me to have him killed, I will."

All at once, it hit Jeff like a ton of bricks.

He wasn't a *success*; he was a *drug dealer* about to arrange for a murder.

All his life, all his history, all his chronology had led to this. His kingdom of "accomplishments" was an illusion.

He went to his apartment and sank into the abyss. Fighting back snot and tears, in front of the youth group and the kids in the back row, he told of those three days lying on the floor in his apartment, absolutely horrified at himself, paralyzed with fear and shame.

Three days. . . so very aware that he needed to die and wanted to die. On the third day, he muttered a prayer: "God help."

And on the third day, the phone rang. It was his old youth pastor with whom he hadn't spoken in ages, who had no clue as to what was going on . . . and yet something in his old friend spoke to something in Jeff, and Jeff made a choice. Or more accurately, *God* made a choice *in* Jeff. He repented and believed the Gospel. He would die with Jesus, and God would raise Jeff and Jesus from the dead. He was saved.

The kids in the back row of the youth room shut their mouths and listened.

What I mean by that is that they didn't *try* to listen because they *should* listen.

They just *did* listen. They repented. They entertained a new thought: "*Perhaps reality is no as I imagined.*"

Jesus came preaching, "Repent the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

As we said last week: repent does not mean try harder; it means: think differently; change your mind; reality is not as you've imagined.

This week, we come to chapter 10 of the Revelation.

It's referred to as an interlude between the sounding of the 6th and 7th trumpets.

For the last two messages, we've been preaching on the sounding of the 7 trumpets at the opening of the 7th seal when we see our High Priest making atonement for us before God.

We said that the 7 trumpets must resound back through time as hope. They sound as the walls of this world come crashing down—we see storms, volcanic eruptions, a falling star, darkness, a plague of demons, and a plague of armies.

The 6th trumpet is blown and chapter 9 ends as follows:

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 [pharmakeia is the word in Greek. It's where we get our word pharmacy. It refers to things like buying and selling cocaine] or their sexual immorality [porneia in Greek; it refers to buying and selling sex as if it were not a mystery, but a commodity, which we control.] or their thefts [which, of course, is just seizing control].

Six Trumpets, a world of calamity, and still humanity does not repent.
Still, the kids in the back row don't shut their mouths and listen.
Still, Jeff lies on the floor of his apartment wanting to die.

Chapter 10:1

It's the end of the 6th trumpet, just before the 7th trumpet...
Just like the end of the 6th day of creation, just before the 7th day—when *everything* is good.
Just like the end of the Friday, the 6th day, on which the Son of Man was crucified on a tree just outside the walls of Old Jerusalem . . .

Revelation 10:1-3

*Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He had a little scroll **open** in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded.*

- The face of this *angelos* (messenger) shines like the sun, just like Jesus' face in Revelation 1.
- He stands on land and sea—that means sovereignty over Israel and the nations.
- His voice is like a lion roaring—there is only one lion in the book of Revelation.
- When he speaks the seven thunders sound. Seven thunders!
 - That's like the voice of God in Psalm 29 and John 12 when Jesus prayed, *"The hour has come for the son of man to be glorified... Father glorify your name."*
 - God spoke! Some people understood it; others said, "No. That was just thunder."
*This "*angelos*" acts just like the manifest glory of God in Ezekiel chapters 1-3, who gives Ezekiel a scroll and tells him to eat it and prophecy.
 - He looks and acts just like the Son of Man in Daniel chapters 7 and 12—
at the end of Daniel, this Son of Man descends raises his hands to heaven and swears an oath regarding the time of the end as he says to Daniel, *"the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end."*

But now, note: this scroll is unsealed.

Jesus *is* the Son of Man; Jesus *is* the manifest glory of God;
Jesus *is* the angel of Yahweh; Jesus is the End . . .

And the book of Revelation is entitled, "***The Revelation of Jesus.***"

Almost all commentators agree: This must be Jesus.

In His hand is a *bibliaridion*, which is a small *biblion*—a small scroll containing words. The scroll may be the same as the scroll in the right hand of God, or it may be a smaller version of the scroll in the right hand of God. Maybe it's Scripture. Maybe it's the Revelation. Whatever the case it contains the words of God and it's open.

The big scroll in the right hand of God sealed with seven seals is also open. This is the End, descending into space and time with "meaning" in His hand. This burning *angelos* roars like a lion and the seven thunders sound.

"And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down" (Rev. 10:4).

I love that! –It's still a mystery

We see Jesus. We see the End. We see and hear the Word of God, but we still can't comprehend all that He means. There is always more than we know. And God is always better than we thought.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul writes:

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

Paul makes it clear that he is that man, although he's not that man.

- As if he, himself, is more than we know.

- And he, himself, is better than we could even begin to imagine.

In Galatians, he wrote, "*It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*"

Jesus Christ is the Beloved Son of God in whom God is well pleased.

He had a nickname for John and his brother—do you remember it?

boanerges—it means "sons of thunder."

Revelation 10:4-6

And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down." And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore (an oath) by him who lives forever and ever,

- Jesus commanded us not to never swear or take an oath. James says, "Above all never swear an oath."
- I think that's because there is only one eternal oath.
- And it forms the one eternal covenant that is the one and only Word of God.

He is that Oath, and His body and blood are the Covenant.

...the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more [chronos] delay... [In the ESV].

The King James Version translates *chronos* as "time" because that's what it means. It's where we get our word: chronology, it's one event happening after another event in a series that we refer to as time.

In chapter 1 we read, "the *kairos* is at hand."

Kairos is meaningful time—like an event.

Chronos is chronological time like a calendar.

"The *kairos* is at hand" and "*chronos* will be no more."

Chronos appears fifty-three times in the New Testament, and this is the only place it's translated "delay" in the ESV and most modern translations.¹

Early Church Fathers argued that this angel marks the boundary of eternity and chronological time—that is the End of time. But modern translators can't seem to even conceive of the End of time...or an eternity that would continuously invade our temporality. Eternity invading time is a mystery, and modern commentators feel obligated to explain away every mystery with *our* perception of space and time.

Revelation 10:5-11

And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever [ages and ages], who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more [time], but that in the days of the trumpet call to be

¹ There's a perfectly good, and related, word for delay, but the *angelos* doesn't use that word.

sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled (“accomplished” or “finished”—teleo).

That’s the same word that Jesus used on the cross. “It is finished.”)

...in the days of the trumpet call [as if the end would be present in time] to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets [as if God has been talking about this throughout the Old Testament].

Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, “Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” So I went to the angel[os] and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.”

Well, what is John to prophesy?

Don’t you suppose it’s the contents of the scroll that he’s supposed to eat?

And what are the contents of the open scroll he’s supposed to eat?

Well, don’t you suppose it’s what the *angelos* called, “the mystery of God.”

So, what is the Mystery of God?

You know ever since the Enlightenment, people in the West have been taught that mysteries are myths—and myths can’t be true.

Modernity taught us that the only things that are true things are things that can be explained . . . and yet truth itself cannot be explained, which logically means that Modernity is a myth that cannot be explained, for there is no such thing as truth, and therefore, Modernity cannot be true.

See? You can only make sense of things by assuming things that make sense of you: things like Truth and Existence, Logos and Love. Truth and existence: “I AM”.

So, perhaps the Mystery of God is:

- Something you can’t explain, but explains you.
- Something you can’t comprehend or control, but it can comprehend and control you.
- Perhaps the Mystery of God is not the absence of Meaning, but *the* Meaning of all meaning, the meaning of all space and time—the Logos.

Perhaps we've crucified the Meaning, in an effort to make it comprehensible to modern people, as well as something that could be controlled by modern Christians—which would be us.

Thankfully, modernity is dead and dying... largely due to science.

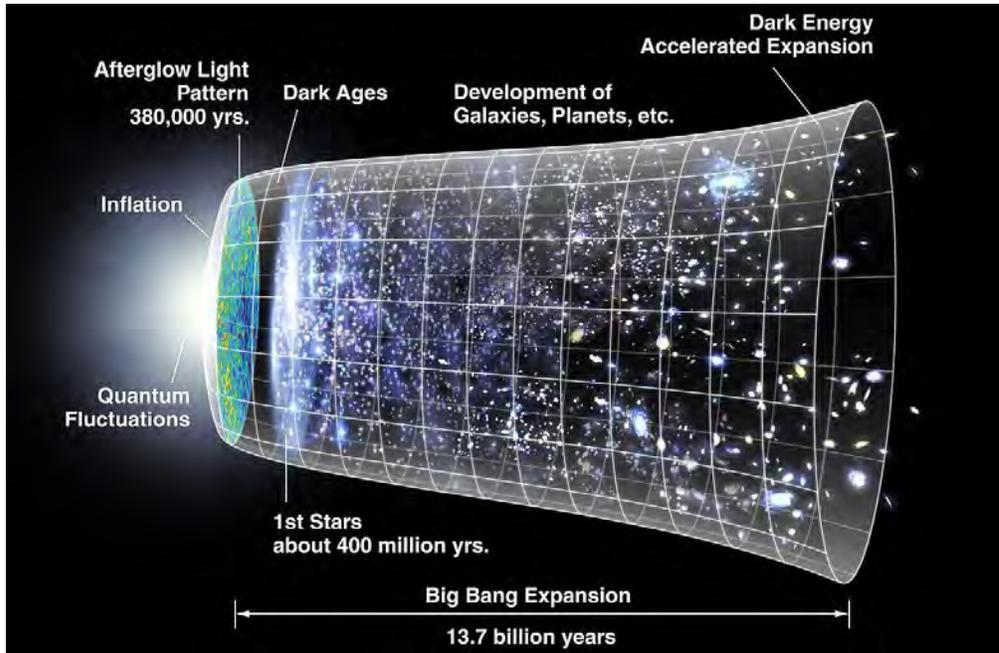


Figure 1 Image credit: NASA / WMAP science team

Physicists now say that our entire Cosmos of space and time—that is all that is natural—must exist within something that's not natural, but *supernatural* by definition.

There's something supernatural on the other side of the Big Bang, which is everything natural—all the laws of space and time. And there's something supernatural in you, for there's something in you that can actually determine the quantum state of subatomic matter.

In other words: everything not mysterious is dependent on a mystery.
In fact, modern physics is certain that we are fundamentally uncertain.

Movie clip from *A Serious Man*

[A professor explains the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. At the end of his mathematic explanation of the principle, the professor says: "Okay? *The Uncertainty Principle: it proves we can't ever really know what is going on. But even though you can't ever really figure anything out, you will be responsible for it on the midterm.*"]

[Image of a professor standing in front of a huge chalkboard packed with information & equations]

He's explaining the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle.

And I'm just explaining that for the first time in hundreds of years, maybe we could just believe Scripture, without using our inferior judgments of space and time to explain away the Judgment of God—and the Word of God—our Father.

I mean maybe you're not a bastard—the accidental result of 14 billion years of physical processes floating in space. Maybe you're a son or daughter of thunder.

Whatever the case, the *angelos* swears that time will be no more.
And that in the days of the 7th trumpet call the Mystery of God will be fulfilled.

What is “The Mystery of God?”

Mysterion is the Greek word and it's used 27 times in the New Testament. (With the sermon manuscript posted on the website, we'll also post a sheet listing all the instances of its use.)

Mysterion comes from the Greek verb *muo*, which means, “shut your mouth.”

What is “The Mystery of God?”

Soon we'll read that the Great Whore of Babylon is a mystery...

And in 2nd Thessalonians, Paul refers to “lawlessness” as a mystery.

“The Mystery of God?”

- ✓ Lawlessness (evil)

And it is a mystery. In the beginning, God speaks and His will happens.
But on the 6th day, humanity does its own will in opposition to God's will.
God said, “*You will not eat of the fruit.*” But then, they did—a mystery.

There's a mystery of *lawlessness*, and then, in 1 Timothy there's a mystery of *godliness*, which is faith.

“The Mystery of God?”

- ✓ Lawlessness (evil)
- ✓ Godliness (Faith)

So, according to Paul faith is not simply your choice.

Faith is a mystery, more like a miracle.

According to Paul's letter to the Colossians, this is “**the** mystery hidden for ages and generations,” “*Christ in you, the hope of Glory.*”

“The Mystery of God?”

- ✓ Lawlessness (evil)
- ✓ Godliness (Faith)
- ✓ Christ in you

In all of Paul’s letters, he talks as if hope in you, and especially faith in you, is somehow Christ in you. In Galatians 1:16 Paul writes that when he was called to ministry by Jesus on the road to Damascus, that, (and now I quote) “*God was pleased to reveal his son in me,*” which seems to mean, that Jesus was on the outside of Paul, calling to the hidden Jesus buried somewhere deep inside of Paul...

-As if in some amazing way Jesus had *always been* in Paul.

-As if whatever Paul had done to Paul, he had also done to Jesus.

-As if whatever you do to the least of these, his brothers, you do to Jesus.

-As if Jesus was calling to Jesus—in Paul, on the road to Damascus, saying “*Awake oh sleeper and rise from the dead.*” In the words of David, “*Deep calls to deep at the thunder of thy cataracts*” (Psalm 42:7).

I had a fascinating experience recently praying for a friend struggling with demonic oppression. In situations like hers, when I don’t know what to do, I often pray in tongues. At first something in her reacted violently, until that something was like reduced to nothing by the words on my tongue and the presence of Jesus.

And then . . . my friend started answering me in tongues... As if the Jesus in her, was responding to the Jesus in me... It was another language, but every now and then I’d hear her say: “*Yeshua.*” That wasn’t a demon. That was another Spirit; it was Christ’s Spirit. It was the deep in her calling to the deep in me, and then had an amazing encounter with Jesus.

Years ago, praying for my friend who had been wed to Satan, we prayed our way into a memory that she did not want to remember. She heard muffled cries coming from the closet in which she’d been abused—when through prayer, she finally gained the strength to open the closet, she didn’t see herself bound and tied in that closet, she saw Jesus bound and tied in that closet.

The message was clear: As long as she refused to love her beaten and battered self—she refused to Love Jesus buried with her in fear and shame. But by loving that abused self, the Jesus in her adult self freed the Jesus in her abused self . . . And then, both were free and both were one.

The mystery is “*Christ in y’all.*” Paul uses the plural—“*y’all.*”

“How great among the Gentiles are the riches of the Glory of this mystery, which is Christ in y’all, the hope of glory.”

He talks as if Christ has been hidden in the depths all humanity, and will be rising in all humanity as “faith, hope, and love.”

- Not human judgment, but God’s Judgment in humans.

- And so, it’s not my choice that determines God’s Judgment, but God’s Judgment

that creates my choice—my good free will, a mystery.

Now, remember that the Revelation was sent to the seven churches in Asia Minor, who all first heard the Gospel from Paul in Ephesus. So, when John writes: “*mystery of God,*” they would’ve thought of the mystery in the letter to the Colossians in Asia minor, and even more, Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus, where Paul taught “*all the residents of Asia*” for two years in the *Hall of Tyrannus* (according to the book of Acts).

In Ephesians 1:7-10, Paul writes:

*In (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the **mystery of his will**, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite [anakephalaio—bring together under one head] all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

The mystery is that “*all things*” are coming together like a body under the one head, which is Christ.

“The Mystery of God?”

- ✓ Lawlessness (evil)
- ✓ Godliness (Faith)
- ✓ Christ in you
- ✓ One Body

Ephesians 3:6 “*This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*”

“The Gentiles” not “some Gentiles.”

The Ephesians had been Gentiles, but Paul refers to them as no longer Gentiles (4:17) for Christ had broken down the dividing wall of hostility in His own flesh (2:14) the One body, circulating the One breath, in the One river of Life that is our Lord’s blood, under “*One God and father of all, who is over all through all and in all*” (4:4-6).

. . . One Body that would inherit all things in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:8-9

“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things...”

Paul thinks it’s his incredible privilege to proclaim this Good News to the whole world.

- It’s as if He is convinced that Jesus Himself lies dormant in every man, perhaps like a seed that lies dormant in broken and dirty ground.
- When Paul preaches the Gospel, that seed is germinated/activated as faith, hope, and Love.
- And then the Logic of Christ begins to animate the body of Christ.

- And the Life of Christ begins to flow through the members of that body like blood.
- When all the members of the body bleed life as love, the whole body is joined in a communion of ecstatic Joy—all lose themselves and find themselves in joy.

In Ephesians 5:32, Paul declares that sex in the covenant of marriage is a mystery that refers to this great mystery of communion in the eternal covenant that forms the Body of Christ.

“The Mystery of God?”

- ✓ Lawlessness (evil)
- ✓ Godliness (Faith)
- ✓ Christ in you
- ✓ One Body
- ✓ United in a communion of love

Ephesians 3:9-10

“...the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities (principalities and powers) in the heavenly places.”

Ephesians 6:19 *“the mystery of the Gospel.”*

“The Mystery of God?”

- ✓ Lawlessness (evil)
- ✓ Godliness (Faith)
- ✓ Christ in you
- ✓ One Body
- ✓ United in a communion of love
- ✓ The Good News, The Gospel

Understand? Paul is saying that when we preach the mystery of the Gospel, we deliver a message to the Devil and his demons, and the walls of this fallen cosmos come tumbling down, like the walls of Jericho at the edge of the Promised Land.

Of course, we want to know when this will happen.
Well, it *has* happened, *is* happening, and *will* happen.

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus tells a parable about seed and then he says to the twelve, *“To you has been given the mysterion, the secret, the mystery, of the Kingdom.”* Like we talked about last time, Jesus came preaching, *“Repent. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

“The Mystery of God?”

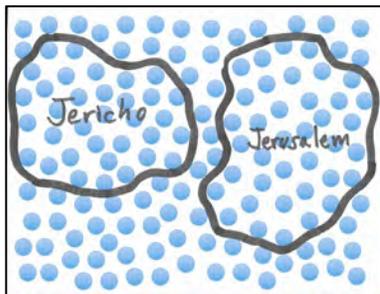
- ✓ Lawlessness (evil)
- ✓ Godliness (Faith)

- ✓ Christ in you
- ✓ One Body
- ✓ United in a communion of love
- ✓ The Good News, The Gospel
- ✓ “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”

That means it’s right here, right now. In Luke 17 Jesus says, *“Look the Kingdom of God is within y’all.”* *“Repent.”* *You can’t make it come if it’s already here.*

If you think you can make it come—you don’t know what it is and you won’t recognize it when it appears. You must repent.

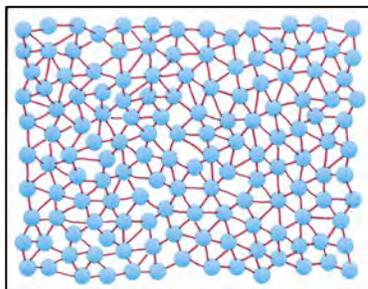
When we look at the world, we normally see something like this:



6 Billion souls only banding together to protect their individual rights and thereby preserve their own death. We’ve been preaching about this the last two messages. This is a picture of the Kingdoms of this world, the principalities and powers of this present darkness that tempt us to create covenants of self-interest and walls that divide.

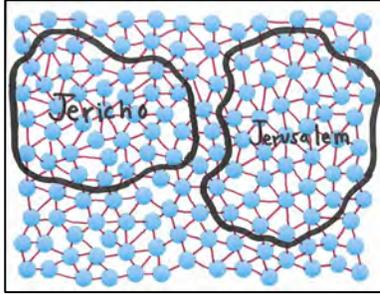
These kingdoms are temporal and this isn’t actually life . . . but death.

When Jesus, John, and Paul talk about the Kingdom of God, it’s like they’re seeing something more like this:

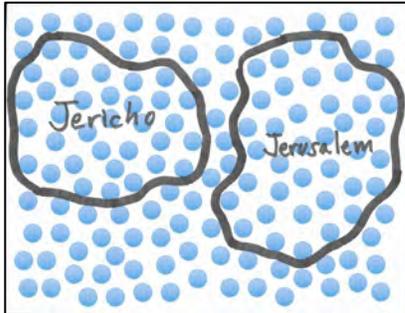


6 Billion cells all interconnected by one Judgment, in one Body, with each sacrificing themselves for the other selves in an ecstatic communion called Life. This Life is eternal. This Kingdom is eternal. This Gospel is eternal.

So do you believe the Gospel? What do you see?



Can you see the Kingdom of God that is at hand?



Or can you only see the kingdoms of this world and six billion lonely souls?

At the sounding of the seventh trumpet in the next chapter, the twenty-four elders on their twenty-four thrones cry, *“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.”* You are already in Christ on a throne.

In Ephesians, Paul refers to each of us as *already “seated with God in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* who is seated on the throne. That would be His Body . . . on a throne. And yet, look you’re here, in this world probably seated on a hard seat that can hurt your behind; that’s a mystery.

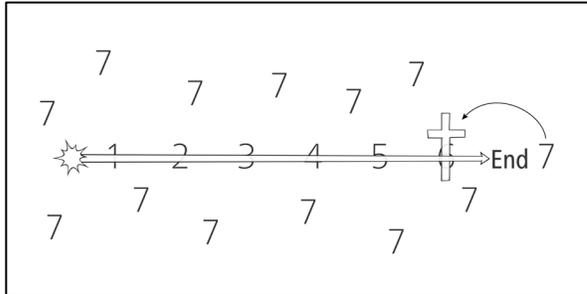
At the boundary of the 6th and 7th trumpet, like the boundary of the 6th and 7th day of creation, which is the boundary between this age and God’s eternal Sabbath rest... Jesus stands on land and sea and makes a covenant swearing that *chronos* will be no longer, but in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded, the mystery of God would be finished—the seventh trumpet.

As Jesus hung on the cross, He cried, “It is finished.”
And yet, 2000 years later so much seems to not be finished. That’ a mystery.

In 1 Cor. 15:51-52 Paul wrote:

“Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”

The Last Trumpet is the 7th trumpet. Paul writes that we have come to the end of the ages in Christ Jesus. And that there, at His cross, we die with Jesus and rise with Jesus. Jesus dies at the end of the sixth day and rises on the eighth day, which in Hebrew thought is an eternal 7th day. At the cross, we receive eternal life, *aiionios* life—the Life of God's age in this age, eternity in our time.

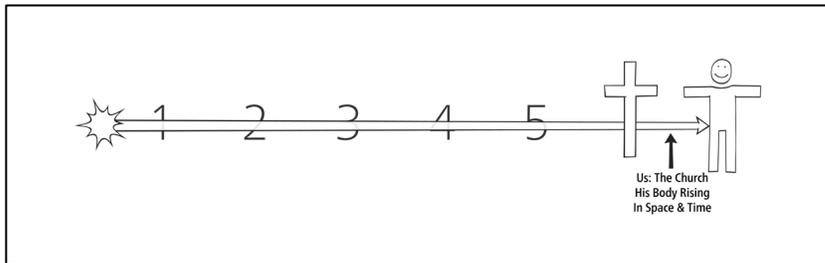


I sure hope that you remember this picture.
This is how Genesis and the Revelation seem to view time.

All of space and time, Creation itself is like the revelation of Jesus over the span of seven ages, *aions* or creation days.

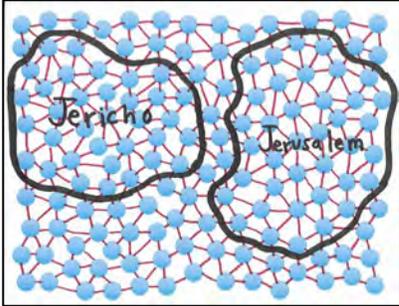
And on the Seventh Day, everything is Good (Genesis 1:31).
That's God's Judgment, that's the Word of God, and that's Jesus.
Jesus is the End and the Beginning according to the Revelation.
And Jesus is the eternal Logos in whom all is upheld and created.

At the cross, Jesus cried, "It is finished." He gave up His Spirit and Eternity invaded time.
Time will come to an end for all (see the arrow from the end into chronology?).
But time has come to an end for you when you walk in Faith (John 17:3). This is eternal Life, knowing Him—the Kingdom!



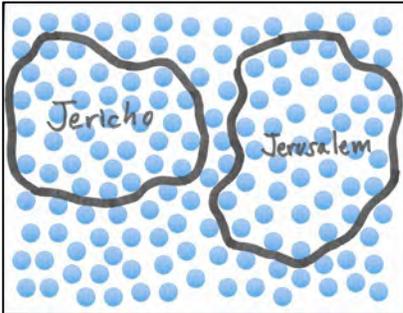
Faith in you is Christ rising in you.
And Faith in us is the Body of Christ rising in this world.

When you walk in faith, you begin to see this:

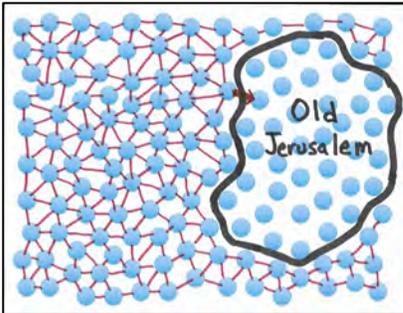


[The Body]

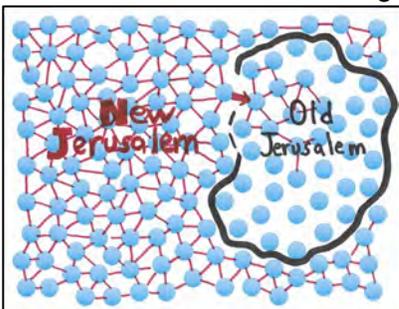
. . . And not only this:



And when you preach the gospel you do this:



And the walls of this world begin to crumble

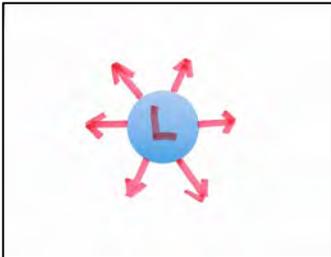


Eternity invades time. That's a space-time boundary.
 The walls of the world begin to crumble, because the walls of one lonely soul have begun to crumble.

The last two weeks, we preached a mystery:
We preached that a self-centered lonely soul like this:

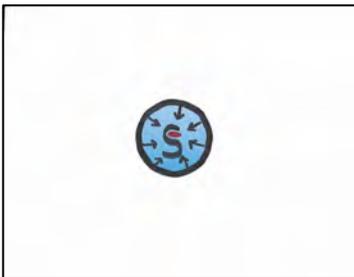


Can become a self-sacrificing and loving soul like this:

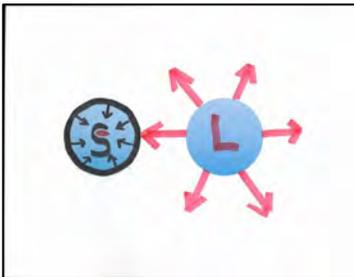


And how does that happen?

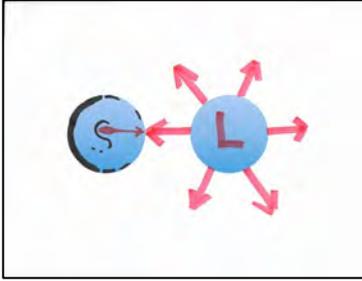
This is a mystery but it appears that Christ has descended into the depths of the human soul as a seed.



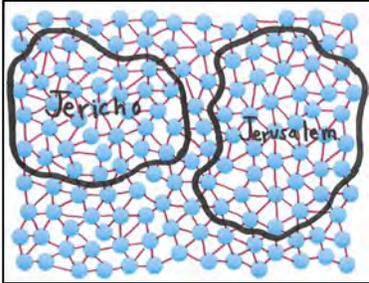
And when Christ in you, preaches Gospel to that seed in them, deep calls to deep.



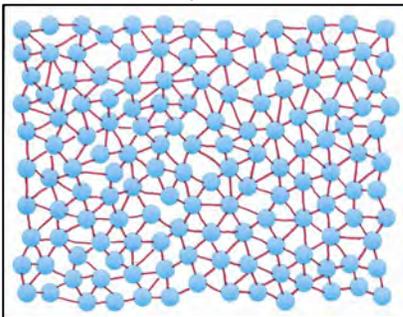
And Jesus rises in them as faith, hope, and Love.



That's repentance; it's coming to see that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand



The Kingdom of God is at hand and the kingdoms of this world are an illusion that will soon fade away.



Paul and John describe the process as “waking up.”

We have each dreamed the dream of our own sovereignty—our own kingdom (our own king dominion—that’s what kingdom means).

We have each dreamed that we were our own creator, savior, and redeemer.

We have each dreamed that we have no Father, no Progenitor, which means we have no brothers and no sisters... we're utterly alone.

One particularly challenging day along about 1994 my particularly strong-willed five-year-old daughter, Elizabeth was having a particularly bad day. Her brother and sister were not doing what she told them to do. And her mom and I were telling her to do things she didn't want to do.

At one point, with tear-stained cheeks, she screamed, “I don't want a mommy, I don't want a daddy. I don't need a daddy.” And I said, “OK.” Just “OK, As you wish.” Then all

afternoon I ignored her. I didn't listen to her. Of course, I didn't really ignore her and I didn't really *not* listen to her. But I let her pretend she didn't have a daddy, and she was king of her kingdom.

Of course, she was in my house, eating my food, constantly under my watch and protection, but I let her dream a little dream of her own Sovereignty.

At dinner, I didn't talk to her, and I could tell she was absolutely miserable. After dinner I did let her go to the store with me—she begged.

But when we got in the car I didn't look at her... I was totally silent. And then out of the silence, she just began to wail as she threw herself across my lap sobbing "*I want a daddy; I want a daddy! I want my daddy.*"

I think our entire life in this fallen world is like Elizabeth's bad day in 1994. I think the Father has let you dream the dream of your own sovereignty. And now that dream has turned into a nightmare.

It's like this [Peter picks up a scroll and holds it securely in his hand]. He has the whole world, the entire cosmos in His hand.

And He has you in His hand as you dream the dream of your own sovereignty. But now your dream has become a nightmare. And so He speaks a Word into your dream, [Peter picks up a scroll and kisses it] and that Word is Jesus.

Has your life become a nightmare? If so... this is the Good News:

*It is . . .
But in a moment in the twinkling of an eye you will wake up.*

We must all wake up eventually... it's conceivable to me that some may sleep for hundreds of years in a place where men weep and gnash their teeth. But we must all wake up. And by Faith, you can wake up now.

And when you wake up, your dream won't be wasted. The experience of your nightmare will make you love reality that much more. Your empty chronology will be filled with all the fullness of God.

Well, when you proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, you speak the word of the Father into a child having a nightmare. You're saying: "*Repent the Kingdom is at hand. He's right here, holding you, surrounding you, calling to you: wake up. You're not a bastard. You're the beloved child of God.*"

See? To dream that you have no progenitor is to dream that you are a bastard. And if you think you're a bastard, you've swallowed a lie—you're dreaming.

Now, I'm not recommending this for families—because of the sex and violence,—but last month I watched all 7 seasons of "The Game of Thrones" in preparation for season 8.

Spoiler alert!

Everyone that watched the 7th season can't wait for the 8th season, primarily because they want to watch, and they wish they could be the one that gets to tell John Snow: "John Snow. You're not a bastard. You're the rightful heir to the Iron Throne."

See? John grew up in a Lord's house thinking he was a bastard. At one point, he's betrayed by his brothers for letting the wildling tribes through the wall that supposedly separates the bad people from the good. He's murdered and even raised from the dead. The entire world is caught in a battle to seize the iron throne. But John snow can't seize the throne. He's already inherited the throne . . . he just doesn't know it.

Well, throughout the 7th season, we know, but John doesn't know; he's the son of the king and therefore rightful heir to the throne. That news is Good News; it's Gospel.

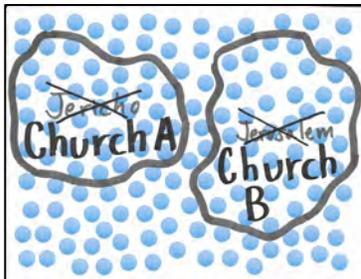
We live in the 7th season. We live in the Day of the 7th trumpet call, and that's the Gospel we're called to preach: "You're not a bastard." Your Daddy is God. You can't seize the throne because you inherit the throne. All things are yours. You may act like a bastard, but you're *not* a bastard. The truest thing about you is Jesus. The way God feels about Jesus is the way God feels about you. Believe you're loved and you *will* Love. You actually are the Body of Love, the Body of Jesus. Repent. Wake up."

John is told to eat the scroll and prophesy.

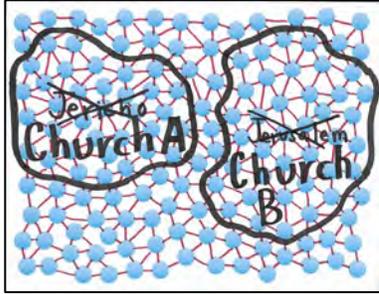
Revelation 19:10, "*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*"

As Jeff stood in front of the youth room balling his eyes out, he testified to Jesus. He testified to the Mystery of God and the Kingdom of God.

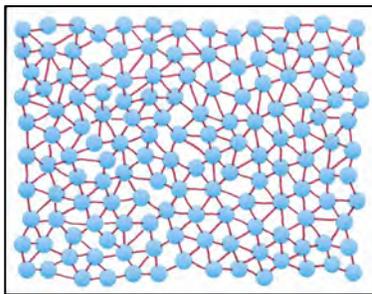
When we pastors preach and teach, we're often testifying to ourselves and trying to build our kingdom. And our kingdom looks something like this:



So, we entertain, threaten, and argue to convince you that Church A is better than Church B. It's nothing new; it's just more death whitewashed and branded as life and love. It's a kingdom we chose, comprehend, and can "control."



But Jeff testified to a mystery he could not comprehend and did not control—a Mystery he could not choose, except that it was the choice given to him and rising within him. He did not testify to His own will . . . but to God's will.



He testified to the Grace of God in Christ Jesus his Lord.
He testified to the Kingdom of God that is at hand
And the kids in the back row repented; they shut their mouths and listened.

It was sweet on Jeff's lips as he spoke the words, and I know it was sweet when he first believed—when he first ingested the scroll—but as he shook and sobbed all could see that it had been bitter in his soul.

Because he had ingested the scroll all of his walls had come crashing down.

Because he had believed "God is Salvation," he could no longer believe "Jeff is Salvation." His own self-centered and arrogant ego had to die.

That's hard to digest, but once it's digested, it returns to your lips as a testimony of praise—a testimony of Jesus.

The kids in the back row repented for they heard the testimony of Jesus.
(We're out of time and we'll need to pick this up in the next message.)

Communion

But this is the testimony of Jesus: On the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you." And 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 sweet. And yet it can be hard to digest. It means, that the walls of your ego will come crashing down. But if you digest it, you will preach it, and it will be sweet on your lips as you do for you will prophesy a mystery—the testimony of Jesus.

Believe the Gospel; ingest the Gospel, and you'll live the Gospel

Prayer

Lord God, thank you for waking us up from a nightmare that you are not good. Thank you for revealing that we've built walls; we've run and hidden in darkness. Thank you, Lord God for whispering into our nightmare! Thank you that one day, very soon, we will be entirely awake. In Jesus' name, we thank you! Amen.

Benediction

When I was a kid I used to have nightmares and they would really terrify me. But the older I get, the better I get at separating out reality from what I'm dreaming. So, I'll have a dream and they'll be snakes and all sorts of junk, and within my dream, I'll think: *"This isn't real."* And it won't bother me. Now, as I'm older, I dream about church meetings going bad and people hating me, but even then I'm able to think: *"Yeah. It's a dream. It's just a dream."*

You see? I think we're supposed to do that in life, and that's what preaching is all about. Scripture teaches we're to proclaim His coming and yet, at the same time "His glory fills the whole earth." You might wonder: *"Well, which is it?"* It's both, but one is more real than the other. In fact, the word "coming," used in Scripture to describe Christ's second coming is the Greek word: *parousia*, which means "His effective presence." So, you're proclaiming that He is coming. So, when the *parousia* happens, everyone's eyes will be open and you'll see Him.

Your job as a preacher is really to proclaim something to people having a nightmare. That is: "You're not a bastard. Your Daddy is here, and He loves you." That is different than saying, "You're not a bastard . . . if you agree to the terms and conditions of this contract I have here, and if you decide to not be a bastard." No! The Gospel is: "You're not a bastard. Soon you are going to wake up. In fact, by the faith of Christ, you can wake up right now.

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.

19

You Can't Be Serious

You Can't be Serious

Easter

April 1, 2018

#19 in our series "The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation"

Peter Hiatt

[Band plays "Why do Fools Fall in Love?"]

This man enters the auditorium on Easter Sunday and takes a seat in front of the Sanctuary Congregation.



Figure 1 Image credit: The Sanctuary

In a funny accent, he begins to speak:

I know what some of you are thinking . . . You're thinking, "*You look foolish.*"

Do I?

Or do you?

What? With your nice Easter dresses, and your knowledge of good and evil, and your hiding from God in your fig leaf underwear . . . Who's foolish?

My friend Paul once wrote, "*God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.*" "*If anyone thinks he's wise, let him become a fool that he might be wise.*"

In the Greek Orthodox Church, the day after Easter is devoted to telling jokes because Easter is the ultimate joke upon the devil and all the vanity of humanity.

Psalm 2: "*Why do... the people imagine a vain thing?*

...He who sits in the Heavens laughs."

He laughs . . . He laughs.

And so the Orthodox still venerate a group of saints that they call *The Holy Fools*.

- The first was Saint Simeon, who was routinely kicked out of mass for flatulence and throwing nuts at the altar candles.
- On Good Friday, as the priest was telling the people to “mortify their flesh,” Saint Simeon pulled out a long sausage and began to eat it during the service. As they were dragging him out of the church for the last time he said, “The essence of human sinfulness is to take ourselves and our rituals too seriously.”
- Ezekiel was told to lie on his side and eat food cooked on poop, while he prophesied to the walls of Jerusalem for over a year.
- Isaiah was commanded to walk naked, “buttocks exposed” and prophesy for three years. I bet he looked foolish.

I look foolish, I know...

But you see? I come from the Greek Island of Patmos in the Eastern Mediterranean... It sounds sexy . . . I know, but not so much in my day. It was a Roman Penal Colony.

My name is John. Jesus called me “Son of Thunder.”

I suppose that I had some anger management issues.

I once begged Jesus to let me call down fire on an entire Samaritan village.

I wrote four of the books in your Bible—the last of which you’ve been studying...

That’s why your pastor arranged for my super-spectacular-through-space-and-time visit today. . . because you all are studying the Revelation. I wrote, The Gospel of John, 1st, 2nd and 3rd John, and the Revelation.

Nobody reads the Revelation, but they all think they know what it means. Do you know what it means? Do you *want* to know what it means? Do you? . . . Do you want to know? . . . I’ll tell you what it means:

It means you’re gonna die! Famines, plagues, wars and demons and you’re gonna die! [“John” stands up and approaches the congregation with intensity.] We’re all gonna die! Tribulation and death! We’re all gonna die!

[“John” begins running around in utter fear and panic shouting, “We’re gonna die! Tribulation and death, we’re all gonna die!” He pulls out some of hair in despair and passes out, falling to the ground....]

APRIL FOOLS!!!! Had you going didn’t I . . . for a minute? But actually . . . we are gonna die... I wasn’t foolin’ about that... Show of hands: How many of you think that you’re never going to die?

See? You already knew you were going to die. You already knew that.

And famines, plagues, wars, and demons are not what *might* happen...

Famines, plagues, wars, and demons are what’s *been happening* for at least two thousand years.

So it’s kind of foolish to think the Revelation means “Freak out—you’re gonna get tribulated and die!” You are gonna get tribulated and die... but that’s not the revelation.

The revelation is that all of that means somethin'... And in a minute—if you're good—I'll tell you what it means.

There are several scholarly theories as to the authorship and setting of the Revelation. Due to a variance in genre and grammatical style, some propose that the Revelation was written by a different author than that of the Gospel of John.

I've studied this a bit, and I'd like to give you my theory: I wrote it, just like everyone said I did. Of course, the genre and grammar are different; I had a freakin' weird vision... and I had to write it down in a freakin' prison colony in the Aegean Sea... AND I had to write it in freakin' Greek, although I'm a Jewish fisherman.

Later, when I wrote the Gospel, I was better at Greek, and I had spell check—his name was Luke. Grammar and genre are different—sure—but all the stuff in my Gospel is the stuff that I saw in the Revelation. In fact, people always wonder why my Gospel is so different from Matthew, Mark, and the Gospel Luke.

Well you see, those guys did their Gospels and kinda copied each other... By the time I wrote mine—I didn't need to repeat all their stuff. And I remembered a bunch of stuff that they had forgotten or kinda put out of their minds. I remembered that stuff, 'cause I saw that stuff in the Revelation. They didn't, but they didn't want to.

You see? Jesus was kinda like your crazy, but loveable, uncle Mike... You know the one that always seems to drink a little too much at family dinners and then starts talking about aliens and stuff; he's a fool, but loveable. So everyone loves him, but at a certain point, they just kind of tune him out.

It was like that with Jesus. He never drank too much, but at a certain point, we'd just smile and say, "Sure whatever Jesus. Whatever you say."

Things would be goin' great.

And He'd stand up and say,

"Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you."

We'd smile and say,

"Okee dokee... how about we all take a nap."

He'd say something like:

"Before Abraham was, I am."

We'd all smile and say,

"Well isn't that special."

Then, conveniently, we'd put it out of our minds. BUT, all these years later, I had the Revelation. And all these memories popped back into my mind.

He wasn't "Crazy Uncle Mike;" He is the Logic of God. Jesus is the Wisdom of God, the *Logos* of God—the Word of God: *"In the beginning was the Word... with God, that was God."* See? That's in my Gospel, 'cause I saw it in the Revelation.

He's *"the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the World."*

See? That's in my Gospel, 'cause I saw it in the Revelation.

All the crazy things that Jesus says about judgment:

- “*The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the son*” (John 5).
- “*I judge no one ... I have much to judge*” (John 8).
- “*Now is the Judgment of this world... I did not come to judge the world, but save the world*” (John 12).

He’s like the Judge that Judges by not Judging, who *is* the Judgment.

Sounds crazy!

But do ya see? That’s in my Gospel, ’cause I saw it in the Revelation.

- I saw a slaughtered lamb standing on the Judgment seat of God.

Did you know that my gospel is the only gospel that records Jesus’ first miracle?

- I think the other guys thought it was irresponsible and foolish.

- They thought it was an inappropriate story to convey to the youth group.

It was at a wedding feast: He turned six stone jars of water into 180 gallons of top-shelf premium wine, at a party, where folks were already a bit sloshed. It’s a bit embarrassing to write into your new gospel, but I saw it in my vision. It’s the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb.”

He makes the wine at the end of the sixth day, as He hangs on a tree, that is a throne, that is also a winepress that makes wine that is blood and blood that is wine—wine that will make you forget yourself and look foolish. And He’s happy to make this wine for you—insanely happy.

You see? Jesus is crazy.

He’s crazy with Love for you and for me—His Bride.

Jesus took Love so seriously—or knew that Love took Him SO seriously—that He didn’t have to take Himself seriously at all. He constantly lost Himself, and then found Himself, in Love. It made Him loopy, most of the time. I was always sayin’, “Get serious Jesus.” But *no* He’s off playin’ with the kids.

It’s April Fools Day and it’s Easter and that’s entirely appropriate.

When Jesus died, He went through Hell and looked like death...

The earth shook; the sun failed; the moon rose blood red...

And then on Easter morning: April fools! Death did not win!

Mary thought He was the gardener, ’cause He acted like the gardener, and He is the gardener—April fools! He had Mary tell all the boys: “April fools!”

That part about “*Mary toucheth me not, I haven’t yet ascended to my father.*”

I think that was a Jesus joke... April fools! Like: “*I conquered death, Hell, the devil, and a sealed tomb and now I’m about to ascend to heaven... but I can’t, ’cause woman you’re hangin’ all over me.*”

After Easter, it was like April Fools Day, every day, for forty days.

One day, me and the guys went fishing 'cause we were flippin' hungry and we didn't know what else to do; Jesus wasn't into detailed instructions. Now, some of us were professional fisherman; we knew our stuff and worked really hard at our trade—all night we fished and caught nothing. If you didn't catch no fish, you didn't eat no fish.

We were grumpy, tired, feelin' sorry for ourselves, and flippin' hungry...
In the morning, some joker yells, *"Try the other side of the boat."*

For some strange reason, we did... And, all at once, the nets were so full of fish I thought they'd swamp the boat. I said to Pete, *"It's the Lord!"* He got dressed (go figure!), dove in & swam for shore. When we got to shore, Jesus didn't need our fish.

He already had fish on the fire!

He wouldn't stop laughing. He thought He was so funny.

It was like He was sayin', *"You worried about fish? I got fish!"*

[*"John" pulls fish out of his pockets and begins tossing them out to the crowd.*]

It was like Jesus was saying, *"Worried about fish? Here have some fish. Didn't I tell you that Abba loved you? Why do you worry about what you'll eat and what you'll wear and what people think of you?"*

The whole time, He's bustin' a gut . . . deep belly laughs. And yet, you could still see the wounds in His hands—fresh, and in His feet—fresh wounds. He didn't deny the pain, but now, it was like, transformed into joy. He laughed, like a mother—that's just given birth to a healthy baby. There was all that tribulation and then she just laughs—deep belly laughs.

In fact, the night before He died, He told us that it would be just like that. He said, *"You will be sorrowful"*—like it has to happen—*"But your sorrow will turn into Joy."* Like sorrow is how God makes Joy.

Then He said, *"And no one will take your joy from you."*

Then He said, *"In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer.*

I have conquered the world" (Gospel of John Chapter 16:33).

That's the Gospel; that's Easter, and that is what the Revelation means.

Understand? Easter didn't end on Easter. Easter is Eternal. Easter is the victory of Jesus constantly storming the gates of this dark world—Eternity constantly invading our space and time—Easter. It's Eternity constantly kicking down the doors of temporality. That's Easter.

About forty years later, I had been exiled to the Roman Prison Colony on Patmos for preaching the Gospel:

I was a castaway and sometimes wondered if God had cast me away.

In this world I had seen tribulation:

- Most of the guys had been tortured and then, murdered.
- Nero had been burning believers alive, as human torches, in the Coliseum.
- Our fellow Jews had betrayed us for power and position.
- I couldn't stop worrying about the churches in Asia Minor.

- We were to be *"fishers of men,"* and I felt like a failure.

So, this day, forty years later, I was praying on Patmos, when I heard a voice like a trumpet.

I turn and see a man glowing like molten metal.

His hair is white as snow and his eyes aflame with fire.

He's standing among seven burning torches and holding seven stars in his hand.

It totally freaked me out! I fell at his feet and thought, *"I'm dead."* The man bent down and said, *"Hey John . . . April fools!"*

OK . . . maybe He didn't actually say that, but He could've.

It was Jesus . . . and He was laughing.

He gave me a vision. I call it "The Gospel According to Jesus."

But at first, it didn't sound like Gospel...

It started as a call to conquer... and I thought, *"How are we gonna conquer?...seven little churches and an old castaway on a desert island, feeling like he's been cast away by God. How are we gonna conquer?"*

But then He said, *"Come up here."* And I was like *out-carnated*.

Kinda like how He'd been incarnated but in reverse.

He showed me everything from His perspective, which is called: REALITY.

He told me to write it down and send it to the seven churches . . . and the world.

He said, *"Blessed is anyone who reads it."*

And I think this is the point: *"In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have conquered the world."*

In other words: *Stop taking yourself so seriously and start taking me seriously. You can only conquer by being conquered by me—the Word of God.*

And so, I was *out-carnated* to this place where everything was good and I heard *"every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them worshipping..."* every creature (Revelation 5:13)—no creatures weeping and gnashing their teeth in outer darkness—all creatures delirious with wonder, absolute joy, singing in perfect harmony— a great dance of love that's life—Eternal Life.

I thought, *"Oh my God, you can't be serious!"* And in my heart I heard:

"No John, you can't be serious..."

"You must stop taking your perception of space and time so seriously..."

"It's like I told you, 'Repent, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'"

Repent doesn't mean: "Try harder."

Repent means: Change your thinking. Wake up to Reality.

See? I wasn't looking at what had been, might be, or could be.

I saw what always is... *beyond, before, underneath, and after* the Big Bang...

beyond, before, underneath and after all of space and time.

Or maybe, I saw all of space and time filled with the eternal glory of God.

Whatever the case,

- You need to stop taking your perception of reality so seriously...

- You need to stop taking your judgment so seriously and start taking the Judgment of God very seriously.

I looked to the throne of God and I saw a lamb standing as if it had been slain—Jesus is the Judgment of God.

The Judgment of God is to bleed for you.

The Judgment of God is Love in flesh, broken for you.

The Judgment of God is Mercy that never comes to an end.

To take the Judgment of God seriously is to forgive your self and *every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them.*

I saw a scroll sealed with seven seals, like the seven days of creation.

At the opening of the sixth seal, the kings of the earth and everyone (Rev. 6:15), run from the Judgment of God—who is... Wait for it:... a slaughtered little lamb.

That's hilarious!

At the opening of the seventh seal, seven trumpets sound and after the seventh trumpet . . . a baby is born and that baby is the lamb.

The Ancient Dragon, Two terrifying Beasts, all the kings of the earth and a freaky Giant Harlot go to war with the lamb baby and his friends.

April Fools!

The Lamb baby beats the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness. That's hilarious!

Jesus opens the scroll because He is *the meaning* of creation.

And all the days of creation reveal the meaning of God, which is the Judgment of God, which is a lamb standing on a throne—Jesus.

Open seals reveal the Judgment.

Trumpets proclaim the Judgment.

And Bowls of Wrath apply the judgment.

What do you suppose is in the bowls that bring the end of the world?

Lamb's blood.

(Blood that is wine and wine that is blood.)

Where have you ever seen such a thing?

The Judgment of God is Jesus, and the name Jesus means, "God is Salvation."

You see? God is Salvation is Judgment upon the illusion that you are salvation.

The belief that you are salvation, is called your ego.

There's no way that you can stand in the presence of God, and be proud. In other words, *there's no way* that you can enjoy Heaven unless you learn to laugh at your self.

Your *ego* is that thing that makes you want to defend yourself, create yourself, exalt yourself and compete with your neighbor and run from God.

Your *ego* tries to create your self in the image of God with your “knowledge of Good and evil”—in my day, we called that, “Justifying yourself by works of the law in the power of the flesh”—the ego.

It's your *ego* that boasts in all of your *accomplishments*—your *deeds*.

For 1500 years we Jews had built Jerusalem—the City of Peace.

- We thought Jerusalem was our *accomplishment*.
- We had fought and bled and died for Jerusalem, and yet, to be honest, Jerusalem was anything but the City of Peace—it was more like the capital of ravenous beasts.
- She was a Great Harlot... to quote the prophets.
- She crucified Jesus on a tree... just outside her gates.
And when she did, He cried, “father forgive” and “It is accomplished.”

In my vision, when the seventh bowl is poured out on the earth, the voice from the throne cries, *“It is done. It is accomplished.”*

Then, in my vision, I saw the Great City crumble to the ground and turn to dust.

- I watched the destruction of Jerusalem.

- And then, I saw the New Jerusalem, coming down, out of Heaven, from God.

April fools! . . . Are you laughing?

Or weeping? Because that's a little hard on the ego.

Can you imagine?

I watched absolutely everything for which the People of God had worked, and for which we felt proud—I watched it all turn to dust.

And then God said, *“Here it is—only better—eternal and free.”*

I mean, it was just like that day on the Sea of Galilee:

All night we professional fisherman accomplished nothing— no-thing.

And in an instant, we realized that Jesus had accomplished all things.

That breakfast party on the side of the sea laughing with Jesus is the happiest that I'd ever been in this fallen world of space and time. And yet, if it weren't for the fact that we'd been humbled by Jesus' death and resurrection... as well as three years of watching Him live and love,

- There's no way we would've thrown the net on the other side of the boat.

- There's no way we would've enjoyed the breakfast party.

- There's no way that we would not have been utterly offended at the lavish grace of God

in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We would've resented the fact that a carpenter caught all the fish.

We would've resented the fact that Jesus let us go hungry all night long (suffer).

We would've resented the fact that Jesus got Himself crucified.

And we would've been ashamed of the fact that we had all abandoned Him when He did.

We would've been offended at Jesus.

We would've been stuck on our selves . . . AND offended at Jesus, but that day, we had lost ourselves, and found ourselves laughing.

Jesus said, *"If you lose your life (self) for my sake and the gospel you'll find it."*

"If you exalt yourself you'll be humbled, and if you humble yourself you'll be exalted."

"The first will be last and the last will be first."

If you're proud, that is not in the least bit funny (the first last, and the last first).

But if you've surrendered your ego, it's hilarious.

And if everybody surrenders their ego, it's a party that will never stop.

("You first. No, you first... I exalt you. No! I exalt you!")

Like a great dance of Love, that is Life Eternal.

Jesus said,

"Blessed is he that is not offended at me"... my boatload of free fish, and the endless party."

"Repent. The kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

I saw the Old Jerusalem destroyed.

And I saw the New Jerusalem coming down, "coming down" NOW. . .

It's at hand. And the gates of the City are always open...ALWAYS OPEN... (Rev. 21:25)

And yet, (22:15) *"outside is everyone who loves and practices falsehood,"*

That is, everyone who believes they can make themselves in the image of God with their *knowledge of Good and evil*—their own judgment.

Outside is everyone with a big old arrogant ego:

Mob bosses, Church ladies, Pharisees... and pastors.

I'm talkin' about older brothers resentful that their Father would throw a party for their prodigal siblings.

They're outside . . . and the gates are open, but they won't go in, for they refuse to laugh at themselves; they insist on paying for that which can never be bought: the New Jerusalem.

The voice from the throne says, *"Look I make all things new."* Not *"Look you make all things new,"* but *"Look I make ALL things new."*

And so, He will make you new, but you cannot meet your new self until you've learned to laugh at your old self.

Psalm 2: The Lord laughs at your vanity, your ego, ...and yet, He always suffers your ego...

See? I never felt as if he were laughing at me, He was always laughing *with* me, *in* me, *at* me, for He chose to bear the burden that is "me." And that is the heaviest burden that you bear, isn't it? Bearing the burden that is you?

He came to help me laugh at myself, and so, become my *true self*.
In fact, He may be doing that for you, right here, right now, with His Word—a sword (Rev. 19). It frees you from yourself so you can laugh at yourself.
Over and over and over again God says, "*Through Isaac shall your descendants be named.*" *Those descendants* are Israel... and *the descendant* is Jesus.

- The New Jerusalem is made of living stones that are the Israel of God.
- And the New Jerusalem is the Body of Jesus—His temple and His Bride.

The New Jerusalem is who you truly are.
And through Isaac shall y'all be named... through *Yitshaq* (in Hebrew).

Do you know what *Yitshaq* means?
Tsachaq means "laughter." And *Yitschaq* means "*He Laughs.*"

God told Abraham, "*In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*"
And for twenty-five years Abraham tried to make it happen,
just like we tried to catch fish on the sea of Galilee,
just like we all try to build Jerusalem, the City of Peace.

When Abraham was one-hundred-years-old and Sarah was ninety and it had not happened, God said to Abraham, "*It will happen*" and Abraham laughed. Sarah overheard, and she laughed, saying, "*When Abe is old and I am old, shall I again have pleasure?*"

And the Lord said, "*Is anything too hard for the Lord? Why did you laugh?*"
Sarah said "*I didn't laugh*" and God said, "*No, you did laugh.*" And God got the last laugh.

So, when the promised one was born they named him *Yitschaq*—"he laughs".
And Sarah said, "*The Lord has made laughter for me.*"

Did you know that the Lord is making laughter for you?
Yitschaq is the new you—the Promised One in you.
It's a very painful process, like giving birth.
But, through laughter, *you* will be named.

In fact, laughing at your *old you* is part of giving birth to the *new you*.
So you won't be stuck on you, proud of you, and worried about you...
Instead, you'll be forever grateful to God for the gift that is you—eternal and free.

The *old you*, that you think you made is the place where God reveals the *new you* that He has made.

The *old me* wanted to call down fire on Samaria.
And Jesus did name me, "*Son of thunder.*"
But then He revealed the nature of real thunder.

God is Love, and God is a Consuming Fire.
Love is the Consuming Fire, and His Word—the voice of God (Psalm 18) is Thunder.

I am the "Son of *that* Thunder."
And I actually did call down Fire upon the Samaritans (Acts 8).
Pete and me baptized the Samaritans with the Spirit of God—Holy Fire.
We all laughed at our vanity and were born again.

Isaiah prophesied saying, "*the earth will give birth to the dead*" (Is. 26:19).
Revelation 1:5, Jesus is "*the first-born from the dead.*"
Revelation 20:12, *the dead* are judged according to their *deeds* (accomplishments),
which are their judgments, which had created the illusion they thought was
themselves—their ego.
Revelation 20:14, *Death is thrown into the lake of fire*, which is the 2nd *death*.
Revelation 21:4, "*And death will be no more.*" The 2nd death is the death of death.
And what could be "the death of death" . . . except *the Life that will never die?*
Jesus is *the Life that can never die*, AND He gave His life for all.

Revelation 21:5 The voice from the throne, who is the judgment of God, which is the
commandment of God and Life of God says, "*Look I make all things NEW!*"

John 12:50 The other guys forgot this one or tuned it out.
(They thought it was just Crazy Uncle Mike, but it was the Word
of God that creates all things.)
Jesus says: "*The Father's commandment is eternal life.*"
You can't fulfill that commandment, but Jesus does, and Jesus is the Life.

John 3:7 "*You must be born from above.*"

So what does the Revelation mean?
- It means "You're gonna die"—but come on man—you already knew that.
- It means "You're gonna die . . . because you gotta live."

We all *gotta* live!
To live is to "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and
to love your neighbor as yourself*"—'cause you want to!
To live is to join the Party—'cause you want to join the Party. It's a new desire in your

heart.

To quote me:

1 John 5:14 *"This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith."*

You *will* live! And you can begin to live now, by Faith.

Faith is laughing at your self, with God.

Faith is not taking your self so seriously, for you see that God has taken you so very seriously.

Faith is not taking your perception of reality seriously, your judgment seriously, your accomplishments seriously, or your self seriously . . . *because* . . . Jesus has taken you SERIOUSLY.

Jesus is the Judgment of God.

And Faith is the Judgment of God at home in you—on the throne, in the throne room of your heart.

If you take yourself seriously, you won't take God and His Judgment seriously.

- You won't do what He says.
- You won't believe that you're forgiven, and you won't forgive, and you'll resent your neighbors, compete with your neighbors, and hate all your neighbors.
- You'll resent the Mercy of God and refuse to join the Party—weeping and gnashing your teeth, alone in outer darkness.

BUT, if you take the Judgment of God seriously, you won't take yourself so seriously.

- If God says you're forgiven, you'll believe you're forgiven and you'll forgive.
- You'll know the Good, and know that the Good is Grace, and Grace is God.
- You won't compete with your neighbor, but long to bless your neighbor.
- Their joy will be your joy, and your joy will be their joy.
- You'll be impossible to offend, AND you'll have no problem laughing at yourself.
- You'll fall in love because you see that Love has fallen for you—literally— suffered, died, descended into Hell, and risen from the dead for you.
- You'll join the Party that is the New Jerusalem coming down.

"Why do fools fall in love?"

... because they don't take themselves seriously . . .

But see that Love has taken them . . . seriously. . . swept them away!

Communion

THIS is LOVE

On the night He was betrayed, by us—Jerusalem—Love took the bread and broke it saying, *"This is my body given to you; take and eat."*

And in the same way, He took the cup saying, *"Drink of it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant... poured out for the forgiveness of sins."*

This is the Judgment of God... Seriously!

To come to this table is to stop taking your self so seriously;
It is to confess your sin, receive God's grace, and join the Party.

So, we invite you to come to the table, tear off a piece of bread,
Dip it in the cup,
Ingest the Judgment of God.
And then, allow someone to place a party hat on your head.
[“John” puts a hat on his head.]



Figure 2 Image credit: The Sanctuary

But if you think, *“Hey! Wait a minute . . . But I’ll look foolish.”*
“Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”

Psalm 103, “He crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” —so wear the hat.
Wear it until the last song... and then, we’ll all cast our crowns before Him.

Pray with me: *“Lord I confess that I take my judgment more seriously than your Judgment. That’s why I sin; that’s why I refuse to forgive myself when I do, which is more sin. I surrender my judgment to your Judgment. I want to join your party.”*

Now listen to the Judgment of God: “In the name of Jesus and under the authority of His blood, your sins are forgiven you.” Let’s worship.

[Communion is shared. Several worship songs are sung.]

In Revelation 5, John sees the eternal throne room. And there are twenty-four elders around the throne. I think they are the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve disciples symbolizing all the people of God.

The singing never stops and the twenty-four elders constantly cast their crowns before Jesus, which means Jesus must be constantly putting them back on the twenty-four elders, which means it is like some sort of great dance or something. So, to close our service we’ll sing, “Crown Him With Many Crowns.”

I invite you to join me and take your crown. He crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. You can throw it at His feet, but where is He? You could throw it before this table, but . . . look! All the bread and wine is gone! Where is it? It's in you.

Do you see? When you love another person, when you humble yourself and exalt another, you're casting your crown before Him, and that's the beginning of the great dance that starts here and ends with your eternal destination.

So, join me. Take your hat, and you could put it on someone else, throw it at his or her feet, do whatever you want with it. You can put it back on your head because Jesus keeps crowning you, but let's crown Him as we sing!

[The congregation sings "Crown Him With Many Crowns" by Matthew Bridges and Godfrey Thring]

Crown Him with many crowns,
The lamb upon the throne:
Hark! How the heav'nly anthem drowns
All Music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of Him who died for thee,
And hail him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity.
Crown Him with many crowns
Crown Him with many crowns
Crown Him the Lord of Heav'n:
One with the Father known.
One with the Spirit through Him giv'n
From yonder glorious throne.
To Thee be endless praise.
For Thou hast died for me;
Be Thou, O Lord, through endless days
Adored and magnified
Adored and magnified
Crown Him with many crowns
His glories now we sing,
Who died and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring
And, lives that death may die.
Crown Him with many crowns



Figure 3 Image credit: Michael Hanna



Figure 4 Image credit: Michael Hanna

Benediction

May you believe the Gospel, which means stop taking yourself so seriously.

Take Jesus seriously; He is the Judgment of God for you. In His name, Happy Easter!

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.

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To Prophecy the Mystery II (Meditations on a Cheeseburger)

To Prophecy the Mystery II (Meditations on a Cheeseburger)

Rev. 10-11:13

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

April 15, 2018

Peter Hiett

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Prayer

Jesus, we pray that we would hear you speaking—that you would preach, if you want to use my body to do it, that’s great. Use all of us to speak and to hear your Word. Father, thank you that your word is good; in Jesus, we know that. Amen.

Message

Our last expository message in our series from the Revelation was four weeks ago! So, I’m reminding you where we were, and where we are now.

- In Revelation 10, the seven seals have all been opened, and six of the seven trumpets have sounded, just as they sounded outside the walls of Jericho proclaiming the Judgment of God, that atonement has happened, and the Kingdom is at hand.
- Jesus was crucified just outside the walls of old Jerusalem; He is the Judgment that makes atonement. And He is the King of the Kingdom that is at hand.
 - Jesus is crucified on the sixth day of creation, the sixth day of the week, at the sixth hour of the day.
 - In Revelation 10, the sixth trumpet has sounded, and the seventh is about to sound.
 - The seventh is the last.

Paul wrote,

Behold! I tell you a mystery [mysterion]. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. (1 Cor. 15:51-53)

Well, Christ has been raised, and at the seventh trumpet, we will all be raised in Him. He is the Resurrection.

So, we live in the days of the seventh trumpet call to be sounded. We live in the time of the End—when and where eternity constantly invades temporality. In other words, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

Revelation 10 and 11 is an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet. It’s about here and now.

Revelation 10:1-11, what we preached on last time:

Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow [that's the sign of the covenant] over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down." And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more [chronos literally "no more time"] delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery [musterion] of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

Well, it's pretty clear that the angel shining like the sun, with a rainbow over his head and a voice like a lion is the Angel of Yahweh and Word of God who is Jesus—Word of God. The scroll must also contain Word of God in some form.

Last time, we conjectured that the scroll must be the mystery of God. Or a description of this mystery... the *musterion*.

Musterion is a word that's used twenty-seven times in the New Testament, mostly by Paul, who used it extensively in his letters to the churches in Asia Minor, to whom the Revelation was sent.

So, last time we looked at this slide:

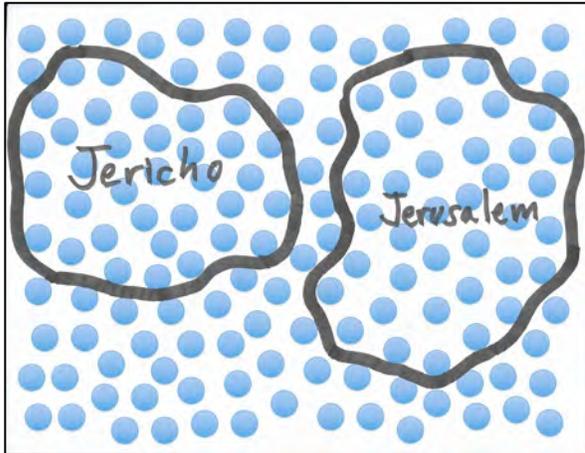
"The Mystery of God?"

- ✓ Lawlessness (evil)
- ✓ Godliness (Faith)
- ✓ Christ in you
- ✓ One Body
- ✓ United in a communion of love
- ✓ The Good News, The Gospel
- ✓ "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

We saw that the mystery of God according to Scripture is at least:

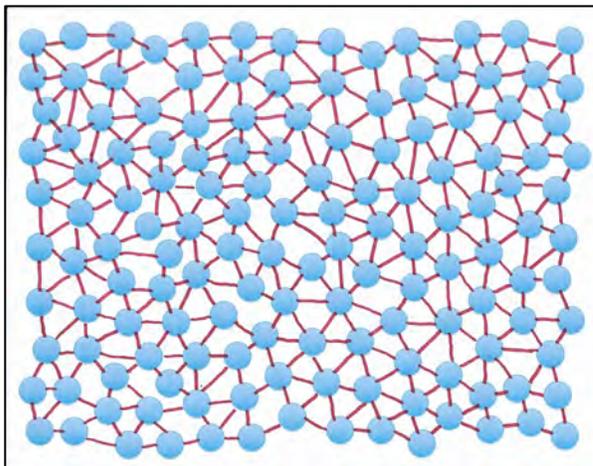
- That faith in us is Christ—miraculously, mysteriously—rising from the dead in us.
- So, the New You (the real you) is Christ in you.
- And more than simply Christ in you is Christ rising in you; it's Christ hidden in all, and uniting all in Himself. Eph. 1:7 *“The mystery of His Will... to unite (to bring together under one head) all things in Christ Jesus.”*
- And more than this, it not only *will* happen, in some mysterious way, it truly *has* happened. “It is finished.” “The Kingdom of God is at hand.”
- You have only to wake up to the Revelation of Jesus—the Good News.

Last time, we said that we all tend to view the world like this:



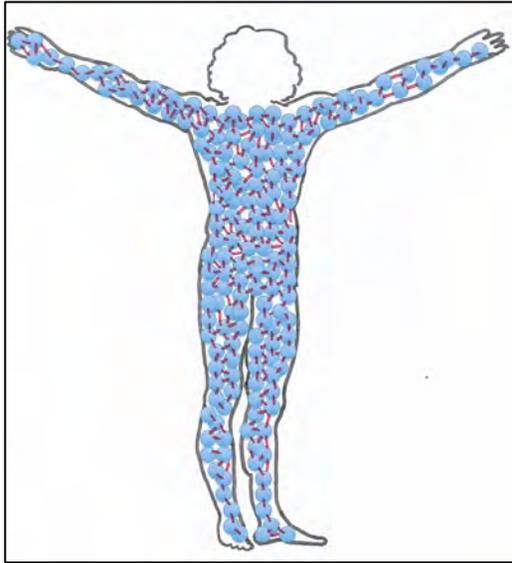
We see six billion souls only bound together by covenants of self-interests, called tribes, and cities, and countries, and sometimes churches—human governments (“the principalities and powers of this world”).

But God sees the world like this:



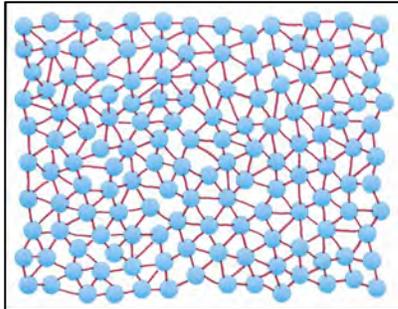
Six billion souls bound to together by a covenant of self-sacrifice called love, which is life, and the life is in the blood like air is in your blood or oxygen is in your blood, like Spirit is in your blood.

So, the six billion souls are like six billion cells bound together in a body, the body of Christ:



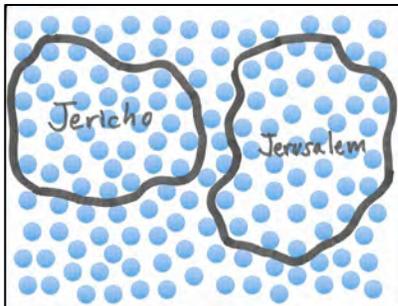
This is God's Word, which is God's Judgment, which is also called reality. So, when you look at the world what do you see? Do you see reality or an illusion?

Do you see this:

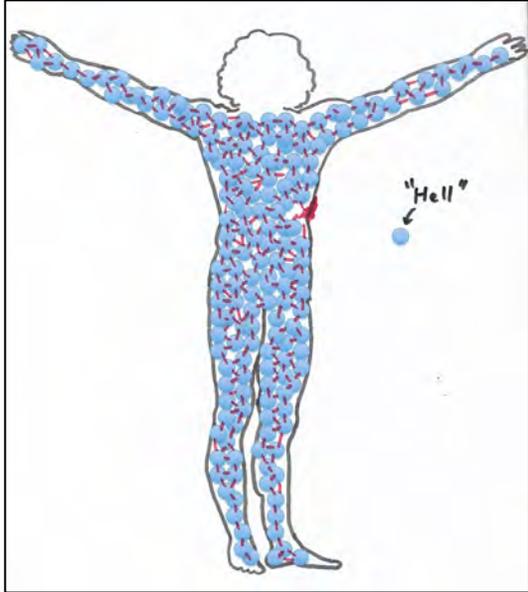


Billions of souls that all belong to each other in a communion of Love that is Life?

Or this:



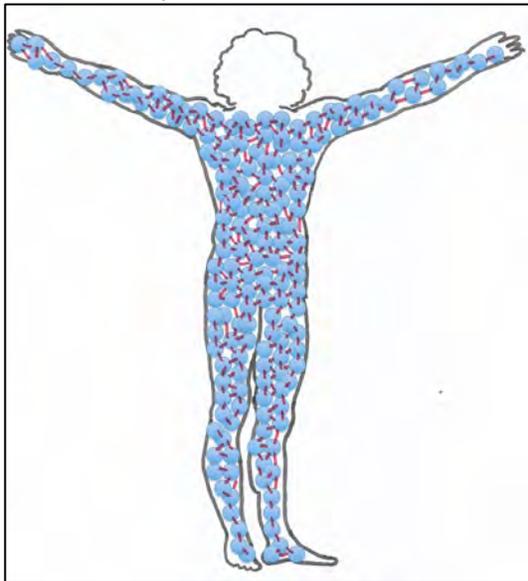
Billions of souls all competing with each other for Life, which is actually death?
If you see this... I think you will also soon begin to experience this:



Isolation from the Life of Love.
I think we loosely call this "Hell."

It's not only hell for you it's hell for Jesus, the head.
No wonder he came to seek and to save "the lost." They are His body.

So Jesus says, "repent."



It doesn't mean try harder, but wake up to reality—"The Mystery of God."
This is the Good News, *euangelia* in Greek, the Gospel.

Often people will say, "Great! I got it, What now? What am I supposed to do?"

Usually, people don't say it to me; I hear it through the grapevine: "*I understand that God loves me, God loves everyone and God is making all things new, but I wish Peter would tell me what to do... What now?*"

I heard the question again last week; I found it rather frustrating, and then, went home and wrote out the answer—it took about ten minutes. I found it frustrating, 'cause I constantly ask the very same question . . . And yet . . . in a way . . . I think I always know the answer. So, I wrote it out and made copies, which I am now handing out to you.

[This handout was passed out at this point in the message. You can glance at it now and take a more thorough look at it later.]

"What Now?"

We preach the Gospel and people say, "What Now?"

I) "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength."

1. You will worship nothing by Yahweh—not success, money, your country or your football team.
2. You will not fashion Yahweh after your own image—make Him look like you in your own mind or in your speech.
3. You will not use the name of The Lord to serve your own ego.
4. You will rest because you know Yahweh is your Creator.

Getting Practical:

- ✓ Repent (think differently) and be baptized (we have a special service down at the river each summer).
- ✓ Regularly attend worship services and truly engage your heart. Every breath you breathe must be the worship of God.
- ✓ Pray constantly, always surrendering ("losing") your soul. Confess your sins one to another and receive God's Mercy—you'll probably need some sort of small group to do this... Pastors are also available. This is also what is happening each time you participate in communion. You are publicly surrendering your *psyche*, and finding it.
- ✓ Take time to study Scripture and truly engage your mind. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind—in His image, not vice versa. Never ever say, "God says," in order to serve your ego.
- ✓ Constantly offer your strength. Whatever you do, do it as an offering to the Lord. Give money and various forms of service, not for what you get, but because you are worshipping God with all your strength. All should be done from a heart at rest in the finished work of Christ.

Also:

- ✓ Write a song. Paint a picture. Author a book. Create something to glorify the Lord.
- ✓ Sit in silence before Him meditating. Pray through the Psalms.
- ✓ Go for a hike in the mountains thanking Him for what He's created.
- ✓ Read theology, philosophy, poetry, history, science; get serious about loving God with your all your brain.
- ✓ Attend and participate in a class, Bible study and/or prayer meeting.
- ✓ Worship Him in the temple of flesh that is your neighbor (II).

II) "You will love your neighbor as yourself."

5. You will honor your Mom and Dad.
6. You will not murder. Anger can be murder.
7. You will not commit adultery. Lust can be adultery.
8. You will not steal. Your life is not your own.
9. You will not lie about your neighbor. Truth makes you one.
10. You will not desire what belongs to your neighbor.

Getting Practical:

- ✓ Call your mom. Thank your dad. Stop blaming them for all your problems. Don't deny their failures and sins, but forgive and hope for restoration.
- ✓ Forgive every person you know and find ways to express this reality without condemnation. Love your enemies!
- ✓ If married, *Stay Married!* Don't even consider a husband or wife other than the one that you now have. Love your husband or wife!
- ✓ Love and discipline your children in the Wisdom and Grace that is Jesus.

- ✓ Give everything to God and realize that what you “have” is on loan from Him. This reality is expressed in a life of freely giving to others.
- ✓ Don’t gossip or slander your neighbors—Christ died for them.
- ✓ Be sincerely happy that your neighbor has gifts, abilities, successes, and possessions that you do not have.

Also:

- ✓ Make sandwiches for homeless people in the park. Visit lonely people in nursing homes, hospitals, and orphanages—in Denver, The US and abroad. Collect crutches for crippled people in Africa. Make water systems for people that lack clean water. Find homeless people and provide shelter. Tutor school kids that are struggling with their lessons. Go to Mexico to assist the poor. Share your resources with the church in the developing world. Immerse yourself in the struggles of the last and the least in Denver and places like Uganda and Guatemala.
- ✓ Do all of these things with other people, if they would like to join you.
- ✓ If Necessary start a program at church (we’ll help you), outside of church, or even as a non-profit organization.
- ✓ Or simply participate in existing programs like helping hands, community kindness, one of our mission trips, bible studies, Relentless Love Class, Alpha class, relationship classes. Serve on a committee that organizes other ministries.
- ✓ Pray for others. Pray the sick would be healed. Pray against the devil and his work. Use gifts of prophecy, words of knowledge, tongues etc. etc.
- ✓ Tell people that Jesus loves them, not only with your actions but your mouth.
- ✓ Always be prepared to make a defense for the hope that is in you.
- ✓ Meet together in “life groups,” “support groups,” “prayer meetings,” and just as friends that care for each other and God. Start a group if you can’t find one.
- ✓ Pay attention to social justice issues, how the principalities and powers of this world operate, prayerfully consider candidates and vote.
- ✓ Involve yourself in “movements,” but never equate a “movement” with the Kingdom of God.
- ✓ Give away your money and time, without thought of reward or repayment.

* Ask the Lord, “What now? What would you like me to do now?”

PLEASE NOTE: You must do all of these things from the heart. You will do them because you want to do them, not under compulsion—not because you gained this *knowledge of Good and evil* by taking it from a list for the purpose of making yourself in the image of God. To do so is to crucify Love... rather than live the life of Love.

THIS IS NOT A TRICK. This *is* truly what you *must* do...

At the top, you’ll see the question: **“What now?”**

The answer is basically in bold below.

Roman numeral I, “You *will* love the Lord your God with all your heart soul mind and strength.”

Roman numeral II, “You *will* love your neighbor as yourself.”

If you ask the question, “What does that mean?” it’s detailed in the Ten Commandments listed under Roman numerals I and II:

I’ve paraphrased them as follows:

1. You will worship nothing but Yahweh—not success, money, your country or your football team, not yourself.
2. You will not fashion Yahweh after your own image—that is you will not make Him look like you in your own mind or in your speech.
3. You will not use the name of Yahweh to serve your own ego. That’s taking His name in vain.
4. You will rest because you know Yahweh is the Creator.
5. You will honor your Mom and Dad.
6. You will not murder. Anger can be murder.
7. You will not commit adultery. Desire can be adultery.
8. You will not steal. Your life is not your own, life. Even you don’t belong to you.
9. You will not lie about your neighbor. Truth makes us one.

10. You will not desire, what belongs to your neighbor.

Now, if you say, “Get practical!” I’ve tried to spell it out with statements like,

- ✓ “*Stay married,*” and
- ✓ “*Rejoice that your neighbor has more stuff than you.*”

I’ve also listed a section called “also.”

This is by no means exhaustive, but includes stuff like:

- ✓ *Make sandwiches for homeless people; visit nursing homes; pray for the sick and the suffering.*
- ✓ *If you want to do this with others, start a program—we’ll help you.*

Now, THIS IS NOT A TRICK, this is stuff that you really must do; **you must love.**

At the bottom (on the back side) there is a little note. Please note: “You must do all of these things from the heart. You will do them because you want to do them, not under compulsion—not because you gained this *knowledge of Good and evil* by taking it from a list for the purpose of making yourself in the image of God. To do so is to crucify Love... rather than live the life of Love.”

It’s probably important to note that this list is called “the law.”

When Saint Paul speaks about the law, he’s not just speaking about the Mosaic Law or the ritual law, he’s speaking about any law. (It’s written on the Gentile’s heart.)

- He writes, “*No one will be justified (made right) by works of the law*” (Gal. 3:11).
 - Actually, anyone that relies on works of the law is “under a curse” (Gal. 3:10).
 - It’s not that the law is bad, it’s “good” (Romans 7, 1st Timothy 1), but attempting to justify yourself before God with “the knowledge of Good and evil” is the origin of all sin (Genesis 2).
 - So, taking more law to justify yourself just “increases the trespass” (Romans 5:20).
- If you try to do the list in order to justify yourself, you’ll end up competing with your neighbor, rather than loving your neighbor.
 - You’ll hate your neighbor, and end up hating God, and hating the list.
 - The list is a description of the Will of God.
 - And Jesus is the Will of God in flesh.

So you see, it’s no wonder that it was the Pharisees who most wanted to crucify Jesus. The Pharisees were all about making lists to clarify the Law of Moses so they could do the things on the list, justify themselves, and so save themselves from God.

They believed that their will was salvation and so they crucified God is Salvation—who came to save them from their own will, their sin.

But like I said: IT’S NOT A TRICK; you really must do these things on the list. Love is not an option; it is the Will of God, Word of God, it is the Commandment of God... Actually, it is God. God is Love.

So “What Now?”

- Well, the commandment of God is to live the life of God... without trying . . . because it's your nature . . . the desire of your heart.
You must do that.

Now, it's probably important to note that when the Angel of Yahweh hands the scroll to John, He does not say, "*Read it and do it.*"

In the Old Testament, He did say that to Moses and the Israelites.
And it killed them, and it killed Him—the Angel of Yahweh.

The Israelites finally crucified Him—on a tree just outside the walls of Jerusalem.

The Angel doesn't say, "*Read it.*"

The Angel says, "*Eat it.*"

[A brief clip with Weird Al Yanovic singing, "Just eat. Eat it. Don't you make me repeat it." is played.]

I just want you to remember that the Angel says, "*Eat it.*" I think that means that the Gospel is less like a list. And more like this: [Peter pulls out a plate with a cheeseburger on it] . . . a cheeseburger.

So, when I preach it's like I'm saying, "Here's the Gospel...." If you say "*What now?*"
The answer is "*Eat it.*"

[A brief clip with Weird Al Yanovic singing, "Just eat. Eat it. Open up your mouth and feed it." is played.]

Maybe you say, "OK, but what does that mean?"

Someone might say, "Well, it means apply it to your life." OK . . .

[Peter begins to stick pickles from the burger to his face.]

Is that correct?

Do we apply it to our lives?

That's what my kids used to do and we'd say, "Stop playing with your food..."

[A brief clip with Weird Al Yanovic singing, "Your table manners are a crying shame. You're playing with your food like it's some kind of game. Now if you starve to death you'll just have yourself to blame so eat it. Just eat it. You better listen better do what you're told. You haven't even touched your tuna casserole. You better chow down or it's gonna get cold so eat it. I don't care if you're full. Just eat it. Eat it. Open up your mouth and feed it." is played.]

Yeah. So, we'd say, "Stop playing with your food... Open up your mouth and eat it."

Maybe you say, "OK...eat it, but I don't understand it."

Of course, you don't: it's a mystery—Christ in you, rising from the dead in you, redeeming all creation in a communion of Love that is eternal life.

You don't have to understand it. You have to eat it.

No one fully understands a cheeseburger.

And I don't consciously apply cheeseburgers to my life; I don't think:
*"Assimilate proteins; Come on, let's break 'em down into constituent amino acids;
now apply amino acids to tired muscle cells"*

I don't try to apply the cheeseburger, I just enjoy the cheeseburger and ingest the cheeseburger—I trust the cheeseburger. And unconsciously, mysteriously, the cheeseburger is applied to my life.

You know? A five-year-old can often digest a cheeseburger better than a sixty-year-old with a degree in nutrition and physiology. In the same way, we have to enter the kingdom as children, not as Pharisees.

A shepherd doesn't feed his sheep so the sheep will vomit its feed at his feet as if to say, "Aren't you proud of me for eating my dinner."—that's Gross. But that's what a Pharisee does; he ingests the law, to regurgitate the law, and says, "Look God; look everyone; I ate my dinner."

The Shepherd wants you to ingest the food, digest the food, and turn it into wool, and milk, and more sheep.

The Angel with the scroll does not say, "Read it and do it."

The Angel says, "Eat it and Prophecy."

Prophecy is obviously something that you cannot simply will to do.

Prophecy is a proclamation of what God wills to do.

Prophecy is ingesting, digesting, and manifesting a mystery.

Rev. 19, *"The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus."*

To testify to Jesus is to prophesy a mystery.

More than that: your life is to be a testimony of Jesus—actually the manifestation of Jesus, the Body of Jesus, the will of God in your flesh.

Jesus said, *"I didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law."*

Do you see? He fulfills it in you. Jesus is like a cheeseburger . . . and He fulfills the law in you. He fulfills it. If you try to fulfill it, without ingesting it.. it can kill you.

You might say to me, "Peter what can I expect from this cheeseburger you're serving?"

And I might say, "Well that's about 500 calories—which means you could walk a couple of miles and do some pushups." Well, if you walked and did pushups, but never ate the cheeseburger eventually you'd starve.

Likewise, if you ingest it, and don't digest it, but regurgitate it for all to see, it will eventually kill you and in the meantime make you sick and everyone around you sick—it's just gross.

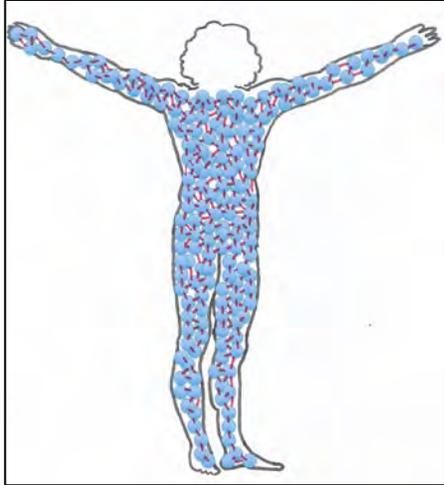
You won't be a testimony of Jesus.

You'll be a lie about Jesus, a white-washed tomb, a hypocrite.

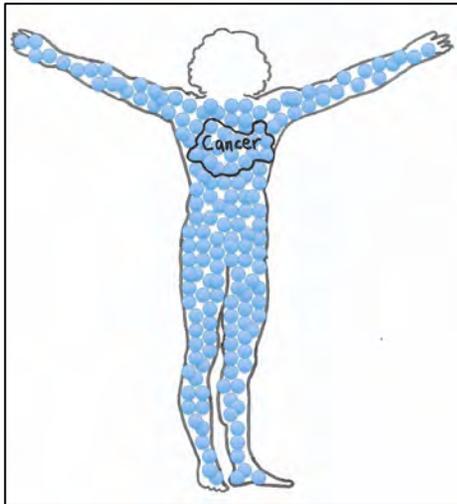
You may say, "Jesus, Jesus." But you won't be a testimony to Jesus; you'll be a testimony to your self, your ego, your white-washed tomb.

You'll say, "Jesus," that is, "God is Salvation," BUT you'll testify to "me-sus"—"me is salvation," the imitation Christ, the antichrist.

You won't be a testimony to this:



Billions of souls, all blessing each other in a communion of love that is life—the Gospel.
You'll be a testimony to this:



Dividing walls of hostility and the principalities and powers of this world—cancer . . . but worse than a cancer—a lie about Christ that keeps other people from Christ.

To eat the scroll is to believe the Gospel. You can't live the Good News unless you believe the Good News. Believing that God loves some, and endlessly torments others is not the Good News.

You see? The entire "*What now*" is Love.

And . . .

We love our enemies because God loves his enemies....

We love all because God loves all.

We love because He first loved us, writes John (1 John).

We love because we believe the Gospel.

“So, how do you know if you’ve believed the Gospel?”
“Well, how do you know if you’ve eaten a cheeseburger?”

There may be a variety of answers depending on the quality of the cheeseburger and your physiology, but assuming it’s a quality cheeseburger, you’ll find in yourself the ability and desire to do things you couldn’t have otherwise done—like walk a mile and do some push-ups, or perhaps... love your enemies.

In other words, if you believe the Gospel, the list I gave you will just happen. Unconsciously, non-self consciously, joyfully happen.

So, you see, the list can be very good and has a purpose.
The Law has a purpose—it tells you that you need to eat the cheeseburger.
And it tells you when you need to eat the cheeseburger.

So look at the list, and if you think, “*Wow this list doesn’t describe me,*” don’t simply try to do the list—it will turn you into a walking lie, gross everyone out, and eventually kill you and the Messiah.

Don’t simply try to do the list.
Eat the Gospel Cheeseburger.

See? The solution to the problem: “How do I do this list?” is not in your will; the solution is God’s will. The *problem* is your will.

The Power is not in your will; the power is God’s Will in your flesh.

- God’s Will is God’s Word and God’s Word is living and active.
- God’s Word is the Promised Seed that’s implanted in the soil of your heart.
- God’s Word rides a white horse and swings the sword of truth and conquers all flesh in Revelation 19; God’s Word is Jesus.

The Good News is the Mystery named Jesus.

“In many churches good news has subtly changed into good advice.” Writes theologian NT Wright. *“Here’s how to live, they say. Here’s how to pray. Here are techniques for helping you become a better Christian, a better person, a better wife or husband. And in particular, here’s how to make sure you’re on the right track for what happens after death. Take this advice, say this prayer, and you’ll be saved...’ This is advice, not news.”*

The whole point of advice is to get you to do something in order to get a desired result. Now there’s nothing wrong with good advice. We all need it. But it isn’t the same thing as news... Jesus and his first followers were all about news.”

Perhaps you recognize this picture:



Figure 1 "Kissing the War Goodbye" by Lt. Victor Jorgensen

We didn't win the war because this sailor kissed this nurse.
This sailor kissed the nurse 'cause he just heard the Good News: "We won the war."

The Gospel is Good News, "We won the War."
"The Lamb on the throne has conquered all things!"

Every sermon is to be that news... and the News changes you.

Some time ago, a British magazine published a letter in which a man complained about the futility of preaching. (I understand that because I complain about that, like, all the time.) Rather miraculously, God once told me (Ezekiel 2) that I was to "eat the scroll" and speak it regardless of the consequences. He claimed that he had spent thirty years listening to sermons, about 3,000 in all, and couldn't remember one of them.

Another man wrote in response: I have been married for thirty years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals—mostly my wife's cooking. Suddenly, I have discovered I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet . . . I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved to death long ago.

Well, the Gospel comes in many more forms than just the sermon, but I hope you get the point. And if you can't remember the point of this sermon, perhaps you can just remember this: [A brief clip with Weird Al Yanovic singing, "Just eat. Eat it. Don't you make me repeat it." is played.]

I think that's the point of the Revelation. John is told to eat the scroll and then John sends a scroll—called "The Revelation of Jesus" to the seven churches.

You'll remember they all face a variety of challenges from apathy, to *porneia* and idolatry, to torture and martyrdom. So, the answer to "what now?" looked different for each church and yet the prescription for each church was exactly the same. It was to

read the Revelation and believe the Revelation—the Good News that the Lamb on the throne has conquered all things; that’s the Gospel (Rev. 1:3).

Now hold that thought, meditate on the cheeseburger, and let’s keep reading. We’ll explain more of in the next message, but I’d just like to connect a few more dots.

Revelation 11:1-13

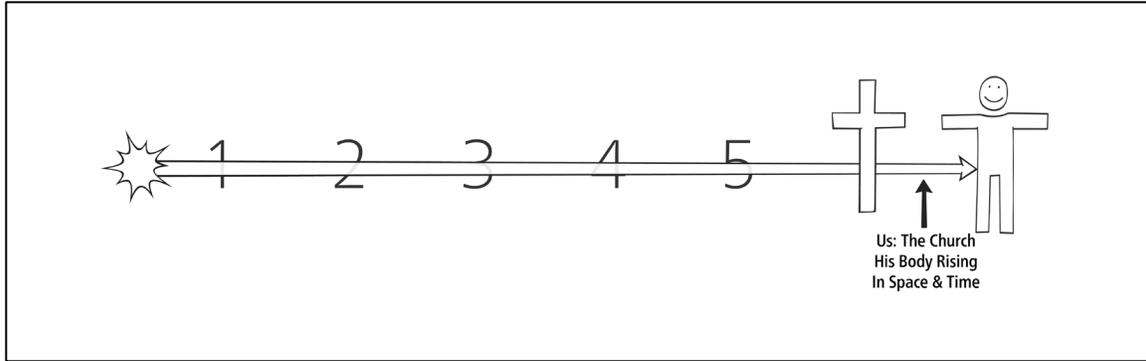
Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth [repentance].”

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies [“body,” singular] will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies [“body,” singular] and refuse to let them [“bodies” plural] be placed in a tomb, and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

John is told to measure the temple.

In the gospel of John, Jesus talks about two temples that are one temple, just as Paul talks about two men that are one man—the old man and the new man. Jesus says, *“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”*

In Revelation 21:16 John actually gives us the measurements of the temple, for the temple is the New Jerusalem, and as you know the New Jerusalem is Christ’s Bride, and Christ’s Bride is His very Body.



And that's the temple he raises up in the days of the seventh trumpet call.

- It's 12,000 stadia on each side.
- That's the largest number times twelve in three dimensions.
- That's literally 1,380 miles on a side or 2,628,072,000 cubic miles.
- This is a big body—the Body of Christ—the Sanctuary.

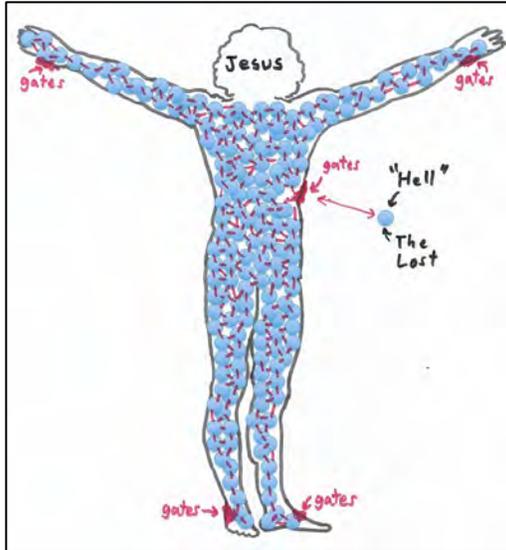


- It's The Sanctuary that is the New Jerusalem coming down.

She's coming down now and...Her gates are always open.

The outer court is given over to the Gentiles and in the end they stream into the city.

Ezekiel and Zechariah see and do a similar thing. In Zechariah, the Lord says, *“Jerusalem will be inhabited as villages without walls because of the multitude of people and animals in it. And I will be to her a wall of fire all around... and the glory in her midst.”*



The New Jerusalem coming down is the Body of Christ rising in this world—seeking and saving the lost through the wounds of Jesus. You are this Body and individually members thereof. You each manifest the Will of God in a unique and individual way. Just as each part of my body manifests my Will in a unique and individual way.

Saint Augustine recounts that, originally, he was utterly terrified to take the body of Christ at communion, and then he heard a voice: “I am food... eat me! You will not change me into yourself, but you will be changed into me.”

You don't apply Jesus to your life. Jesus applies you to *His* life. When we digest Jesus, He digests us and turns us into Himself—His body, each a unique and indispensable testimony to Jesus. (If I was better at graphic arts, each blue dot would be a unique and indispensable part of the body of Christ... but hopefully, you get the idea.)

I have four children. Genetically, they are each my body and Susan's body, and each a testimony to our love:

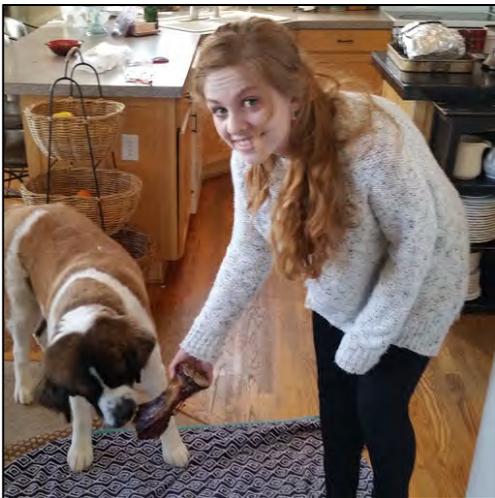


Coleman is standing next to me in this picture. He's engaged, working at the Grand Canyon, and just accepted a fellowship to work on

a doctorate in Geology. John is standing next to Coleman and studying psychology at the Seattle School of Theology.



Elizabeth is engaged to Francisco, teaching English and living in Chile.



Becky works at the Museum of Nature and Science, has a degree in Anthropology, and plans to study Archeology.

I love each of them so very much.

Each is absolutely wonderful and utterly unique; this is my point: they're each so very different, one from the other . . . and yet, they all ate the same cheeseburgers.

This is a McDouble [Peter picks up the cheeseburger in front of him on a plate]. For years, they'd want to go out to dinner and I'd say, "OK as long as you order from the dollar menu... and that meant McDoubles."

One year on vacation, I think we ate McDoubles for breakfast lunch and dinner ten days in a row...Same Cheeseburger, entirely different results.

Likewise, we all ingest one spiritual food, says Paul (1 Cor. 10:3), and yet may have very different lists of "What now?"

At the end of the list I gave you, just before the note, you'll notice that I wrote: "Ask the Lord, 'What now? What do you want me to do now?'"

You see that's actually a very good question. It's just that I can't really answer it for you, but Jesus is answering it for you all the time—and not as a list, but as a new desire in your heart right now (where eternity touches time).

So anyway, I can give my kids a cheeseburger, but I can't tell Coleman, "Turn that into a Ph.D. in geo-tectonics." Or "John, turn that into wisdom shared with a suicidal client in your counseling practice."

Likewise, I can preach the gospel, but I can't digest it and apply it to you. Not even you can do that, but Jesus can and does when you eat it.

There was a time when it felt like I could apply the Gospel to you, a time when I could come up with programs for people and make the work. A program is a list of things to do. But for the last ten years, every program that I create seems to miraculously fail.

And yet someone will eat the cheeseburger and say to me,

- "Hey can we start a church." I'll say, "I guess," and that's us...
- "Hey can I help us buy the old Zen Center on Speer." I say, "I guess," and we didn't fold. We're here.
- "Hey, Can I post sermons on Facebook?" "I guess," and wow it really works.
- "Hey, Can I turn messages into devotionals?" And Wow sixty thousand likes on one devotional.
- "Hey can we host a conference?" "I guess," and wow, hundreds from all over the globe, ministered to by you."
- "Hey can we preach this in the Philippines?" and wow, all sorts of new churches and a literal hamburger factory purchased by you... (Our sister churches are literally being funded and supported through cheeseburgers.)

And really... it's always been this way... the rest was an illusion.

This week, I found this website: HealingWaters.org

- ✓ This is an amazing ministry that's been profiled in Christianity Today.
- ✓ They distribute water and the Gospel through indigenous churches around the world.
- ✓ They work in fourteen countries, have 292 projects and distribute 317,183 liters of clean drinking water a day. That's a pretty amazing "What now?"

You know how it started?

- Twenty-five years ago a guy said, "Hey Peter could we partner with a poor church in the Dominican Republic?" and I said, "I guess." For three years just about everybody said, "What now?"
- After three years, my Dad said to my confused friend Tom, "Hey Tom you ought to go live in the D. R." Tom did for a year... the whole time he asked, "What now?"
- He came back and a hurricane hit the DR, so we sent Tom and some others back to the DR to help distribute an offering we took. In the Dominican Republic, they listened to Tom 'cause they had come to trust Tom.
- One of those that went with Tom was Steve Wilner, who'd been doing some

maintenance work for the church. Most of you know Steve Wilner. One day he said, “Hey I could build those guys a water purification system.”



[Steve Wilner is pictured above (acting in our *Hallelujah in Hell* film)]

He regularly attends at The Sanctuary, but I bet you didn't know that about Steve... He's a pretty humble guy. (317,183 liters of clean drinking water a day to the “poorest of the poor.”) Well, that whole thing happened 'cause Steve ate the cheeseburger. And one day Jesus in Steve thought, “*Hey I'd like to give a drink of water to my neighbor.*”

And now those may all be rather silly and minor examples:

- Because no one can measure the power of a kiss on the cheek of a child that hates himself or herself.
- No one can measure the impact of a word spoken in love at just the right moment.
- Or an unscripted smile at the site of friend... No one, except Jesus. The center of your story and your light.

Well anyway . . . 1) John is told to eat the scroll and prophesy.

And to prophesy is to testify to Jesus.

And then . . . 2) He's told to examine the Body of Jesus.

And then . . . 3) We meet two weird and wild witnesses. Witnesses testify.

They prophesy and testify for 1,260 days, which is forty-two months—the same time that is given to the Gentiles to trample the city and temple courts. That's also three-and-a-half years, which is times time and half a time, which carries all sorts of biblical allusions:

- That's the duration of Christ's bodily ministry,
- And the amount of time that Elijah prayed and stopped the rain,
- And the amount of time until the end of days in Daniel 9,
- And the amount of time Antiochus Epiphany defiled the temple,
- And The Romans laid siege to Jerusalem,
- And Nero persecuted the Body of Christ—the Church,
- And three-and-a-half is a broken seven—it's the imperfect and broken time in which we the Church live and are to testify to Jesus.

The two witnesses are two olive trees, like those in Zechariah

- And two lampstands, and lampstands are churches in the Revelation.
- They are referred to as one body and yet they're obviously at least two people.
- They both testify to Jesus but in a different way.

And that's good for over and over the Old Testament stipulates that nothing shall be

established except on the testimony of two witnesses.

So you need to hear Peter Hiett yap about Jesus in a sermon...

And you need to get a drink of healing water from Steve...

And every one of you is to be a witness—a unique and incarnate witness to Jesus Christ.

These two witnesses have powers like Moses and Elijah—who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus, bearing witness to Jesus. Paul writes “The law and the prophets bear witness to the righteousness of God,” which is Jesus.

Moses is a picture of the Law and Elijah is a picture of the Prophets.

I find it fascinating that the Law is also a Prophecy.

This is the whole law: *“You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and you will love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Jesus, the Word of God in flesh, who creates all things, said, “You will Love.”

If you take that as a law, it will kill you or reveal that you’re already dead. But then, if you receive it as a gift—the prophecy that it is—it will give you life: **“You will Love.”**

Do you understand?

Love dies and rises in the temple of your heart. God is Love. You are His Body.

The Angel testified, *“It will be sweet on your lips, bitter in your stomach, and then sweet on your lips once again.”*

- ✓ Just look at John, son of thunder who became the beloved disciple.
- ✓ Just look at Peter, the coward, who digested the gospel and wept bitterly, and became Peter the Rock on whom the Lord built His church.
- ✓ Just look at Paul, the Pharisee, who became the apostle of Grace to the Gentiles.
- ✓ Just look at a guy like John Newton the slave trader, who wrote, *“Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.”*

The Gospel was bitter in his stomach and so sweet on his lips.

The Gospel is the Testament of God’s Grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Digesting it will kill the old you and then give birth to the New You.

But if you don’t eat it and digest it, that undigested Gospel will just make everyone sick.

It’s very strange, but Jesus really didn’t leave any rituals to perform, programs to follow, or list of things to do... And at the end of His life, the disciples were all asking “What now?”

Communion

And Jesus took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you. Eat it.” Jesus is the Lamb of God on the throne of God. The throne is literally the law written on stone encased in the Ark of the Covenant of Grace. It’s covered by the Mercy Seat, on which our High Priest, the Lamb of God has sprinkled His own blood.

And He took the cup saying, "This is the Covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you for the forgiveness of sins." In Jesus' name believe the Good News.

[Several worship songs are sung.]

Prayer

Father, we thank you that all is at rest, and we can rest because you are the Creator. You are the Author of the Story. And we are part of the Story. It's a Good Story, and you don't fail. I believe Lord God, help my unbelief. Amen.

Benediction

So, the Angelo of the Lord handed John a scroll and said, "Eat it." I think the Angel also hands you a scroll and tells you to eat it. Scholars debate what was on the scroll. Some say it's the Revelation. Some say it's a copy of the big scroll; some say it's the Bible. Whatever it is, it is somehow the Word of God and it comes to us in a variety of ways. [Peter points to his Bible.] This is one way. People stress about this because they just read a page or two and just think it's a bunch of lists. But the lists are all part of a bigger story. The story is the story of God and humanity, God and *ha adam* the *Eschatos* Adam. This story is also your story so I hope you receive it and eat it. I hope you believe the Gospel; it's Good News. In Jesus' name, 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.

21

To Prophecy the Mystery III ...and Conquer the Beast

To Prophecy the Mystery III . . . and Conquer the Beast

Revelation 11

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

April 22, 2018

Peter Hiett

All images by Peter Hiett unless otherwise credited.

Prayer

Lord God, we thank you that you gave yourself away. We pray that we would give ourselves away. We pray that you would help us to preach, that you would help us to see you and to become like you, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Message

Let’s review!

In the Revelation 6-8, John hears a voice saying, “Come up here.” And he does, and he sees a scroll. [Peter picks up a scroll with seven seals and holds it up for all to see.] John watches a slaughtered lamb open the scroll sealed with seven seals that had been in the strong right hand of God.

When the seventh seal is opened John sees seven angels prepare to blow seven trumpets. [The very beginning of theme song from the movie “Rocky” is played.]

Trumpets were blown on the Day of Atonement—which was the day that the High Priest would go behind the veil in the inner sanctuary in the temple to make atonement for the sins of the people. To do so, he would sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant, which was the throne of God, and the Judgment Seat of God on earth.

The Israelites also blew seven trumpets before the Ark of the Covenant, on the Seventh Day, after walking seven times around Jericho, at the edge of the Promised Land.

It was a proclamation that atonement had been made. It was then that the dividing wall of hostility came tumbling down. The Angel of Yahweh was not opposed to Canaanites or Hebrews, but He was opposed to the wall.

In fact, His very Body was dependent upon the destruction of that wall; on one side of the wall was the great, great, great... grandfather of Jesus and on the other was his great, great, great... grandmother, Rahab. The Angel of *Yahweh*, in flesh, is Jesus.

The walls came tumbling down and the kingdoms of this world became the kingdom of something else—which was a foreshadowing of the Kingdom of God.

God destroyed what was evil, but this is the great mystery hidden for ages and generations...

-He destroyed what was evil—not by *preserving* evil in some place of

endless torment.

-He destroyed what was evil, by *transforming* it into Good.

It's what the voice from the throne declares at the end of the Revelation:

"Look! I make all things new."

That's the Atonement—it means "at-one-ment."

That's where we ended our message last week and every week—the Atonement: On the night He was betrayed...the Angel of Yahweh, who is the Word of God, who is the Judgment of God, and the Will of God, and our High Priest, the Slaughtered Lamb...

He took bread and broke it saying this is my Body, which is for you.

And He took the cup saying, "This is the Covenant in my blood."

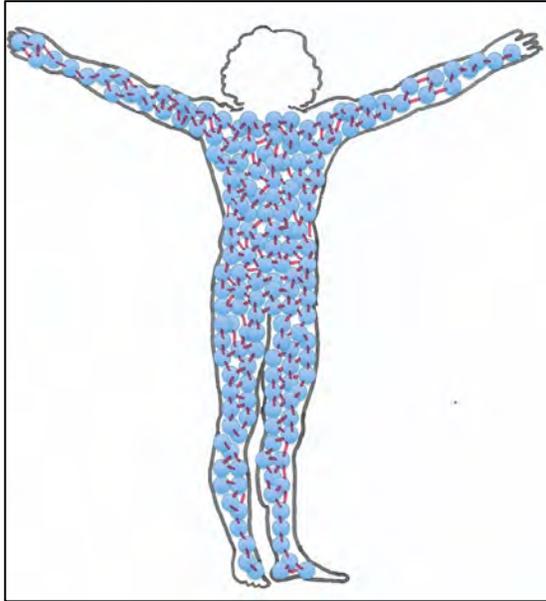
And then, when everyone was asking, "What now?" He didn't leave behind a list of instructions, a set of laws, a program, or any sort of worldly government. He didn't even give an explanation...

He just said, "Eat it... my body, and drink it—my blood."

In the morning, Jesus was crucified on a tree just outside the walls of Old Jerusalem, which the Jews believed to be the site of the Garden of Eden.

On that tree of knowledge and life, Jesus bled for us as He cried, *"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."* That's the Atonement.

And then He said, *"It is finished."* That's the great mystery: He has united and is uniting all things in Himself (Eph. 1:10).



Having broken down, in His flesh, the dividing wall of hostility (Eph. 2:14) making one Body (Eph. 4:4) under one God and Father of *all* who is over all, through *all*, and in *all*—the Atonement.

For thousands of years, we've tried to explain it.
But Jesus didn't say, "Explain it" or "Understand it," He said, "Eat it."

His disciples ate it, and then testified: Saint Paul writes, "*By works of the law* (That's what we can understand, explain, and do), *by deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified—made right.*" That's Romans 3:20.

In Ephesians, he writes, "*For by Grace you have been saved through faith and this (this faith) is not of yourselves. It's the gift of God, not by works, that none should boast.*"

In other words, *your* faith does not create God's Grace—the Atonement.
But God's Grace creates your Faith...

In 2nd Corinthians Paul writes, "*God made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God.*"

On the cross Jesus bore our sin, which is faith/lessness...
And gave us His righteousness, which is faithfulness—faith in God, who is Love.

John writes,

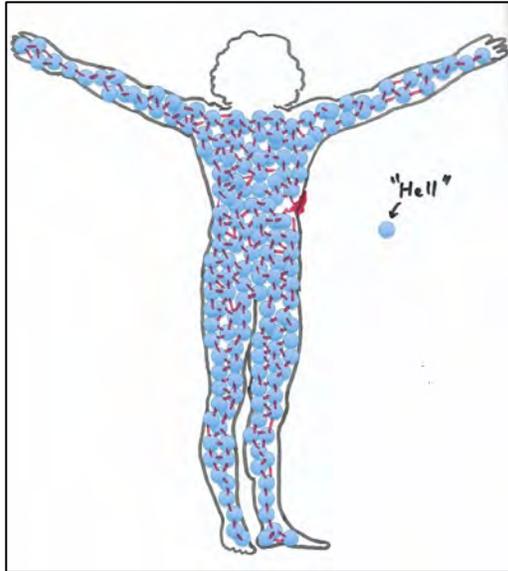
*For God so loved the world (not some of the world—the world)
For God so loved the **world** that he gave his only begotten son, in order that all, believing in him, (that's a literal translation)—might not be lost, but might have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn, the world, but that the world would be saved through him. He who believes is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, for he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. —John 3:16-18*

Think about that!

- We have all "not believed in God is Salvation" and were therefore condemned.
- But upon believing, we are now no longer condemned—no longer damned but undamned because we trust in the name of Jesus. The name means "God is salvation".

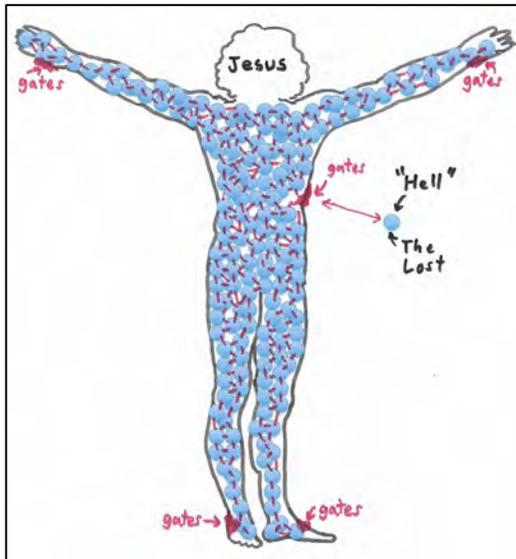
To believe "God is Salvation" is the substance of heaven.

And to not believe that God is not Salvation" is the substance of hell—it's the outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth.



But your belief, or lack thereof, does not determine whether or not the Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world: "God so loved the *world*."

In other words, the Atonement is *not* dependent on *our* belief. Our belief is dependent on the *Atonement*—that's how *God* creates belief.



He bleeds for us—to make us want to bleed for Him and each other like members of one Body all bleeding for each other. To want to love is called faith.

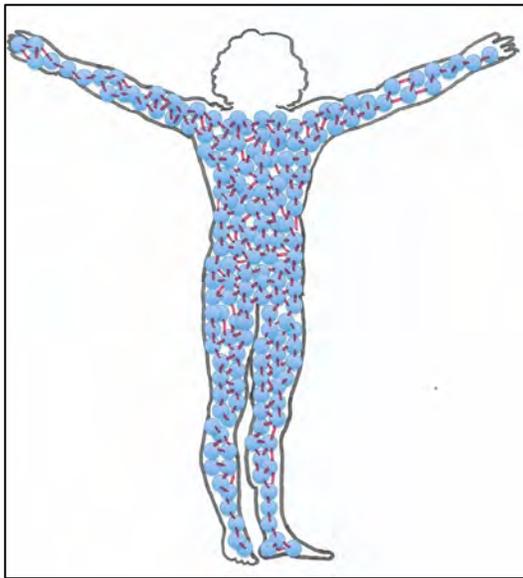
So, Jesus hung on the cross outside the walls of Old Jerusalem and cried, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”¹ Do you see? We are forgiven before we even know what sin is! And then He cried, “It is finished.

And now, this is the mystery hidden for ages and generations: It’s always been finished. “The Lamb has been slain from the foundation of the World” (Revelation 13:8).

So Jesus cried, “it is finished,” delivered up His Spirit, there was a great earthquake (we don’t know how many died—perhaps 7000), and all the walls came tumbling down.

- First were the walls around the heart of a Roman Centurion who dropped to his knees and worshipped.
- And then the walls of Hades itself, for the tombs were opened and the saints came out.
- And then, in a generation, the walls of Old Jerusalem. They were literally plowed into the ground in 70 AD.
- And still today the dividing walls of hostility are tumbling down...

Or maybe I should say, they’re dissolving like an illusion, like a world that suddenly vanishes when you wake up from a nightmare.



¹ See? Forgiveness is granted long before we even know what sin is.
“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Well anyway, this is where we ended our message last week and every week... Jesus announces the Atonement—"My body broken and my blood shed." We all wonder: "What now?"

And Jesus says,



[In the background, Weird Al Yankovic sings, "Just eat it. Eat it. Don't you make me repeat it."]

That was the point of last week's sermon: "Eat it." And then, forty days later, having risen from the dead, He appeared to His disciples and said, "Prophesy the mystery."

Actually Acts 1:7 reads as follows: "*He [the resurrected Christ—it's forty days later] said to them, 'It's not for you to know times or seasons which the father has fixed by his own authority [That's means that the Revelation is not a calendar], but you shall receive power [that's what we get from food]... when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and to the end of the earth.'...Then He was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight.*"

He says, "Eat it and testify." "Eat it and be my witnesses."
"Eat the Word and prophesy the mystery" . . . "Be my witnesses."

So, that's your Job... So, How are you doing?
When was the last time you witnessed, and how did it go?
Close your eyes a moment and answer this question, "*What keeps me from witnessing to my neighbor?*" (File that away in your mind).

OK. Witnessing: It's what Revelation 10 and 11 are all about. It's the interlude between the sixth and the seventh trumpet.

In Chapter 10, six of the seven trumpets have sounded, the walls of this world have been crumbling and, surprisingly, nobody repents.

And then John sees the Angel of the Lord—the Angel of *Yahweh*, who must be Jesus, descend with a scroll in His hand. The scroll obviously contains the word of God and He

is the Word of God. He stands on the land and sea and swears that time will be no more, but that in the days of the seventh trumpet call, the mystery of God would be fulfilled.

He hands the scroll to John and says, "Eat it... and prophesy." "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," says the Revelation (19:10).

John ingests it and digests it; it's bitter in his stomach and sweet on his lips.

John is a witness. That's chapter 10. In chapter 11 he's told to measure the temple. It's more than just the sanctuary in Old Jerusalem. It's the New Jerusalem coming down. It's the Body of Christ that bears witness to Christ.

Just like your body bears witness to all the cheeseburgers that you've eaten.

He measures the Body of Christ and then we meet the witnesses.

Revelation 11:1-13

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth [That's repentance]."

Last time we noted that 1,260 days is 42 months, which is 3 and ½ years, which is a broken 7, and refers to all sorts of biblical events—all of which are a time of tribulation in this fallen world—kind of like the time in which we live.

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth (Not "mouths"; it's singular in Greek—they have one mouth) and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying [Like Elijah], and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire [Like Moses].

You can read about the two olive trees in Zechariah . . . and about the lampstands that are churches, in the first three chapters of the Revelation. (The oil from the trees lights the lamps that shine on the place of atonement in the Temple.) And in Scripture, we read: "Nothing is to be established without two witnesses." These two witnesses look like Moses and Elijah, who represent the law and the prophets, and who bear witness to the Faith of Jesus, as Paul writes in Romans 3. The two witnesses are two people, but as we read, they have one mouth.

In a minute we'll read that they have one Body.

You think there are many bodies, but "there is one body," writes Paul, time and time again in Scripture.

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them...

This is our first introduction to the Beast. He's already appeared in the book of Daniel. In Daniel 7, four beasts come from the sea—that appear to be Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. This one looks like Rome and Nero in particular.²

The Dragon calls up the Beast from the sea to war against the church.

- The Beast from the sea appears to be the demonic forces behind human politics—like that of Rome.
- And there is a Beast from the land, who appears to be the demonic forces behind human religion—like that of the scribes and Pharisees.
 - They ride the Great Harlot, who is also a city.
 - Roman power and Hebrew religion join forces in the city of Jerusalem to crucify the Angel of *Yahweh* in human flesh.
 - They are the “principalities and powers of this world.”

The Revelation never uses the term “Antichrist.” But people usually equate the Beast with the Antichrist. John talks about the Antichrist in his Epistles. Antichrist means “imitation Christ” and all human political entities and all human religious entities, imitate Christ.

Jesus means “*God is Salvation.*”

Politics and Religion, both teach, “*We are Salvation*”:

“Our laws, programs and rituals are salvation.”

2000 years ago, John wrote that the spirit of the antichrist is in the world already and that many antichrists have come. And yet Paul mentions a “man of lawlessness” who will sit on the throne of God in the temple of God and proclaim himself to be God. Then Paul claims that Jesus will destroy this man with the breath of His mouth and the “manifestation of his presence” (2 Thess. 2:1-8).

For 2000 years, people have conjectured as to who this man is. The list has included emperors, popes, reformers, and kings.

In the 20th century, Adolph Hitler murdered 6 million Jews and therefore seemed to be the most likely candidate. After Hitler, many thought the obvious candidate was the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. As a young man, Sadat admired Hitler for hating the Jews and the Brits, who defended the Jews and occupied Egypt.

- In 1970, Sadat became president of Egypt.
- In 1973, he attacked Israel in the Sinai.
- But surprisingly, in 1979, he signed a peace treaty, a covenant, with Israel.

² We'll soon learn that the mark of the beast is the number 666, which in that ancient society was like a reference code for the name Nero. And 666 is also a reference to the rule of human flesh, the power of old Adam.

(That was just a few years before the 40th anniversary of the founding of the modern nation-state of Israel.)

Many American Christians were convinced that it fulfilled the prophecy in Daniel 9:27... and so, Egyptian Pharaoh Anwar Sadat was the Antichrist.

And if not Sadat, well then, it must be Jimmy Carter. He was the one that set up the treaty in the first place. I still have the book, *Countdown to Armageddon*, in which Hal Lindsey points out that Jimmy Carter was groomed by the trilateral commission, which clearly prepared the way for the one world government ruled by the Antichrist—perhaps “Jimmy, the Antichrist, Carter.”

In the *Left Behind* series, the Antichrist is Nicolae Carpathia. He’s modeled after the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu... for “Romania” kind of sounds like a revived Roman Empire . . . and Ceausescu was a jerk.

Well anyway, back to Scripture.

The witnesses battle the Beast from the bottomless pit.

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies [“body” is singular in the Greek] will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

What city is that? Jerusalem.

Listen closely all modern American Christians—‘cause we really, really need to get this through our thick skulls. Scripture refers to Old Jerusalem as Sodom and Egypt. And we will soon read that “The Great City” is “The Whore of Babylon.” Before you get all worked up about blessing Jerusalem, it’s worth asking, “Which Jerusalem am I blessing?”

- The New Jerusalem, that comes down from God . . . or
- The Great Whore . . . the one that crucified our Lord and murdered the prophets . . . the Great Harlot.

...their dead bodies [“body,” singular] will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies [“body,” singular] and refuse to let them [“bodies” plural] be placed in a tomb, and those who dwell on the earth [land] will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth [In Greek—“land”]. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Well anyway, that’s what it means to be a witness.

That's what it means to, "Eat the Word and prophesy a mystery."

Like I said, "That's your Job... So, How are you doing?"
If you're not witnessing, why aren't you witnessing?

According to the *Left Behind* movies, it should look something like this:

[A cameraman along with another gentleman carefully approach two bearded men dressed in robes. The witnesses take turns speaking.]

Witness 1: *"The Lord has chosen this as a building for his sanctuary."*

Witness 2: *"By the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified in His sight. For by grace you are saved, through faith, and this not for yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not by works, so that no one can boast."*

[Nicolae Carpathia, the "Antichrist" watches the witness from a comfortable charis and says, "Cut it."]

Witness 2: *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that, in Him, we might become the righteousness of God."*

Witness 2: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believe in Him will no perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. He who believes in the Son is not condemned. But he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*

Gentleman standing next to the cameraman: *And the name of the Son of God?*

Witness 1: *He is the Christ, Jesus."*

[Armed men dressed in black enter the scene and begin showering the witnesses with bullets. The witnesses calmly raise their hands and remain unharmed.]

[Suddenly fire comes out of their mouths setting the armed gunmen ablaze.]

Peter points to the screen as the scene ends and says, "Witnessing!" and then exhales with concern.

Did you catch all of that?

✓ "God has chosen this building for his sanctuary," His temple—that's a stone building in the Middle East . . . in the Old City of Jerusalem.

- ✓ The witnesses then recite the most gracious and loving words that human ears have ever heard . . . Romans 3, Ephesians 2, 2nd Corinthians 5, and John 3. And then they say the name “Jesus,” which means “God is Salvation.”
- ✓ And then, when threatened, when they tried—and it didn’t work out and it’s like they’ve run out of patience—they burn their enemies to a crisp.

The *words* they speak are true, and even, life.
However, they may be a wee bit *undigested*!

Jesus said, “*Eat it...*” and then, forty days later, “*Be my witnesses.*”

So, anyway, I asked you, “What keeps you from being a witness?”

What keeps you from witnessing?

1. *“I don’t know what to say.”*
2. *“I don’t have all the answers.”*
3. *“I don’t like selling stuff.”*
4. *“I’m not good at arguments.”*
5. *“I might lose my faith.”*
6. *“It’s too much responsibility.”*
7. *“It doesn’t feel like good news.”*
8. *“Sometimes it seems . . . unkind.”*
9. *“I’ll fail.”*
10. *“It won’t work.”*

(I wish we had time to discuss this more, but I’ve been asking folks and I imagine that I can anticipate some of your answers... like maybe.)

#1. “I don’t know what to say?”

But you see, you are actually the only one that does know what to say.

A witness testifies to what they have witnessed and only you, or Jesus in you, can do that.

And that’s why there are always at least two witnesses. All eat one gospel cheeseburger and each digests it and manifests it in a unique and indispensable way—you are a unique and indispensable member of the Body of Christ—a unique and indispensable witness.

#2. “I don’t know all the answers.”

Well then, testify to what you do know, and say, “I don’t know all the answers.”

You *cannot* testify to the Truth, who is Jesus, by telling lies and making up answers.... And no one knows all answers except Jesus, who *is* the answer.

Faith is not lying. If you feel like you're lying—stop—and testify to the truth in you; that's called honesty.

#3. "I don't like selling stuff."

You're not selling stuff... and if you think you're selling stuff it's not the Gospel. The Gospel is free, and yet, worth the life-blood of God in Christ Jesus. If you make the Gospel dependent on any created thing, it's not the Gospel. The Gospel is the Word of God, which creates all things. And the pinnacle of Creation is Faith in you, which is the Judgment of God in you, which is Love sitting on the throne in the temple of your soul.

#4. "I'm not good at arguments."

Well, ask any judge. What does he want from witnesses? Does he want arguments? No. To testify is not to argue... Witnesses don't argue . . .
It's good to have a logical defense prepared for the hope that is in you . . .
But you have a Defense Attorney, who can win any argument against the prosecuting attorney, the accuser—that is satan. The Angel didn't say, "eat it and argue" but "eat it and prophesy." That's the testimony of Jesus.

#5. "I might lose my faith?"

Well, no you won't . . . not if it's faith.
Real faith is not the result of some human argument.
Faith is the gift of God and it's eternal.
"This is the victory that conquers the world," writes John, *"our faith."* That's why the 144,000 were sealed. I think that's why the temple is measured: *"To Him who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God,"* says Jesus You are the temple and it's already been measured.

#6. "It's too much responsibility."

Well, if you think it's your responsibility, I doubt you're testifying to the Christ, but instead, the imitation Christ—the Antichrist. You're not testifying to *"God is Salvation,"* but testifying that *"You and your judgment are Salvation"*—that you are your own atonement.

1 John 2:2, John wrote: *"[Jesus Christ] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*

- The Atonement is not dependent on your ability to respond.
- Your ability to respond is dependent upon the Atonement.

To Repent is not to make forgiveness happen but to believe it *has* happened.

When I witness in fear and shame, as if forgiveness might not happen, I testify that it has not happened and we need to make it happen. Even if I say "Jesus," which means "God is Salvation," I testify that God is not salvation—if I testify in fear as if I were responsible; I don't testify to Jesus, but Me-sus.

#7. "The Gospel doesn't feel like good news."

Well, if it doesn't feel like good news, maybe the gospel you've believed is not the Good News; maybe it's not good and it's not news. It's probably a threat.

- The principalities and powers of this world run on threats.
- The Gospel is not a threat but an announcement that delivers us from every threat.
- It's an announcement: "The Atonement has been made and all is forgiven."

That's Good News, but if you don't hear the Good News, it can result in some very bad things. If you don't believe that God *has* paid, *you* will try to pay.

I read about an Indian Christian Man who found a young woman sobbing uncontrollably, pounding on her chest as she knelt on a beach in India. When he knelt down and asked her what had happened she sobbed, "The problems in my home are too many, and my sins are heavy on my heart. So I offered the best I have to the goddess Ganges: my firstborn son." She had just thrown her baby in the river... trying to pay. All the worst sins, perhaps, all sin . . . is trying to pay that which cannot be bought: Life—eternal Life.

Now I'm convinced that the goddess Ganges does not have her baby. Jesus has her baby, but wouldn't you like to have told her only a few minutes before: "*You* don't have to pay. *God* in Christ Jesus has already paid." This actually happened to my friend Phil. Preaching in India, he met a woman at one of his rallies.

See? We don't have to postulate some place of eternal torment. People, who think they have to pay, are already in torment in bondage to the accuser. The outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth is for people that think they have to pay, people that don't believe they're forgiven.³ And you get to tell them—witness: "Your sins are forgiven you! Repent! (The means change your mind and believe the Gospel)." You see? The Good News really is the *very* Best News; it destroys the illusion that is your Hell and delivers you into the reality that is the Kingdom of Heaven.

#8. Sometimes, "*it seems unkind.*"

Well, pestering people you don't know with pamphlets and surveys, at public events, in order to justify yourself, does seem rather unkind.

I know that God uses programs like that, at times, but He says to all of us "Love your neighbor." And the most enjoyable way to love a neighbor is to announce Good News. And they'll believe you because you're their neighbor; you have a relationship. They probably won't believe me because I'm a pastor, who is part of an institution, who obviously has ulterior motives.

But yeah. . . sometimes witnessing seems a little unkind, and well, let's be honest... Setting people ablaze *does* seem a little more than unkind:

[Images of burning people from the "Left Behind" movie]

That seems slightly unkind. . . right?

Romans 2:4, "*It's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance.*"

³ And so, of course, it was the Scribes and Pharisees, the self-righteous religious leaders, that Jesus most warned of Hades and Gehenna, which we often translate as Hell.

And that's what's so weird, about Revelation 11 . . . People are terrified, but then, they all give glory to God. And in the next verse, at the seventh trumpet, everyone repents.

So, you see? This fire that proceeds from the mouth of this body—this Body of Christ—is some rather unusual and Holy Fire. And now, it might be helpful to remember that John is writing the Revelation. Jesus nicknamed James and John, “the sons of thunder” . . . for it appears that they had some anger management issues.

In Luke 9, James and John ask Jesus if, like Elijah, they can call down fire from Heaven upon the Samaritans, like Elijah. Elijah does this in 2 Kings chapter 1, until the Angel of Yahweh tells him to cut it out.

So, John asks Jesus if He can call down fire on his enemies. And then the Fire of God descends on John, for Jesus turns to John, rebukes John and says, “*You do not know what manner of spirit (pneuma, breath) you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy . . . but to save*” (Luke 9:55-56 NKJV).

Save us from what?

Our Sin.

Sin is trusting *our* Judgment instead of *God's* Judgment.

It's believing that “*we are salvation*” instead of “*God is salvation.*”

It's faith in *Me-sus*, instead of *Jesus*.

It's faith in the imitation Christ—the spirit of the antichrist—who wants to seize the throne in the temple of your soul.

In 2nd Thessalonians, Paul writes that Jesus will destroy this Antichrist with the Word of His mouth—a Fire that rides on His breath. Well, Jesus speaks words of Fire. John ingested those words and digested those words. The Word burned the Antichrist in John and took his place on his throne in the temple of John's soul. The Word was bitter in John's stomach; it was repentance. It was bitter in John's stomach, and then, sweet on his lips—that means it was kind.

It burned away John's ego and turned him into the Apostle of love. To digest the Word is to be humbled by the Word, and then, speak the Word. And like we mentioned on Easter, John's request was answered; he did call down fire on Samaria—He baptized Samaria in the Holy Spirit that's fire.

If you haven't digested the Word, don't speak the Word. Over and over in the Gospels, there are people that want to testify to Jesus, and Jesus asks them not to. They're not to speak the Word for they haven't digested the Word.

The first person told to testify in the Synoptic Gospels is the Gerasene demoniac—he didn't know anything except, “God is Salvation.”

The very first person told to testify in John's Gospel is a woman on her sixth husband—and a Samaritan. The Word was bitter in her stomach—six husbands—and sweet on her lips: "We are forgiven."

"Is not my Word like Fire?" says the Lord.

The Fire is not punishment for refusing to believe the Word.

The Fire is the Word of God that is the Will of God, who is the Atonement of God.

"God is one; God is Love; God is a Consuming Fire. Love is a Consuming Fire and Jesus is the Word of Love. He is the Kindness of God"—the Kindness that leads us to repentance.

But if you think that means that it doesn't burn, you are profoundly wrong.

It does burn. It burns the Antichrist. And it burns the spirit of the antichrist sitting on the throne in the temple of your own soul.

It burns the work of the Antichrist in you. It burns your ego.

That's why the people of the land are tormented by the Word of the witnesses.

#9. "I'll fail."

Well, actually, yes . . . correct.

Perhaps you noticed that the two witnesses are killed by the Antichrist.

They fail—they can't make this whole church thing work.

John is exiled on an island writing to seven little churches that in so many ways appear to have failed and yet are called to conquer.

None of the apostles appear to conquer; none of the disciples got a raise or a nice retirement package . . . and all, except maybe John, were slaughtered by the beast when they battled.

- John's brother James is beheaded by King Herod in Acts 12.
- Peter is crucified upside down in Rome under Nero.
- Saint Paul is also martyred—in fact, that's the word for "witness" in the Greek language *marturos*, it's where we get our word martyr.

And it's not just that their bodies died, but that they sacrificed their egos, for the Gospel. At the end of his life sitting in a jail cell, Paul writes that all had deserted him. I think he felt like a failure (2nd Timothy 4:16). He doesn't know that he was writing the Bible... and yet he still wrote...He testified.

Perhaps that's why they were such amazing witnesses—because they were obviously no longer witnessing to "me is salvation," that is, their ego; they were witnessing to "God is Salvation," who saved me from my self—my old self.

They loved Jesus when e seemed to be "good for nothing" just Good.

In the same way, Jesus testified to His Father, when He seemed to be good for nothing just Good.

He cried, *“My God my God, why have you forsaken me?”*

He didn't understand.

And then He cried, *“Into your hands, I commit my spirit.”* That's Faith.

And lo and behold it's not good for nothing. It's everything. That's Faith.

And He gives it to us through His witnesses.

Well, the witnesses are killed by the Antichrist.

They fail—or maybe I should say their flesh fails . . . their ego fails . . .

But the Word does not fail.

Revelation 11:13-19

And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

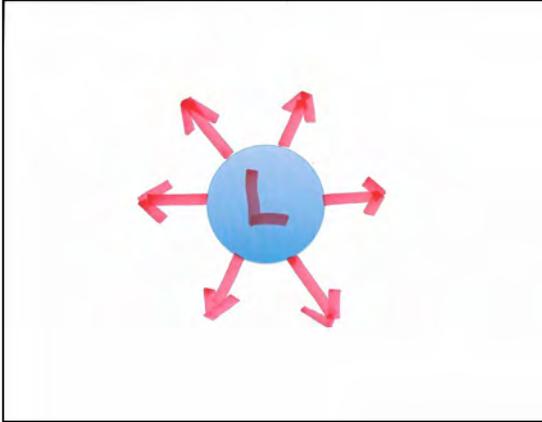
Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped 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.

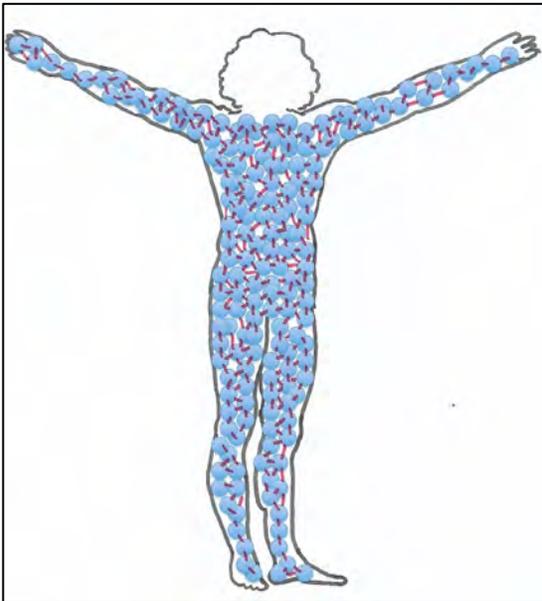
The Ark of His Covenant is His Judgment, and His temple is you.

The Imitation Christ is no longer on the throne; the Lamb is on the throne in the temple of your soul.

Look:



And this is the End, which we saw in the beginning (Chapters 4 and 5).



This is the End, for evil has been destroyed, *“and the kingdoms of this world, have become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ.”* And it has happened through the proclamation of the Atonement, through the mouth of the Witnesses, which is us.

#10. You say, “It won’t work.”

But it’s the only thing that will work. Legislation, programs, rituals, armies, governments, and movements won’t work. But the Word will work, and already *has* worked. The Word will not return void, even when, especially when it rides out on your tongue.

I heard this story from Tony Campolo, who heard it from Millard Fuller, who is a friend of Jimmy Carter and the founder of Habitat for Humanity. After Reagan’s landslide election in 1980, Carter struggled with depression. A struggling economy, the Iran hostage crisis, and a landslide defeat all made him feel like a failure as president. On top of that, people in his own denomination thought he was the Antichrist! That sucks, believe me.

One day this friend said, *“Jimmy, is there anything you feel good about?”*
Carter said, *“I do feel pretty good about the Middle East Peace Accord.”*
The friend said, *“What I mean is . . . Did you do what you promised you would when you entered the White House? You told me you would share Jesus with anyone who spent the night at the White House.”*
Carter thought for a moment and then said, *“Actually, yes. I did do that.”*

He went on to share with him about a night in 1976 when Anwar Sadat spent a night at the White House. That night, President Carter got up, grabbed his Bible, and went down to Sadat’s room. He knocked on the door and asked Anwar if he could talk to him for a moment. Sadat invited him in, and Jimmy Carter and Anwar Sadat sat next to each other there on the bed. And Jimmy told Anwar about their Father in Heaven, and how much he loved each of them, and what he had done for the both of them. He told him about Jesus.

According to the story, that night when Jimmy finished his testimony, the two of them sat next to each other on the side of the bed and prayed to the Prince of Peace.

I don’t know if Sadat called himself a Christian or not . . . but . . .

- That next year, Anwar Sadat shocked the world by going to Israel and giving a passionate speech for peace.
- The year after that, he won the Nobel Peace Prize.
- The year after that, the Middle East Peace Accord was signed.
- A few years after that, he was gunned down by Islamic Fundamentalists for his gracious and loving ways.

Well, if Sadat was the Antichrist, that’s how Jimmy Carter conquered him . . .

-Not with legislation, governments, and armies.

-Not as the president of principality and power, that is the United States of America . . .

but as the son of a Georgia peanut farmer, sitting next to the son of an Egyptian store clerk, just telling his friend, why he liked Jesus.

He ate the scroll and prophesied the mystery.

Communion

Jesus says, “Eat it” and “testify” (Rev.12:11).

We overcome, we conquer by the blood of the Lamb and . . .

[Peter dips the communion bread into the communion wine and eats it]
the Word of our testimony. Communion wine is fire. Come to the table.

[Several worship songs are sung.]

Benediction

I am really grateful for you—The Sanctuary—because there are a lot of people that testify: “You really don’t need to be saved; there’s nothing wrong with you. And there are a lot of people that testify: “You can be saved if you’re part of our thing and you join our

group. And then you will be saved, and you can look down on those people who aren't saved."

There really are, in our world right now, especially in our country, few people that testify to the Lamb on the throne, that He's the Savior, and that He *has* conquered, and that He *will* conquer, and every creature in heaven and earth, and under the earth, and in the sea will worship Him, will adore Him, and will be home.

Thank you for testifying. Just your existence is a testimony. And I know it's kinda hard. I used to be the pastor of a really big church, now I'm the pastor of a small church. I don't know where our testimony is going, but I'm just grateful that you are here and that you are a testimony. The witnesses end up getting killed by the beast (and that encourages me because I think: *OK Maybe we're doing something right*) and yet their testimony, in the end, conquers all things because it's the Word of God moving out upon this creation.

I am grateful for you! I hope that you would testify (that's a big church word so maybe forget it). I just hope that you will tell people you like Jesus...

You don't have to have all the answers. Maybe it's just that you say:

"Ya know? I think Jesus likes us. He died for us, and He's on the throne."

Or maybe you talk to someone who thinks God's forsaken them, and they feel alone and abandoned, and you say (like we talked about a few weeks ago):

"I am sure you are not a bastard. Our Father is GOD!"

Or maybe there's someone who thinks: *"I've got to pay. I've got to pay for my sins."* And they've been trying to fix themselves with drugs and alcohol and all sorts of other things in the world. They think: *"I have to pay"*—that's what Judas did—and you get to share the good news:

"Your sins are forgiven you! Repent [literally: 'Change your way of thinking.']" I'm just saying that's good news.

You don't have to have all the right words. Maybe you just speak something from a verse like *"He makes all things new"* or *"As in Adam all die so in Christ will all be made alive"* I can't explain it all, but I know He loves you!"

All I'm saying is eat it and testify!

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.

22

Free Will? ("The Ark is in the Temple")

Free Will? (“The Ark is in The Temple”)

Revelation 11:15-12:2

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

May 13, 2018

Peter Hiett

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Prayer

Lord, we look to you, standing on a throne as if you had just been slaughtered. We ask, Lord Jesus, that you would preach and that you would even use us to do it. Father, we pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Revelation 11:15

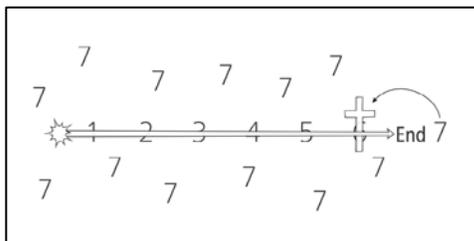
Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

This is the End.

This isn’t the start of the Millennium; we’ll talk about that eventually.

But here the kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our God, and He will reign forever and ever. This is the End of all things, including space and time as we experience them.

By now, you should have this picture emblazoned in your brain.



In the Revelation, there are all these series of sevens just like the days of creation. On the Seventh Day, which is the Seventh age, which is eternal, “Everything is good and it is finished.” Each time we get to seven we come to the End of *chromos*—chronological time.

You’ll remember that John is, like, watching this revelation from eternity.

Now he’s watched the Lamb on the throne unwrap the seven seals.

He’s heard seven trumpets sound, as they would on the Day of Atonement.

He’s watched as the walls of this world come tumbling down . . .

Just as the walls of Jericho came tumbling down . . .

As the seven priests blew the seven trumpets on the Seventh Day the seventh time

around the city.

This is the End, the *telos*, the perfection. This is what the story is all about. We are about to see the reason for all of this pain and suffering...

Revelation 11:16-18

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 [And not "to come" because He's already there!], 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."

We're going to read about folks rewarded, and the dead judged in chapter 20, but here in Chapter 11 it's *already* happened:

God has destroyed the destroyers of the earth... (that's satan, but not *just* satan)

So who are the destroyers of the earth?

Well... "destroyers of the earth" who was supposed to take care of the earth?

Did God appoint someone to "keep it" like a gardener keeps a garden?

This word for destroy (*diaptheiro*) is used just a few times in the Bible—twice by Paul in this form—and it's used of people . . . In 1 Timothy 6:5 it's used of people that think "godliness is a means of gain..." Can you imagine that? That would be like people who take the knowledge of good and evil in order to make themselves in the image of God.

- As if we could make ourselves in the image of God by taking knowledge of Good and Evil...
- As if we could justify ourselves and gain the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Someone that thinks this way has a destroyed mind.

The other place Paul uses the word, *diaptheiro* is in 2 Cor. 4:16.

...Though our outer [man] is wasting away [diaptheiro—"getting destroyed,"] our inner [man] is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction [thlipsis—"tribulation"] is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison...for we know that if the tent [tabernacle] that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 4:16-17).

He's saying that our old selves must get tribulated and destroyed in time . . . so we can receive a new self, eternal in the heavens—a temple that will house a weight of glory beyond compare. In Revelation 11, "The destroyers are destroyed" and "God has taken his great power and begun to reign."

How did that happen?

We witnessed no apocalyptic battle...

And what is God's great power?

I think we all imagine that God's great power is something like this:

He makes people like this: [Peter begins to cut paper in order to make a paper doll.]

Except, He makes us from dust.

We make things from dust: a computer is made from dust.

We think that God's great power and glory is that He kind of makes people like we would make people like paper dolls. Then He speaks to them like I would speak to the paper dolls I've just made.

He speaks His Word.

He gives them His Law saying,

"I command you to dance for me."
"Hey you're not very good dancers!"
Dance or you will witness my great power and glory!"
"OK *fine!* You're pretty bad at that"
[And then He sets us on fire (Peter sets the dolls on fire) and watches us burn.]
"Yeah. Now you know who has the power and the glory!"



Is that “His great power and glory?”

If it is... I’m scared, and so I’ll try to dance... but I won’t dance well.

What is God’s great power and glory?

Well, in Revelation 11: 15 the seventh and final trumpet sounds. Revelation 11:15-18 is what has happened. And now . . . Revelation 11:19, the climax, the big reveal, the reason for all the pain, suffering, and tribulation of space and time.
[Drumroll please]

Verse 19: *“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.”*

Ta Da . . . Ta Da . . . Ta Da . . . Ta Da . . .

I think this is maybe the fourth time we’ve read this, and you may still be thinking: *“OK, they found the lost furniture . . . What’s the big deal?”*

We ask that question because we didn’t pay attention in Sunday school.

We're biblically illiterate, but thanks to Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, now we know:

Indiana Jones: *You see? Tanis is one of the possible resting places of the Lost Ark.?*

Board member: *The Lost Ark?*

Indiana Jones: *Yeah, the Ark of the Covenant. The chest the Hebrews used to carry around the Ten Commandments.*

Board member: *What do you mean the Commandments? Are you talking about the Ten Commandments?*

Indiana Jones: *Yes the actual Ten Commandments. The original stone tablets that Moses brought down out of Mount Hereby and smashed if you believe in that sort of thing. Didn't you guys ever go to Sunday school?*

Board member: *Well, uh...*

Indiana Jones: *Oh look. The Hebrews took the broken pieces and put them in the ark. When they settled in Canaan they put the ark in a place called the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem where it stayed for many years until all of a sudden – whoosh it was gone.*

Board member: *Where'd it go?*

Indiana Jones: *Well nobody knows where or when.*

Board member: *What does this ark look like?*

Indiana Jones: *There's a picture of it right here. That's it.*

Board members: *Good God.*

Indiana Jones: *Yes it's just what the Hebrews thought.*

Board member: *Now what's that supposed to be coming out of there?*

Indiana Jones: *Lightning. Fire. The Power of God or something.*

Board members: *Beginning to understand Hitler's interest in this.*

Oh yes, the Bible speaks of the Ark leveling mountains and laying waste to entire regions. An army which carries the Ark before it is invincible.

"The Army that carries the Ark is invincible."

That means they always conquer—and that's what this whole book is about.

Remember what Jesus said to the seven churches seven times?

1. "To the one who conquers... I grant the tree of life in the paradise of God."

2. "The one who conquers, will not be hurt by the second death" (the death of death).
3. "To the one who conquers... hidden manna and a new name."
4. "To the one who conquers... authority over the nations... and the bright morning star."
5. "To the one who conquers... white robes and the book of life."
6. "The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of the living God."
7. "To the one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne...
That's also His Father's throne! That's the throne of GOD! That's big!

So, how do we conquer? We need the Ark!

"The Army that carries the Ark is invincible."

Of course, Hitler wanted the Ark.

Of course, we *all* want the Ark.

"The One that carries the Ark is invincible."

"The One that carries the Ark has Free Will."

I mean, whatever that one wills will happen.

And whatever that one *doesn't* will, *won't* happen.¹

The Ark of the Covenant is like the ultimate example of this thing that we loosely call "free will."

The dictionary defines freedom as "the power... to act, speak or think without hindrance or restraint." So, a "free will" would be a will that wills without restraint—a will that wills what it will without being determined by another will.

We all seem to want free will, and yet, we're terrified of free will.

And worst of all, we don't really know what it is...

We imagine *what* it does, but we don't stop to consider *what* it is...

I read about an Irish prisoner who escaped from prison by tunneling under the prison walls. He came up in a playground, where little children were playing. Unable to restrain himself, he began to jump up and down exclaiming, "I'm free. I'm free. I'm free." A little girl looked at him with scorn in her eyes and said, "That's nothing . . . I'm four... You're free, but I'm four."

So who's free and what is free will?

[Peter starts singing.] *"I'm proud to be an American, cause at least I know I'm free?"*

Are you free?

Is the ability to choose between Coke and Pepsi at 7-11 free will?

Is random choice freedom?

Is chaos, freedom . . . or bondage?

¹ So, the one with absolutely free will must have willed his own will.
That sounds attractive at first, but it does present some problems.

What is a free will?

You know? American Christians, in particular, defend God with “free will.”

When folks ask: “Why is there suffering in the world?”

“Why would a good God, send people to Hell?”

We say stuff like, “Well God won’t violate our free will.”

It’s this idea that God’s Will will endlessly abdicate to our will—our free will.

“We have free will,” we like to say.

And yet for 2000 years, Christians have debated as to whether or not we actually *do* have free-will.

Some say we don’t have free will, we’re predestined. It’s actually a lovely idea, for it means that we don’t save our selves, *God* saves us. But it’s a horrifying idea, for it seems to turn people into robots. And if there is an endless hell, God must’ve created some people for nothing but torture.

Some say we’re not predestined; we have free will.

It’s a lovely idea for it means that we’re not robots, but persons capable of love.

But it’s a horrifying idea because none of us seem to be capable of saving ourselves, that is, living a life of perfect love... We can’t bear the responsibility.

Scripture claims that apart from a miracle, we’re slaves to sin and actually dead.

In which case, God can’t violate our free will, for we don’t have one.

And yet we’ve read the Law: “You will Love” and it’s impossible to Love without a free will.

So, for 2000 years we’ve debated, fought wars, and divided the church over free will, and the term “free will,” as such, can’t even be found in a good English Bible.

There’s reference to a “free-will offering” in the Old Testament, but in Hebrew, the word translated “free will” really means “your will” and there’s no mention of freedom.

And yet there must be a word, somewhere in the Bible, that describes what we mean by “free will.”

Sometimes when I hear people talking about “free will,” I think, “*Wow that sounds like Heaven.*”

And sometimes when I hear people talk about “free will,” I think, “*Holy Crap, that sounds like Hell.*”

Well let’s think, for just a minute, about this thing that we call “free will.” That is:

“A will that wills what it will without restraint... the restraint of other wills.”

For a slave, that sounds like heaven... right?

Think about Israel coming out of bondage in Egypt.
They thought freedom from the will of Pharaoh was the Promised Land.
And yet, God had a far greater freedom in mind for them.

A free will is a will not constrained by anyone else's will.
Societies constrain individual wills with a corporate will called the law.
Sigmund Freud wrote the seminal book, *Civilization and Its Discontents*.
In it, he points out that civilization is dependent upon repressed wills...
It's dependent on people who say to themselves, "*I will to sleep with my neighbor's pretty wife, but I will repress my will in subjection to the corporate will*"—the law.

Do you think we'll be repressed in Heaven, our Promised Land?
Most people think we will; they can't imagine anything other than that.

Paul wrote, "*For freedom Christ has set us free. Let us not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*" He's talking about the law.

But the law isn't just ten commandments written on stone.
Whenever you think, "*I should*"— whenever you should on yourself, you're probably referencing a law written on your heart—and, by the way, the prophets claim that the human heart is made of stone... until God performs a miracle.

The law is on your heart, but one day it will be *within* your heart (Jer. 31:33).
And in that day no one will look for the Ark or even think of it, prophesies Jeremiah (3:16).

Well, whenever you think, "*I should,*" you're referencing a law impinging upon your heart, and thereby admitting that your heart is not free.

Now, this is a great irony, but what we normally mean by "freedom of choice," is not a free will, but actually the bondage of the will.

As soon as you begin to deliberate between choices, you recognize that you're not of one will, but deliberating between two wills. Make sense?

When is a dancer most free?

- When she consciously chooses each step, thinking, "I could put my foot here or I could put my foot there... Oh, I should put it here."
- Or is she most free when she's not even conscious of making a choice because the choice is making her, for it has become her nature—when her body is in communion with the rhythm and logic of the dance?

Soren Kierkegaard wrote:

"Freedom which equally well chooses the good or the evil, is nothing but an abrogation of freedom and a despair of any explanation of it."

That is freedom is not deliberating between Good and evil... and if you do, it just reveals that you don't really know what either one is or isn't.

"...Emphasizing freedom of choice, as such, means the sure loss of freedom..."
Writes Kierkegaard.

"Freedom really is freedom only when, in the same moment...it rushes with infinite speed to bind itself. Freedom is the choice whose truth is that there can be no choice."

I think that means that a dancer is only free when she dances without thinking about her dancing, but solely because she's surrendered to the music.

Or think of it this way:

Have you ever experienced a moment in which you suddenly thought to yourself, *"Wow, there is no other place else I'd rather be—no other place and no other time?"*

Maybe it's a moment listening to one of your kids sing you a song.

Perhaps it's a moment making love to your bride.

Perhaps it's an awesome bite of pizza when you're really hungry.

You think, *"There's no other place I'd rather be, than right here, right now."*

It's perfect rest, *but* it doesn't mean you're doing nothing—you're doing something; you're *really* doing something.

You're doing what you absolutely want, and wanting what you do, absolutely.

So you think, *"There is no place else I'd rather be—no other place and no other time. I completely will to be right here right now."*

You see I think that's a free will.

For a will that's entirely free, time stops... *"chronos is no more."*

It's eternity now. It's Heaven on earth. It's absolute Joy.

And so, of course, we try to choose it; we take it; we seize hold of it...

And then what happens? We kill it... and it vanishes.

We think, *"Look, I'm dancing!"* And we trip.

"Look at me, I'm walking on water!" And we sink.

Well anyway, a truly free will must be Heaven...

A truly free will is entirely unrestrained, unrepressed, and undetermined...

A truly free will, is not determined by anything and determines everything.

So the truly free will is the undetermined determiner.

It's the Uncaused Cause.

It's the Uncreated Creator.

In one of her books, Shirley MacLaine writes about actualizing free will, one afternoon in a hotel room. She writes:

"If I created my own reality... I had created everything I saw, heard, touched, smelled, tasted; everything I loved, hated, revered, abhorred; everything I responded to or that responded to me. Then, I created everything I knew. I was therefore responsible for all there was in my reality. If that was true, then I was everything... I was my own universe. Did that also mean I had created God...? A chilling wave of loneliness rippled through me... Was this what was meant by the statement I AM THAT I AM?"

So, do you want free will?

You might be thinking *"Well, it sounded like Heaven for a bit there, Peter, but now I'm worried that we're talking about Hell."*

Yeah... we are.

Free will is *truly* the greatest thing that you could ever imagine.

And yet, those who *seize hold* of Free Will seem to suffer the greatest bondage.

It's often kings that are truly slaves...

And it's slaves that are secretly kings.

In 1943, out of all the people in the world, which person had a will *least* restrained by any other will? And who in turn, restrained all other wills?

Well, wouldn't that have been Adolph Hitler?

Who would it be today? Vladimir Putin or Donald Trump . . . ?

Fortunately, for Donald's soul², we have a system that limits power.

Free will is power . . . and seizing power will make you miserable.

Every mother knows this: the spoiled child is the miserable child. It's the child whose will is left unrestrained that sinks into despair. That child wills whatever they want, and loses the ability to want what they will. It's like they seize hold of the Good, but the moment they do, the good dies... and then, in misery they try again, and again, and again . . . trapped in a hell of their own making until someone breaks their will and the walls of their kingdom come tumbling down.

After watching *Charlottes Web*, my friend Cathy was worried about her daughter, for, at the end of the movie, Charlotte the spider dies giving birth to her babies. Her little girl looked up and said, *"Those babies were born and their mommy was dead. Do you know what that means?"* Cathy looked at her little girl with compassion . . . *"It means they can do whatever they want!"*

We understand why that idea is enticing.

But what if the thing that all babies most want is their mommy?

I'm just pointing out that Free Will is the very definition of Heaven...

But when we seize hold of it, as if it were solely ours, it feels like hell.

² We have a system, which attempts to limit power, for we know that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Absolute freedom of will is absolute power. And absolute Power is God. Does God corrupt absolutely? I don't think so. And yet, making yourself God is the very definition of corruption.

People that claim to possess free will, well they often seem to end up in Hell.
But people that don't have free will—aren't really people.

Maybe we're not really people . . . quite yet?

Maybe we're not really persons, but just dreaming of being persons one day . . .

The Seventh Day, when it is finished, and everything is Good . . . including us.

Scripture says that Jesus is “the firstborn from the dead,” and “the firstborn of all creation.” That would imply that you're not actually born until you die, and you're not entirely created, until that day. Paul writes “*Awake oh sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will give you Light.*” We're asleep in the dream of our own sovereignty—the dream of our own free will.

Well anyway, as I was saying—the Ark is Free Will and so of course, every one, especially the Nazis, want to possess the Ark.

The Army that carries the Ark is invincible...

The question is, “What Army can carry the Ark?”

Clip from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*

[Two Nazi soldiers pick up the Ark of the Covenant. Indiana Jones and Marion are tied up and watch from a distance. The scene changes: Belloq, the main antagonist anxiously moves towards the Ark. Powerful light emits from the Ark turning into fire and then consuming Belloq. Fire then shoots from his eyes and pierces nearby Nazi soldiers consuming them as they fall to the ground. Fire, light, and power continue to flow out of the Ark and then shoot into the sky and can be seen from miles away.]

See? This is the problem with the Ark . . .

It has a mind of its own.

It has a will of its own.

It does what it wills and wills what it does.

It is free will... absolute free will.

Steven Spielberg actually got that scene right out of the Bible.

In 1 Samuel, Philistines capture the Ark but can't handle the ark so they send it back to Israel and some Israelites look into the ark. They look at the law, without its covering, and it kills them, all seventy of them.

However, unlike the movie, the Glory wasn't in the Ark.

The law is in the Ark, the Glory would rest on top of the Ark... the Glory is alive.

In 2 Samuel, David attempts to bring the Ark into Jerusalem on a cart. When the cart hits

a bump, a fellow named Uzzah reaches out his hand to save the Ark and the Ark smites Uzzah: you don't save the Ark, the Ark saves you.

Well, David loves the Ark, but he's terrified of the Ark . . .
And so He attempts to build a container for the Ark—a temple of stone.

In the wilderness, God had the Israelites keep the Ark in this elaborate tent called the tabernacle—the point was that it was mobile. That was important, for the Word of the Lord, would appear in a pillar of fire and cloud on top of the Ark, issue judgment, and give Israel direction to the Promised Land. It was the Way, the Truth, and the Life . . .
And yet, even the Israelites couldn't endure its presence . . . let alone, the Nazis.

Well, understandably David wants to build the Ark a stone container because a tabernacle—a tent is just too flimsy. In 2 Samuel 7, the Word of the Lord rebukes David for wanting to build Him a stone house; He declares that He wants to move with His people. But then, He promises David that a son of David would build Him a house.

Of course, they all thought that was Solomon.
But that home would be destroyed in 587 BC.

About six hundred years later, after it was destroyed, another son of David, stood by the rebuilt temple, minus the ark, which had been lost when the temple was destroyed. He stood by the stone temple and said, *“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up... and he spoke of the temple of his body.”*

Well, the Ark is absolute free will . . . and so far we've spoken of what it does:

It judges, it directs, it can move mountains...

That's what it *does*.

But even more fascinating is what it *is*. It's a coffin.

In Hebrew *“awrone,”* which comes from *“awraw,”* which means to pluck or to pick, ... like you might pick fruit from a tree. And that makes sense: you pick the fruit and the fruit dies.

The first place that the word appears, in the Bible, is in the last verse of Genesis: it's Genesis 50:26, when Joseph makes the children of Israel promise to put his bones in an *awrone*, and one day carry them back to Israel. Joseph is, perhaps, the most vivid and detailed picture of Jesus in all the Old Testament: the bones of Jesus in a box is quite a picture.

The next place *awrone* appears is in Exodus, when God commands Moses to have Israel build an *awrone*, a coffin, for the law. They are to build it of *“ates”* which is translated, tree, wood, gallows, or even, by the 1st century... cross.³ They are to build it of *“shittim ates,”* which can be translated *“scourging tree or piercing tree.”*

³ Exodus 25:10 “Shittim wood.” In Hebrew, the word Shittim is derived from a word that means “to pierce or scourge.” It's a scourging tree. The term “Shittim wood or tree” occurs twenty-nine times in the Old Testament. Twenty-eight of those times it refers to the material of which the Ark and Tabernacle are to be

Do you suppose that the law died?

What is the law? Isn't it the knowledge of Good and evil?

Perhaps the Good died, and taking the life of the Good, is the very essence of evil?

Apparently, at one point, the Good hung on a tree like fruit.

And somehow we picked it, and it must've died.

Adam, humanity—*ha adam*, took knowledge of Good and evil... and everything died.

Well, Moses was instructed to put the law in the Ark.

And then on top of the Ark, to construct an "atonement seat" or "Mercy seat."

And on both sides of the seat, cherubim, like the two cherubim that guarded the way to the tree of Life.

The Mercy Seat was also the throne of God and Judgment of God.

The Word of God, and Glory of God, would manifest between the cherubim on top of the Mercy Seat and issue the Judgment of God.

Understand? The Judgment of God is the Will of God, and the Will of God is Free . . .

That means God's will is stronger than your will.

And God's Will is Law covered in Mercy.

When James wrote, "*Mercy triumphs* (literally "boasts" or "rejoices") *over judgment*," He must have been picturing the Ark of the Covenant. It doesn't mean that Mercy opposes Judgment, but that mercy is the full revelation of judgment. The Glory is on top of the Ark... the coffin...As if it died and rose from the dead.

When John looks to the throne of God and sees a lamb standing *as if* He'd been slain, He's looking at the top of the Ark.

He's looking at the ultimate revelation of the Will of God.

He's looking at Jesus—Now... Hold that thought...

And let's review:

The Ark of God is the Revelation of the Judgment of God.

The Judgment of God is the Will of God.

The Will of God is absolutely Free.

It is Free Will... It's not just furniture.

So seven seals are opened, seven trumpets sound...

The walls of this world crumble . . .

The destroyers of the earth are destroyed . . .

The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our God . . .

This is the reason creation was subjected to futility . . .

This is the reason all people were consigned to disobedience . . .

constructed. And once it used in a prophetic word as to how God will turn the wilderness into a garden (Is. 41:19). Reference Strongs Exhaustive Concordance #H7848 and H7850.

John looks and He sees the Ark of God . . . in the temple.

What temple is He talking about? Us! Us! Us!
What's the Glory of God?

That He makes people like paper dolls and then burns them with fire?

OR

That He makes people like paper dolls and breathes His fire into their souls.

I mean He gives them His own will, His free will, His own heart from His own bosom.

Such that He could actually say,



"Would *you* dance with me?"

And

they would freely reply:

"Why yes! It is my greatest desire to dance with you forever, and ever, and ever, my Love!"

"The Glory of God is man fully alive," wrote Iranaeus in the 2nd Century.

The Glory of God is Humanity in His Own Image.

The Glory of God is His own free will at home in our hearts—His temple.

Jesus said, *He who conquers will sit on my throne.*

That means God's Will, will be your will, and your will will be God's Will.

God's Law will be living and at home in your heart.

You will say to the mountain move and it will move.

You will never think, *"I wish I was someplace else or some time else."*

You will create reality . . . and yet, you will never be alone.

You will, will what you want, and always want what you will.

You will constantly choose the Good in absolute freedom—freedom that is Life.

It will be better than anything you can currently even imagine.

And this is the plan for the fullness of time.

In other words, you are predestined . . . for free will.

John sees the Ark of God, in the temple of God, and God's temple is you.

So how did it get there? And do we have it now?

Do we have free will?

Once again, let's review:

God's will is free and God is Free Will.

God is what He wills and He wills what He is... He is undivided and free. He is One.

The Biblical word for "free will," is *Yahweh*, I am that I am, God.

God is free will and He is making us in His image.

I think that's the Gospel! That's Good News!

The Free Will of God is also the Word of God that creates all things, including you.

The Word of God is Jesus and Jesus is the Word of God.

Jesus is the Slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne on top of the Ark.

Jesus is God's will. Jesus is Free Will.

Now, ask yourself the question again:

"Do I have free will?" Do you?

If so, How did you get this free will?

1. Did you conquer it?

Did you capture it, scourge it, and nail it to a piece of wood?

If so, you must be terribly proud, and lonely, and dead, and actually not free at all...
but only pretending to be free... only dreaming of freedom.

And not really knowing what the Good is because you killed it.

2. Did you capture it... or did you receive it as a gift?

If you did, you must be terribly grateful for this gift, and just lost in love for the One
Who gave it . . . you must be fully alive, and constantly at peace with all things, for all
things have become new. Anyone in Christ is a new creation the old has passed
away! "Behold," says Paul, all things are new!

So, Did you conquer it, or did it conquer you?

Did you conquer Jesus, or did Jesus conquer you?

If you're like me you kind of have to answer: well both.

I think I sinned and became a slave...

But when I believed God's Grace, I began to be free...

I conquered Jesus and then, [Peter looks at the cross] Jesus conquered me...

That's the story of me, but not only me but of all Humanity—*ha adam*.

We *took* His life on the tree in the garden... and everything died... it was Hell... it's
called sin. And yet, He forgave His life on the tree . . . we received it . . . and everything
lived . . . it's called Grace.

We're saved by Grace, and Grace is the Free Will of God.

We're saved by Grace and created by Grace.

And it's all according to plan.

I think the fruit on the tree in the middle of the garden is Jesus.

He is *the Good* in flesh. He is *the Life*. And He is *the will of God*—Free Will.

Adam was free, but not free to choose the Good because he didn't know what the Good was. He didn't have the knowledge of Good and evil.

Once he took knowledge of the Good—the life of the Good, he began to know evil, but he could no longer choose the Good. Why? He was in bondage to evil. He was divided. And He just crucified the Good.

On the cross, God revealed that what we took, He had always given. It was *for-given*. The Good is Grace, which is the Free Will of God. The Will of God is Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

When we finally, and fully, believe that "It is finished," we will know the Good and want the Good, we will manifest the Good, which is to *be* the Good; it is eternal Life. We will be the image of God. We will know good and evil and we will live. In other words, we will be in the very image of God.

So, at the cross, God Freely Willed to surrender His Good Will to our bad will in time, in order that we might surrender our bad will to His Good will for all eternity. And this is the Glory and Power of God. God is Love!

Free will is Love, and Love is making you in His own image. To the degree that you're proud of love, as if you thought you were the author of love, you are the evil dead in bondage to sin. To the degree that you're grateful for love, as if love were the author of you, you're alive and the temple of the living God.

Actually, I think the Ark is in the temple right now... (maybe it always has been). One day, the last trumpet will sound, you will wake from the dream of your own sovereignty, the illusion that you're in charge. The walls of your world will come tumbling down, this old tent in which you think you live will dissolve and you will see it.

The Ark is in the Temple—the temple of the living God, which is you. Sometimes, you can begin to see it, even here, and even now.

"...Seven, eight, nine - you! Step out!" The Nazi guard yelled at the young Romanian woman. The commandant had ordered every tenth prisoner executed as punishment for two women's escape the night before.

"Please have mercy on me! I have a child. I'm a mother," the tenth woman pleaded. Mary Skotsobaugh stood next in line.

In her heart, Mary heard a voice, *"Step forward and say you want to die in her place."* She replied to the inner voice, *"Why? She is not a Christian. She is a Jewish Communist. When the Nazis are overthrown and the Communists come to power, they will be as bad as the Nazis."*

The voice said, *"On a day like this I died, not for the good ones, but for the bad ones, for sinners."*

Mary then stepped forward saying, *"I wish to die in her place."*

Later on, Mary went to the ovens, she told her executioners, *"When God took his people out of slavery in Egypt, it is written that he went before them in a column of fire, (above the Ark). I pray that when my body burns it would be a column of fire that shows you the way to God."*

It was, and it still is: The Army that carries the Ark is invincible.
It looks weak in this world, and yet, it's stronger than all this world.

The kingdom of the Nazis is long gone and the Kingdom of God cannot be stopped.
Mary willed what she willed, although everything tried to stop her—her will was Free...
and now her will has joined a symphony of wills all in harmony with God's Will, as One Will—it is the Kingdom of Heaven, the Great Dance. And it's free.

And one last thing:

On earth, Mary gave birth to the Life that is God.

Mary saved the life of that young Mother, but Mary is the Mother of Our Lord.

Rev. 11:19 *"The Ark of the Covenant was seen within the temple in heaven..."*

Next verse, Revelation 12:1-2a *"And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant..."*

When we surrender to the Will of God, we give birth to the Will of God.

Happy Mother's Day, Bride of Christ and Mother of the Living God.

Communion

This is the Will of God.

He took bread and He broke it saying this is my body given to you.

And He took the cup saying, this is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it.

So, actually, this sermon is super simple.

This is the Ark [Peter points to the communion table] and you are the temple.

This is Free Will [Peter points to the communion table] and you are His Body, the Bride of Christ, and even His Mother.

What do every mother and father want?

A child who loves them in freedom.

A child with free will—that knows that they've been *given* that free will.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you. Not only for what you do but for who you are. You are the Free Will of God and you are Love in flesh, loving us constantly. Thank you, Lord God, for this glimpse of the Judgment Seat, the Throne. When I see you, I have to confess that I sometimes think that I am responsible for you, that I am responsible for Free Will. Lord God, that's why I get proud; that's why I get jealous; that's why I compete...

I thank you for the Good News. I am not responsible for Free Will. Free Will is responsible for me. When I see that I begin to love you, myself, and my neighbor. I just can't wait for that day when I am finally *fully* free with you and everyone in this room—in an entirely new creation. In Jesus' name, we thank you. Amen.

Benediction

Today was the introduction to the Mother's Day sermon. So, you need to come back next week for the Mother's Day sermon about Revelation 12. But for now, just 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.

23

Where Good Things Come From

Where Good Things Come From

Revelation 11:19-12:17

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

May 19, 2018

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

Lord God, we ask now that Jesus, who is the Word and who is the End, would be implanted in us. We ask that you would help us to preach. Lord God, speak your Word into our hearts. Implant the Eternal Seed into our temporal hearts that are in space and time. God, we ask you for a miracle. Now maybe we all can pray together: “Father, I would like to be begotten from above.” In Jesus’ name, Amen.

We have been preaching through The Revelation.

The seventh seal has been opened. The seventh trumpet has sounded.

Rev. 11:19 *“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.”*

As we preached last week, the Ark had been lost for 600 years. And that was a big deal for the Ark contained the law—the Ten Commandments written on stone.

The Law is a description of the Good. It gives us knowledge of the Good. It describes what the Good looks like, what the Good acts like.

You’ll remember that the seven churches are called to conquer. To conquer is to know the Good and do the Good.

1. In Ephesus, it’s to find the love that they had at first.
2. In Smyrna, it’s to be faithful unto death.
3. In Pergamum, it’s to repent of idolatry and *porneia*.
4. In Thyatira, it’s to renounce false doctrine.
5. In Sardis . . . it’s to wake from the dead.
6. In Philadelphia . . . they must endure suffering, that’s Good.
7. In Laodicea . . . they’re lukewarm and need passion for the Good, which is Good.

The Law is a description of the Good, and the Law is in the Temple.

Quite naturally, this is the reason that most folks go to the temple or the church. They want knowledge of the Good, so they can choose the Good, and thus, make themselves Good.

“Good things come from knowledge and hard work”—that’s what we tell ourselves.

That’s why I went to college.

[Image of Colorado State University]

I wanted knowledge of good geology, so I could make myself a good geologist.
I even took a class on ethics, which is the knowledge of the Good itself.
I thought that if I knew *about* the Good, I could choose the Good and be Good.

So this is where Good things come from . . . a place like this . . .

[Image of a smiling professor teaching smiling students]

In fact, this is promotional material for the University of Colorado that I pulled from the website.

It's a classroom with smiling faces and the transfer of information in a controlled and safe environment, where personal dignity is honored, and each student has an equal opportunity to seize hold of the Good and make themselves "Good."

And I tried to make myself Good—I worked hard and got almost all A's...including my class on ethics

I got A's and was thrilled when my neighbors got "C's, "D's and "F's.
I rejoiced at their failure, for I thought their failure meant my success.
I had *knowledge* of the Good, and it actually made me bad . . .

Well, that was promotional material for the University of Colorado.
But it could equally well be promotional material for just about any modern evangelical church or discipleship and mentoring program.

Under the picture, you'd just have to add a line like:

"Grace Church"

Or *"New Life School of Discipleship—Where Good Things Come From."*

We naturally assume that we go to church to take knowledge of the Good, so we can choose the Good and beat our neighbors.

We assume that we can choose the Good because we assume that we have this thing we call "Free Will"—a will, that can will what it will, undetermined by any other will.

We naturally assume that you go to the temple to take the Law . . .

The problem is that you couldn't just go to the temple... and take the Law.
The Law was kept in a coffin (*awrone*), an Ark.
If you tried to take it—the knowledge of the Good and evil—you'd die.

You couldn't just go to the temple and take the law.
Instead, you'd go to the temple and watch or reenact a story.

Massive portions of the Old Testament are devoted to that ritual or story.
Most Americans are utterly bewildered and terribly offended by the story:

- Worshipers would bring sacrifices and offerings—primarily animals—that were slaughtered by priests, who would drain the blood into bowls, and then offer the meat to God, to each other, and to the worshipers in ritual meals— the meals were communion with God and each other.
- Once a year, trumpets were blown and the high priest would take the blood behind the curtain, and sprinkle it on top of the Ark, making atonement. The Top of the Ark was the mercy seat and throne of God on Earth.

In the Revelation, John is looking at the top of the Ark, where he sees a lamb standing as if it had been slain. Jesus is the Lamb of God, the Will of God, and Judgment of God—as we discovered in our last sermon. Jesus is the Will of God in flesh. God alone is Good. Jesus is the Good in flesh. Jesus is the Good.

We can't take knowledge of the Good and simply *make* ourselves Good.

Once we tried to take knowledge of the Good on a tree in a garden.

We took knowledge of the Good, crucified the Good . . .

And we discovered we were not Good, but evil . . . and dead . . . and no longer free.

And you see? That's not just a story about something that happened in the garden on Calvary or the Garden of Eden, but the story that happens in the garden of your soul, and every soul, starting around the age of, what? . . . two, three, four or five?

We take knowledge of the Good and try to make ourselves Good.

But you can't just take the Law and *do* the Law.

Jesus summed up the Law—all of the Law—in this way: *"You will Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your strength."*

Well, as soon as Love becomes a law, you can't fulfill the law, for if Love is a law, it just reveals that you **don't** *love with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength.*

If Love is a law, your heart, mind, soul and strength are divided. Why? Because something is telling you that you should love, precisely because you don't love.

If Love is law your will is divided, and no longer free. When you take knowledge of Love to make yourself love, you learn that you don't love, Love.

God is Love.

Well, a Good Will is God's Will, and God's will is Free Will.

Free Will in human flesh is Jesus.

Jesus is Free Will.

God loves love, and God is the Love that always Loves. Nothing is stronger than Love.

God Loves in perfect freedom so God is Free Will. ¹

Last week I asked you, “Do you have free will?” And if so: “How did you get it?”

1. Did you conquer it, capture it, and nail it to a tree? Did you take it?
If so, you must be proud, and dead, and not free. You just crucified Freedom.
2. Did you take it? Or did you receive it as a gift?
If so, you must be grateful. Not proud of the Good, but grateful for the Good:
Grateful that you’ve been loved by Love, and now you get to love in freedom.

Free will is Good Will, and Good Will is God’s Will.
And God’s Will is Jesus.

You can’t *make* Good, and if you try, you will crucify the Good and discover you’re evil.
You can’t *make* Good and yet you must *be* Good.
Jesus said, “You *will* love.” That’s the Good.

So where do good things come from?
Where do good people come from?
That’s what every father wants, what every mother wants.
They want a child that loves them in freedom—a child that loves to love because they’ve been loved.

Rev. 11:19 “*Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple.*”

In the last sermon, we saw that the Ark was a picture of God’s will, which is Good Will, which is Free Will. And the temple is us.

Rev. 11:19-12:2

Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an

¹ My friend Mike shared a fascinating little Ted Talk with me recently.

In it a Dr. of Philosophy, Gregg Caruso, points out that recent psychological and sociological studies have correlated a belief in free will with increased religiosity, punitiveness, and faith in what he called “Just World theory”.

It’s the idea that people get what they deserve and so you don’t need to sympathize with the suffering and you shouldn’t have compassion on sinners. Basically, it’s the idea that we can know good and evil and each choose good and evil, which is basically the definition of a Pharisee.

He argued that giving up belief in free will would be Good.
And yet the Good is Free Will, God is Free Will.... And Free Will in flesh is Jesus.
Jesus is Free Will.

earthquake, and heavy hail. And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth.

Now if I lost you in my long and sophisticated introduction, this is what I'm trying to say: Truly Good things don't come from a place like this!

[Image of a smiling professor teaching smiling students is shown again]

Truly Good things come from a place that looks more like this:

Mother's Day Clip from *Saturday Night Live* "The Day You Were Born"

[On Mother's Day, a woman (Amy Schumer) is served breakfast in bed by her son and husband. She tells her son about the day he was born.]

Father: *Good morning honey!*

I'm sorry. I didn't make you breakfast . . . but our son did.

Son: *Happy Mother's Day Mommy!*

Mother: *Oh honey! This is so great. You are the sweetest.*

Thank you, sweetheart!

Father: *I helped a little bit with the eggs, but he did the toast all by himself.*

Mother: *Well . . . (reaching for toast and then taking a bite) Mmm . . .*

This is the best toast I've ever had.

Son: *Really?*

Mother: *Yes! Really! I am so lucky to be your mommy.*

The day you were born was the best day of my life.

Son: *What was it like?*

Mother: *(Concerned but trying to conceal it with a gentle voice and smile)*

The day you were born . . . (forcing a smile)? It was ... amazing!

[The scene changes to the labor and delivery unit of a hospital.]

[The mother is in the heat of labor, surrounded by nurses and screaming out in pain.]

Nurse: (Reassuringly) *Okay. Only a few more centimeters and you'll be ready.*

Mother: (From a hospital bed) *How much bigger can the hole get??*

Nurse: (Smiling with a relaxed and gentle smile) *Just breathe.*

Mother: *Why does my *&%\$ ing vagina hurt?*

[The scene changes back to mother and son at breakfast in bed.]

Son: *Were you scared mommy?*

Mother: (Confidently and reassuringly) *Oh no. I was excited!*

I had a big smile on my face the whole time.

[The mom looks at the father and gently nods "Yes") *Didn't I?*

Father: *Oh yeah.*

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital.]

Nurse: *We're going to need to do an episiotomy.*

Mother: (Through sobs of fear and sadness) *No! No. Don't cut my asshole in half!*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Son: *Daddy, Were YOU scared?*

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital.]

Mother: *Why does it look like that?*

Mother: *You're not a man!*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Father: *No, bud, Daddy's don't get scared.*

Father: *I'm not ready!*

Mother: *You're not a man!*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Mother: *The nice doctor came in and told us it was time.*

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital.]

Mother's Day Clip from *Saturday Night Live* continued . . .

Mother: (Addressing the doctor as she enters the room) *Where have you been, you stupid whore?!*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Mother: *And then . . . she told me to give one little push.*

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital where the birth is finally taking place.]

Doctor: *She's crowning. One more push.*

Mother: *Ahhh. Ohhh. Am I pooping?*

Father: *No. No baby. No.*

(The nurse nods "Yes" to the husband)

[At breakfast in bed.]

Mother: *Then...one little push and you were born.
And you were the most beautiful baby in the whole world.*

[At the labor and delivery unit of the hospital.]

[The baby is delivered and a yellow jaundice baby is lifted up into the air.]

Father: *Wait! Why does he look like that? Why is he yellow? Is that normal?*

Mother: *(Through tears) Why is he so ugly?*

[At breakfast in bed.]

Mother: *And that's what happened on the best day of my life.*

Understand? We can't make Good, but we must give birth to the Good.
And I apologize if you were offended by the video . . . But perhaps you were offended
because you thought the temple should look more like this:

[Image of a smiling professor teaching smiling students is shown again]

And less like this:

[Image of a mother struggling in labor]

You thought church should look more like a school, and less like a maternity ward.
You know? I really didn't *make* Good at the University of Colorado.
I've forgotten almost all that I learned, and it really wasn't that Good—I mean it wasn't
beautiful, heart warming, wondrous, and delightful.

I didn't make Good, but I've watched my bride give birth to Good... four times!



There have been moments when each of these children loved me in freedom, and it took my breath away when it happened. It was Good.

So, where do good things, and good people, come from?

Revelation 12:2-6

"She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains ("travail") and the agony

[This word is from *basanizo*, translated "torment" in every other place in the Revelation.]

She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth

[Literally: "birth pains and tormented to deliver." Why "tormented" . . . ? "To deliver". . . What? a baby. . . that's new life!]

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Which you'll remember is forty-two months, three-and-a-half years or in Bible lingo, "times, time and half a time." It's a broken seven. It's the time of trouble in which we live.

So who's the woman and what's being born?

Almost every commentator agrees that it must at least be Jesus that's being born.

And as we've seen Jesus is the Free Will of God, Jesus is the Good in flesh.

Jesus is being born.

But who's the woman?

Some Catholic theologians have argued that the woman is Mary. She must be at least Mary . . . but she's a rather large Mary. We'll soon read that she also gives birth to other children—*“those that keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”*

Some have argued that the woman is Eve. You'll remember that God's first command was *“Be fruitful and multiply.”* That is *“Don't make the Good; Give birth to the Good.”* Satan tempted Eve to take knowledge of the Good in order to make herself Good, and instead of Giving birth to the Good, She crucified the Good and everything died. Jesus is the Good.

Scripture also refers to Jesus as the *Eschatos Adam*, Which makes us the *Eschatos Eve*, for we are His Bride.

We crucified the Good, who is the *Eschatos Adam*. And yet . . . He rose from the dead and now produces fruit through His Bride.

Well, some say the woman is Eve, some say, Mary, some say she is the lineage from Eve to Mary, which is also Israel.

In Genesis 37, Joseph had a dream about the sun, moon and eleven stars... the family of Israel (Gen. 37:9). God referred to Israel as His bride.

So the woman is at least Eve, and at least Mary, and at least Israel.

And that lineage includes some pretty questionable women. Matthew points out four:

Rahab the Canaanite Harlot, who had been on the other side of the walls of Jericho; *Tamar*, who pretended to be a harlot in order to get her father-in-law Judah to have sex with her;

Ruth of the cursed nation of Moab; And

Bathsheba, who was an accessory to murder, through adultery with King David...

And then there's *Mary*: a poor unwed pregnant teenager forced to give birth in a stable...

Jesus is the Good Thing, but if you were to make an accurate movie of where He came from, there is no way I could show it in church.

The Woman is Mary, Eve, Israel and You.

In Mark 3:33-35 some folks say, *“Hey Jesus, your Mom is looking for you.”* And he says, *“Who are my mother and my brothers?”* And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, *“Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Now you may say, *“Hey I'm not the mother of Jesus.”*

Well if you do the will of God you are. . . Jesus is the Will of God.
And the Will of God is Jesus.
He's Good Will and that's Free Will.

You can't make Good, but you *must* give birth to the Good.

The Woman is Mary, Eve, Israel and anyone who submits to the will of the Father and then gives birth to the Will of the Father.

"Whoever does the will of God is my mother and brother and sister."
Brothers and sisters have the same mother. So, the mother of Jesus is the mother of us.
That means we are the woman and we too are born of the woman.
The woman is the people of God . . . giving birth to His Will in this world.

His Will is Jesus and anything that's Good is somehow Jesus.

James 1:17 *"All good giving and every perfect gift comes down from the father of lights..."* Jesus is the Light: "the light that enlightens all people" (John 1:9).

In Galatians 4 Paul wrote: *"The Jerusalem above is free. And she is our mother."*
We are born of the Jerusalem above.
And we *are* the Jerusalem coming down from above when we love in freedom.

We give birth to fruit that is Eternal Life: *Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faith and self-control.*

You don't *make* the Good, you *give birth* to the Good.
However, you do make the evil. Paul calls that *"the work of the flesh"* as opposed to the *"fruit of the Spirit."* It's what we make when we take knowledge of the Good in an effort to make ourselves in the image of God: It's *porneia*—trying to pay for love; it's idolatry, jealousy, envy, competition and every other way in which we try to save ourselves because we don't believe that we're saved.

We can *work* evil, but we must *give birth* to the good.

In Galatians 4:19 Paul wrote: *"My little children, how I am in travail until Christ is formed in you."* Paul thought he was giving birth to Christ in the Galatians. I think he actually meant that.

You give birth to Christ in every good deed.
You give birth to Christ in people that you love.
And check this out, I think you give birth to Christ in you—the *NEW* you.

John remembered a conversation that Jesus had with a Pharisee—a conversation that the other Gospel writers don't remember. I suspect John remembered it because he saw it in the Revelation Chapter 12.

In John 3:3, Jesus said to Nicodemus the Pharisee: *“Unless you are begotten from above—gennatha anothen—you cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

Gennatha can be translated “begotten” or “born.” Jesus is “the firstborn (*prototokos*—different word) from the dead... and firstborn of all creation,” writes Paul. So, we must be begotten from above in order to be born out of this world and into the Kingdom of God.

In John 3:16, Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his monogena”*—it means only begotten, which means only one is begotten of God.

So, for you to be begotten from above, means that Jesus, the only begotten, is begotten in you . . . He is Eternal Seed planted in the womb of your soul.

John 3:16 *“God gave his only begotten son, that all, the believing in him, might not be Lost, but have eternal life.”*

Understand? *Belief*, which means “faith” or “trust”—in you—is Christ Jesus rising in you; *Faith, Hope, and Love* in you is the Free Will that is God, in the temple of your soul.²

You are the woman, and you are giving birth to a New you, as well as an entirely new creation.

“Anyone in Christ” is a new creation writes Paul, *“the old has passed away, behold all things have become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17 NKJV).

Paul actually wrote that the whole creation *“groans in travail... waiting to obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God”* (See Romans 8:21-22). That’s Crazy!

But this is my point: All free things, all glorious and good things come from travail . . . and not from us and our efforts—not *from* us—but *through* us.

You can’t make the Good, but you will give birth to the Good, for in this way God is making you. God is Good and He is making you in His image.

Revelation 12:5-17

The woman gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of

² And this is the Judgment, says Jesus in the next few verses. *“Every one that does what is true comes to the light that it might clearly be seen that his deeds have been done by God.”* In other words, if you’re proud of your deeds, as if you made those deeds, by taking knowledge of Good and then creating the Good, they’re not Good. But if you grateful for your deeds, because God created those deeds in you, you will run into the Good, for the Good has made you Good.

the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

[In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus says He saw this.]

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him...

[...with a good education and trying really hard... No. It doesn't say that.]

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony,

[Jesus is the Lamb, and He is the Word, who stands on the Ark of the Testimony in the temple that is your soul.]

... they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

[They conquered by losing their lives... what a thought!]

Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold [to] the testimony of Jesus³.

That sounds like a temple containing The Ark with a slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne. He went off to war . . .

We'll talk about all of this later. But for now, I hope you see that we're the woman, and we're the offspring of the woman that, in turn, becomes the woman. In other words, we're the Bride of Christ, giving birth to the Body of Christ, fulfilling God's command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth . . .With what? the Life of Christ?

³ Remember the Commandments are kept in the “Ark of the Testimony.” Those that “keep” and “hold” them are the temple—the temple that is the Body of Christ.

We're the woman in travail in agony, anguish, and torment, to deliver.
And we have an enemy who battles us with a river that comes from his mouth.
He is the father of lies, and the river is a river of lies.
He's been thrown down. He's in the maternity wing and he's lying to you—right now. If
satan were in the labor and delivery room with Amy Schumer in that Saturday Night
Live sketch, what would he be saying to Amy Schumer? . . . Because that's exactly what
he's saying to you.

What would he be saying?

How about: "Oh my Gosh, something's terribly wrong, you better seize control."

That's what he said to Eve in the Garden:

Something's wrong, you better take the Good and make yourself good.

You are your own helper, savior, and even creator.

By the way, I think that's how the earth swallows the river of lies.

You see a sunset, smell a flower or smile at a newborn.

You see creation and realize: you are not the Creator; you are the created.

A woman who's given birth realizes that she didn't create that baby. But the Creator
used her to make that baby and deliver that baby. She had to labor, but all the labor was
surrendering control, not seizing control. If she seizes control she only makes the
torment worse. ("I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing.")

And then, satan might say, "This torment will never end. This torment has no purpose. "

Basanizo, the Greek word for torment comes from *basanos*, which means: touchstone,
that is a stone used to test precious metals like silver and gold. In God's creation,
torment always has a purpose and comes to an end—a *telos*, a perfection. Jesus is the
telos—the End.

When a woman is in travail, her body is being tormented to deliver new life—that's the
purpose of torment. And the new life is being tormented to be delivered of her. Well,
satan would say, "This torment has no purpose. Why don't you quit."

There are many ways that we seize control and try to quit, all at the same time. They
are all the work of the flesh. We quit giving birth to Love. We attempt to save ourselves
from the torments of Love, by refusing to love:

By getting drunk, taking pills, telling white lies, buying junk—that's idolatry.

By attempting to purchase Love, rather than give birth to Love—that's *porneia*.

Even by crucifying Love, we turn Love into law—that's sin, original sin...

They're all ways of saying to God, "You can't fire me. I quit."

The good news is that no one can quit . . . forever.

The baby will come. The kingdom will come . . .

But you can't save your self, by seizing control of yourself with yourself.
You have to lose yourself to find it—your self, your new self, that is.

Well, satan would say, “Your labor, pain, anguish, and torment have no purpose, so you better seize control, and just quite.” That’s what satan would say, but what would the bridegroom say?

How about:

“Nothing’s wrong, everything is right.”

“You’re having our baby.”

“Don’t quit... but, sweetheart, surrender control.”

People say weird things to women in labor:

*Relax, rest, let go, and push, push, push, push; relax, rest, let go, push push, push...
If you can sweetheart, let all your pushing come from a place of rest.*

“Six days you shall labor and one you must rest.”

Actually strive to enter that rest, such that all your labor is rest...

Surrender control and the Good will happen, and when it happens, you will be forever grateful for the Good.

John remembered another thing that the other disciples forgot.
In Gospel of John 16:20-22, the night Jesus died he said to the twelve:

Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a [person] has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

Jesus is “*the firstborn of all creation, firstborn from the dead,*” and He says, “*I will see you again.*”

- Is that because he’ll be unborn back into this womb of a world?
- Or is it because we’ll finally be born out of this womb of a world, and into His world the forever new and eternal creation? If so, that would mean that the day you die is the day you are truly born...and all your sorrow turns into joy.

But even now, the Bridegroom might say, “*surrender your sorrow and it will turn into joy.*” I don’t know if I’m saying this well, but I think we each have a body of sorrow, and for a believer, it’s already turning into joy.

Recently, a friend sent me these pictures, painted by the Polish artist Igor Morski.

[Image of a girl inside a cage shaped like a woman, by Igor Morski]

See? I think we each have a body of sorrow, which we constructed ourselves.

[Image of a boy inside a cage shaped like a man, by Igor Morski]

We began construction when we first took knowledge of the Good and began attempting to make ourselves Good.

[Image of a naked man cowering inside the empty shell of a man in a suit, by Igor Morski]

It's a body of sorrow because we can't make ourselves Good.
We can only pretend to be Good.

[Image of a boy inside a cage shaped like a man, by Igor Morski]

It's not who we really are. Who we truly are is a little child of God.
The "body of sorrow" is the person we think we make with our supposed free will and our knowledge of Good and evil. It's a prison because we're trapped inside and no longer free.

[Image of a girl inside a cage shaped like a woman, by Igor Morski]

It's not true; it's false. It's not living; it's dead.
But if we think it's life and we think it's true, then the presence of Jesus, who is the Truth and the Life will feel like torment.

- We'll think He's tormenting us, when in fact He's setting us free.
- We'll think He's death, when in fact He's the death of death.
- We'll think that we're dying when, in fact, we're being born.

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree," writes Peter, *"that we might die to sin and live in his righteousness"* (1 Peter 2:24). You see the righteousness of Christ is who you truly are (the Father's beloved son, beloved daughter).

"Who will deliver me from this body of death," writes Paul, *"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 7:24-25).

You are the righteousness of Christ, and at the cross, you are delivered from this body of death. So that, when you're finally born; you'll be forever grateful for who you are... not proud of your free will but forever grateful that you get to love in freedom.

- You will know Good and evil, but constantly choose the Good.
- You will love because you've been loved.
- You will be the image of God because you want to be the image of God.
- You will do what you will, and will what you do, absolutely.
- You will be entirely free and nothing will have been wasted.

You see? That old false self is the place where the true self is born.
For where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more. Do you see it?
Your old self is like a womb. And I think that's why we must each give birth in anguish.

When a woman gives birth to a baby . . .

- She knows she didn't make the baby, it's more like the baby made her . . . into a mother.
- She didn't make the baby, but God used her to make His baby and so make her.
- She didn't make the Good, but she gave birth to the Good and became Good.

And so more than anyone, she knows that the Good is a gift from God.
And so, no one enjoys a baby, and child, a then a full-grown person, like a mother.

Bride of Christ, your old man will give birth to your new man and you will be forever grateful for who you truly are... the image and glory of God. You won't be proud; you'll be grateful, in other words, you'll be free.

And did you know that everybody is somebody's baby?
Everybody is a gift from God.

- They didn't make themselves with free will.
- They are being made by the Free Will who is God.
- They can't make Good, and you can't make Good.
- But by the Grace of God you will give birth to the Good and Love the Good.

So where do good things come from?

- Well, it's not through "taking knowledge and working really hard."
- Good things come through "being known and then going into labor."

To put it in church lingo . . .

- It's not by works of the law in the power of the flesh.
- It's by the confession of sin and the renewal of the mind—that is repentance to change you.

To put it in the lingo of Alcoholics Anonymous . . .

- It's not by feeling really guilty and trying really hard.

- It's by admitting you're powerless to change and trusting in a power greater than yourself to change you.

In the lingo of temple ritual . . .

It's sacrificing your old self, your ego and . . .

It's receiving your new self—the righteousness of Christ

It's what we do every time we come to the communion table:

- We confess our shame—that we took the life of the Good on the tree.
- And we believe God's Mercy—that He for-gave His life in the garden on the tree.
- We confess our shame—that we cannot save ourselves and we crucified Him.
- And we believe His Mercy—that He let us crucify Him that He might save us from ourselves.
- We confess our shame, and we receive Eternal Seed in our place of shame through the sacrament of communion in the eternal covenant of Grace. We are the Bride and He is the Groom and that's where good things come from.

We don't make Good, but we give birth to the Good.

God is Good. God is Love. And God is Free.

Years ago, when I lived in Golden and worked on Lookout Mountain, I used to get gas at the Conoco at the base of Highway 40, and I became casual friends with this young guy that worked behind the counter—nice kid, but not terribly bright.

This actually happened:

One day I went in to pay for the gas and there were balloons and streamers and pictures taped all over the wall...

And I said, *"Wow, quite a party. What happened?"*

He said, *"My wife had a baby."*

And I said something like, *"Congratulations! I didn't know she was pregnant."*

And he said, *"Dude, neither did we. The other night we were just chillin' watchin' TV, and she started getting these terrible pains in her belly and lady parts."*

It was the worst pain she'd ever felt. We rushed her to the Emergency Room.

I didn't know if she'd live or die. I figured it was a tumor or maybe cancer.

*The doctors examined her and said, 'It's not a tumor; it's a baby. **She's having a baby!**' And they transferred her from the emergency wing to the Maternity Wing."*

And now this proud young daddy stood at the counter showing me pictures of his new baby.

Imagine how things changed when they heard: *"Nothing's wrong, everything's right. You're having a baby."*

Now some of you are in anguish—you are being tormented.

- Maybe because you had a baby and lost a baby.
- Maybe because you wanted to have a baby and never could have a baby.

- Maybe because you had a baby that turned into a man that broke your heart.
- Maybe you're in anguish because you've tried to make Good and always seem to make bad; you tried to be fruitful but your life feels barren (desolate) and now you think it's over (See Isaiah 54).

Listen closely! Bride of Christ, About all that agony, anguish, and torment that you feel—this is what it means: ***You're having a baby!***

Communion

For on the night He was betrayed He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to for you. Take and eat, and 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." He is our Bridegroom and He is Eternal Seed, and He is the One who is being born.

I have learned that it's not just the mother who experiences anguish, it's also the one being born, maybe even more so. So, I think He would say this to you: "I know your anguish. Don't quit, but *do* surrender. Surrender to Love and you will give birth to Love, and you will always and forever love Love. I am Love, and do you see? I love you!

Lord God, we thank you that you are Love and your Word is the Word of Love—our Lord Jesus. You are making us in your image and your Word won't fail. And now, I pray that you would help us to trust you so that when we see you we won't run into the darkness and hide, but rather we will surrender to Love. We sacrifice our old selves and receive the Truth that is our New self. Lord, thank you that we will love Love, forever with you.

I am asking and we believe. Help our unbelief. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

This whole message has been about the topic, how do we change? Do you understand? It's not by learning stuff and then trying harder, and harder, and harder. It's by confession and repentance. It's what we do each time we come to worship at The Sanctuary... We confess our sins and learn God's Grace. But it's also hopefully what you do in relationships throughout the week. So, I hope that you have a small group or friends; some of you have marriages where you do the same thing... When you confess your sins to someone you love, you are sacrificing your ego and you're receiving mercy (hopefully) and the knowledge of who you truly are. See? That's how you change—confession and repentance... Believe the Gospel.

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.

24

What Hate Is For

What Hate is For

Revelation 11:19-12:17

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

June 10, 2018

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

Lord God, we ask that you would help us now to preach. And I really mean that when I say us—that it would be all of us including you, Lord God, because I can't do this. We can't comprehend your Word, but your Word can and does comprehend us. So, comprehend us, Jesus! In your name, we pray, Amen.

Message

I once read about two Tibetan boys who decided to go for a walk in 1941; they wanted to see the world. They wandered over the mountains into Soviet territory where they were conscripted by the Soviet army. They were then captured by the German army and conscripted into their auxiliary service. Then they were captured by the Americans, and the Americans could not figure out who they were because they did not speak German or Russian.

The Americans called in an expert in Asiatic languages who understood what they were saying and then relayed their incredible story to the Americans. When they were finished these stunned Americans asked these two boys, “Do you have any questions?” They only had one. They asked: “Why were all those people trying to kill each other?” Isn't that great?

Do you ever feel like that?

Every week there seems to be another mass shooting.

If I were one of those Tibetan boys, I'd want to know who's to blame?

I'd blame Joseph Stalin and the Russians, and then, with them, I'd blame Adolph Hitler and the Germans.

Of course, the Germans blamed the Treaty of Versailles and the Jews. Some Christians blame the Jews for crucifying Christ, but to be a Christian is to confess that your sins crucified the Christ.

If that's true . . . who could Christ blame?

He could blame everyone, accuse everyone, even the boys in Tibet... Couldn't He?ⁱ

Maybe we're all to blame . . . or maybe blame is to blame.

My friend Mike shared a fascinating little Ted Talk with me recently. In it, a Dr. of Philosophy, Gregg Caruso, points out that recent psychological and sociological studies

have correlated a belief in free will, with increased religiosity, punitiveness, and a desire to blame.

We've been talking about "free-will" and people mean different things by free-will, but I think most would agree that it's pretty hard to blame folks without some sort of belief in "free-will."

It's the belief that we know good and evil, and can choose the good in freedom . . . So, if people don't choose the good, they are to blame. Well, no one's to blame.

No one's to blame if no one has free will.

And yet if no one has free will, everyone seems to be no one...

I mean everyone seems "inhuman" and no one seems to be a person. (It's like we're not really human and more like robots.)

And yet, there are some people that we don't usually blame because we don't think they have "free-will," and those people are children. They can't freely choose the Good, for they don't yet have the knowledge of the Good or the evil. They don't have it, and yet, we expect them to get it, and so we call them people.

Jesus said we must become like little children to enter the Kingdom. Well, I was just saying, we all look for someone to blame.

Usually, when I point to Scripture that clearly states that God "makes all things new," someone will say, "What about free-will? What about Hitler?"

I understand what they're saying: "I need someone to blame", someone to accuse, someone to hate."

Scripture says that God hates. What is hate for?

Revelation 11:19-12:4

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it [katesthio: "consume by eating"].

Two sermons ago, we preached that the Ark of God's Covenant is a picture of His Judgment, which is His Will, and His Will is absolutely free. The Ark of the Covenant is the Free Will of God.

We defined “free will,” as a will that wills what it will without the restraint of any other will. And so a truly free will is the Undetermined Determiner, the Uncaused Cause, the Uncreated Creator, the Ground of All Being, I Am that I Am, the Lord God. God does what He wills and wills what He does absolutely. God is One. God is Love and the Ark of the Covenant is a revelation of Love. The Ark literally is the Law of God covered by the Mercy of God, and on top of the Ark is a Lamb standing as if it had been slain.

Jesus is the Free Will of God.
He is the “Word of God” that creates all things.
You can’t get freer than that! He creates reality.

And now this is the Revelation of the great mystery hidden for ages and generations: At the blast of the seventh trumpet, at the opening of the seventh seal, like the dawn of the Seventh Day of creation, the Ark is seen within the Temple. And God’s Temple is us.

That was two sermons ago . . .
And one sermon ago, we preached that we are the woman crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth to the Good Free-Will of God.
We can’t make good, but we must all give birth to the Good.
We can’t create Jesus, but we will give birth to Jesus.
Jesus said, “Whoever does the Will of God is my mother.”

The Good Free Will of God is Jesus.
And the Good Free Will of God in human flesh is His Body.

We are His Bride, His Mother, and even His Body begotten from above.

The dragon stands before the Woman so he can eat the baby.
The dragon is evil.

Saint Paul wrote, “*Hate [abhor] what is evil, and cleave to what is good.*”
That word “cleave” is used for communion in the sacrament of the covenant of marriage.

It seems that you can eat the Good . . . Or be married to the Good and even give birth to the Good. “*God alone is good,*” said Jesus.

The dragon tempted Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of “the Good” to make herself Good in the image of God.

There is one realization that’s helped me understand the Bible more than any other, except that everything means Jesus.

That realization is that the Garden of Eden, the Garden on Mt. Calvary where Christ was crucified, and the Garden at the end of the Revelation, are all one garden.

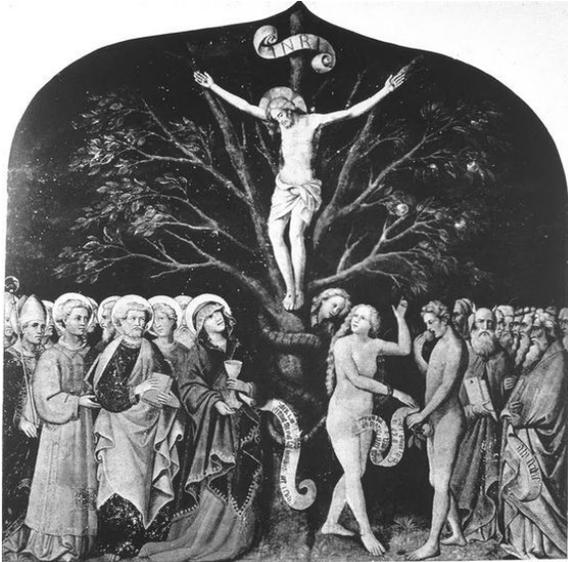


Figure 1 Image credit: Giovanni da Modena. Fresco from the Church of St. Petronio (Bologna, 1420)

And in the middle of each garden, there is a tree.
And on the tree hangs Jesus.

Jesus is the Good in flesh—like fruit. And Jesus is the Life.
Jesus is the *Eschatos* Adam, the ultimate Adam and we are the Woman, His Bride.

The devil tempted the woman, to take the life of the Good to make herself good. But when she took the Good, she made herself evil and lost her life.

The devil tempts us to take the Good and consume the Good to make ourselves good.
That's called sin.

- A thief sees the Good, so he just takes the good, hoping to make himself good, but he makes himself bad.
- An adulterer sees the Good, so he just takes the good, and makes himself bad and his heart dead.
- The Pharisees saw the Good and so took the life of the good, trying to make themselves good, but they made themselves evil and everything died. (The sun even went black and the earth shook.)
- Humanity saw the Good, consumed the Good, and we all died.
- Thieves, Harlots, Pharisees, and all humanity desire the Good, like you desire pizza.

The dragon wants to devour the baby and he tempts us all to do the same.

The devil tempts us to take the Good to make ourselves Good.
And Jesus wants us to receive the Good, for in this way the Good makes us Himself.

What are we doing when we come to the communion table?

#1) We're confessing our sin: We took knowledge of the good to try to make ourselves good; we crucified the Christ; we attempted to devour the baby.

I can't conceive of a more heinous sin than the one we confess when we come to this table. We confess: We took the Life of Christ.

#2) We believe God's Grace: He gave the Life of Christ.

What we took, God for-gave from the foundation of the world... We'll read in the next chapter (in Rev. 13:8), "The Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world."

I can't conceive of a more heinous sin...
And I can't conceive of a more glorious grace...

We took the life of the Good on a tree in space and time—that's evil.
And God gave the life of the Good on a tree from the foundation of the world—that's Good, that's Life.

So, at the cross, we gain the knowledge of Good and evil,
And at the cross, we come to choose the Good in freedom,
And that's Life—eternal Life.

At the cross, we die and rise with Jesus.
At the cross, we're made in the image of God and "*It is finished*".

It's an absolutely stunning picture, on which I hope you'll meditate forever and ever, and ever.

But for now, I hope you see that the dragon still tempts you to devour the Lamb. And the Lamb still romances you to surrender to Him.

The dragon tempts you with the knowledge of Good and evil—the law.
And The Good romances you with the Love that is Himself—body broken and blood shed.

The dragon tempts you to justify yourself.
And the Lamb wants you to see that you have been justified.

The dragon wants you to believe that you can choose to be chosen—that's pride.

And Jesus wants you to know that you have been chosen to choose—that's humility, gratitude, worship, love, and life.

The dragon tempts you to desecration.

And the Lord longs for you to agree with your own creation.

The dragon tempts you to devour the baby.
And the Father longs for you to receive the baby, surrender to the baby, marry the baby
and give birth to the babyⁱⁱⁱ

God wills that you would Love.
Satan wills that you would devour Love.^{iv}

Revelation 12:4-10

...And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron [Psalm 2 (v.9)], but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. [That's "the time of trouble" (Daniel 12:1) before "the time of the end."] Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil [that means accuser] and Satan [that means adversary or enemy], the deceiver of the whole world [oikoumeneiv: world of human habitation]—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. (Verse 8) "He was defeated"

Michael and his angels battle the dragon and his angels (Daniel 12:1). But the dragon and his angels are conquered and defeated by the Lamb, just as all of Scripture and the Revelation itself attest. (Remember we are watching the unrolling of the scroll because the Lamb has conquered and is standing upon the throne.

In Colossians Paul wrote: *"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him"* (Colossians 2:13-15).

The devil tempts us to take knowledge of the Good, to make ourselves Good, and so we make ourselves evil and then he begins to accuse, because if he accuses and we begin to believe his accusations we run from the lover of our souls and hide in fear and shame, fig leaves, and more law.

But at the cross, we see that what we have taken has always been given, for-given; we see that where sin increased grace abounded all the more; the cross reveals that all our debts are null and void.

Therefore, all of Satan's accusations of sin become declarations of Grace. Grace is the eternal reality, and sin is a temporal stage on which God's Grace is revealed.^v

In John 12:31-32, one week before He's crucified Jesus declares, "*Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth* (and he was speaking of being lifted up on his cross), *will draw all people to myself.*" "*Now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*"

The cross is the boundary of eternal truth and this temporal world of lies. And now is the point where eternity touches time. Our shame and fear can only exist in the illusion that we call space and time.^{vi}

"Now is the day of salvation."
"*Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come,*" says the loud voice in heaven.

Jesus is the Eternal Word the does not change . . .
But changes all of space and time . . .
He fills all of space and time . . .

He is the Word of God, the Logos of Love that binds all things together.
"This is the plan for the fullness of time," wrote Paul, to fill chaos with Logos.^{vii}

In most of the ancient cultures surrounding Israel there was a myth of a chaos monster, a sea monster, dragon or serpent that made war against everything good.

It was chaos that wanted to swallow the Logos.
At the cross, I believe that the dragon did just that.
I think this is my favorite depiction of what happened at the cross.

Clip from *Men in Black*

K: (Speaking to a giant ugly cockroach) *Eat me. Eat me!*
[The giant cockroach eats K—and his gun—in one gulp.]
J: *K! K!*
[K is shown swimming through the inside of the cockroach. The cockroach then turns mincingly to J.]
J: *You need to ease up outa my face 'for somethin' bad happen to you!*
[J hears K's gun.]
J: *Too late.*
[K shoots the giant cockroach from the inside. The cockroach is blown up; K and J are blown to the ground covered in the intestinal juices of the cockroach.]

At the cross, the temporal lie that is the devil swallowed eternal Truth who is the Christ.
Darkness swallowed the Light of the World.
Death swallowed the Life, and that was the death of death.
Chaos swallowed the Logos, and that was the desecration of desecration.
That was creation... and in particular the creation of you.

At the cross “It is finished”—Satan can no longer accuse before God.
Satan no longer has a leg to stand on . . . literally
For this is the judgment of God, *“Because you have done this upon your belly you shall go (That’s how the dragon became the snake) ...on your belly you will go ...and the seed of the woman will crush the head of the snake.”*

So the dragon has been defeated and yet we still battle, don’t we?

Revelation 12:10-17

*And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “**Now** the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they **have conquered** him [We’re already “seated in the heavenly places,” wrote Paul] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives [psyches] even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! [Do you dwell in heaven or on the earth?] But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that **his time is short!**” [The devil’s time is short. He does not rule over some endless kingdom called Hell.]*

*And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to [into] the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. [literally “the man.” In Hebrew, “*ha adam*”] But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle [“They that wait on the Lord, will mount up with wings like eagles,” Prophesied Isaiah] so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. [We preached a whole sermon on that. You can get it here: <http://relentless-love.org/sermons/take-a-hike/>] The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea. He’s going to call up the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness to help him do that.*

About twenty years ago, I prayed a crazy prayer. I remember it very clearly. I prayed, *“Jesus, I just want you to be more real to me. I’d even pray for people with demons if you’d just be more real to me.”*

Ten years before that, I’d seen a man delivered of a demon, at a Presbyterian church,

and it utterly terrified me, not just the demon, but the power of Jesus.

Well, I prayed the prayer, and soon after, God answered my prayer. I was introduced to a woman, who became a close friend, who, it turns out had been raised in a coven horrifically abused and ritually wed to Satan. For about seven years we dealt with a host of demons—I suspect that many are fallen angels—those stars that fall from the sky with the swipe of the dragon’s tale.

For seven years, we dealt with a host of demons...
And after that Susan and I met the dragon.

Since then, I’ve prayed for many people struggling with demons or fallen angels. In some, at times, the evil spirit will take over the person’s body, such that they’re not aware of what’s happening, and the spirit will use the body to speak their lies to me and whoever’s with me praying.

- It’s disconcerting for when it happens you realize that the lies they speak are lies that enter your thoughts every day.
They almost always convey the message that God doesn’t want to save or that God isn’t able to save—that “God is not Salvation” (“God is not *Yehashua*, *Yeshua*”).
- When you hear the lies from demons, you realize that you also hear them from people and that they didn’t simply come from those people.
- Worst of all, you realize that you are sometimes one of those people.

Paul wrote, *“We battle not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness.”*

On several occasions, I’ve prayed for people that have manifested evil spirits, and through a couple of those people, I met the dragon.

It’s so very hard to talk about because many people have never witnessed such things, and many people fake such things.

It’s so very hard to talk about because the evil is just so profoundly evil, and we all try to deny evil . . . and the evil one (By that, I mean we pretend that nothing’s there, and yet, in an amazing way there’s nothing there; we’ll get to that in a minute).

It’s so very hard to talk about, for the evil is so evil, and yet the people it infects can be so very good. Let’s not forget that it was to Saint Peter that Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan.”

It’s so very hard to talk about because I don’t really know what evil is, or who the evil one is, but I have a pretty good idea of what he is not.

It’s so very hard to talk about because like John says in verse 9, He is the deceiver of the whole world.

He is defeated, and yet, *“The whole world is under the power of the evil one,”* wrote John

in 1 John 5:19... *"We know that we are from God, but the whole world lies under the power of the evil one."*

It's really so very hard to talk about, and yet once I encountered the dragon, I must tell you that I found it much harder to accuse or blame people for their sins. And, I felt as if I had discovered what hatred is for.

This is a bit surprising to me, but I couldn't find a verse in Scripture where it says—in a good translation—that God will blame or accuse anyone.

He *will* judge everyone, cutting the evil from the Good.

He'll *judge* everyone, but it never says that He *accuses* or *blames* anyone.

Remember what Jesus said on the tree as He hung in the Garden on Calvary? He cried, *"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

If they don't know what they do, you can't blame them for choosing to do what they do.

And, who is they?

Well... It's you and me and, for sure, some Roman Centurions and some Pharisees. They knew they crucified a man, but they didn't know that this man was the Good in flesh and the Life Himself who flows through all of creation.

They didn't know... but then, they began to know, saying, *"Surely this man was the son of God..."*

You could say Jesus blamed them—if by that you mean that He said that they did what they did; they sinned. But He didn't blame them, as if they could've done differently . . . as if they had what we so loosely call "free will."

You could say the Lord blamed Eve and all her children—if by that you mean that He acknowledges that we did what we did; we sinned.

But He doesn't blame us, as if we could've done any differently, for we couldn't freely choose the Good if we didn't know the Good, or that the Word of God is Good. We didn't know the Good.

But now we do... or we are beginning to . . . we are beginning to see that God is Good. It was God we crucified. And . . . check this out:

God didn't accuse, but there is one that does accuse. He is the accuser.

He convinces us that we are free to choose . . . And then, we do choose...

And then he accuses us, and blames us, for having chosen . . . until we hide in fig leaves and shame from the lover of our souls...

That is our choice, but it's no longer free...

And in that state we are no longer free; we are slaves to sin and to the dragon.

"He is the deceiver of all humanity," wrote John.
And *"the whole world lies under the power of the evil one."*
That means that they are hostages

You don't blame the hostages; you don't compete with hostages; you aren't jealous of hostages, prisoners, and slaves.

You don't blame the hostages... and if you're free, you long to set them free.

In my experience, most "Christians" don't feel sorry for sinners, they actually accuse sinners, and are secretly jealous of sinners, which make them the worst of sinners . . . almost like the accuser himself in human flesh . . .

And so, we better long to set them free or we are not free; we too have become the flesh of the dragon.

"Beware when fighting the dragon, lest you become the dragon," wrote Nietzsche.

And yet, once I got a good look at the dragon, I found it much harder to accuse and blame people and I think I discovered what hatred is for . . .

In one of his novels, CS Lewis describes this strange exhilaration that overcame one of his characters when he found himself battling the un-man, which was his name for the devil.^{viii}

Paul wrote, "Hate what is evil..."
And John refers to the dragon as the evil one.

In John 8, Jesus says, "There is no truth in him... (and Jesus is the truth). When he lies he speaks of his own nature... He is the father of lies," says Jesus.

If there is no Truth in him. There is no Way, Truth or Life in Him; there is no breath of God in Him and it's the breath of God that makes us persons—people.

If that's the case, it's not like he was made good, and then chose to be bad.
Once I had my friend ask Jesus in a vision, "Is satan a somebody?"
She heard the Lord answer, "No he's not a somebody, he's a nobody."

Recently, he manifested in another friend and I said, "In the name of Jesus I send you to the void," and I heard him mutter, "I am the void." In prayer, Jesus had us take him back to "in the beginning" before there was space for him and time for him before God created the void, before God created the nothing in the midst of the something that is Himself.

In John 8, Jesus says, "The devil was a murderer from the beginning," which seems to mean that he was evil in the beginning.

So did God create evil?

That's like asking, "Did the Light create the dark?"
Light cannot make dark . . . unless the Light makes something other than itself. And then by shining on what it has made the Light casts a shadow.

Evil is the absence of the Good, like . . .
A shadow is the absence of Light, like . . .
A lie is the absence of the Truth, like . . .
Death is the absence of the Life, like . . .
I Am not is the absence of I Am, like . . .
Chaos is the absence of Logos, who is the Word of I am, through whom all things are created.

The dragon is the chaos monster—the presence of an absence of the will of God. The Early Church Fathers spoke of the ontological non-subsistence of evil. So, if the devil is nothing but evil... (a snake, dragon, or fallen angel is a creation of God, infected with evil)

...But, if the devil is nothing but evil, then ultimately, he is nothing at all.
So how does a nothing become such a horrifying something?

Many years ago praying for a friend, satan manifested to Susan and my friend in an absolutely terrifying form screaming threats of great violence. But as we prayed, he began to shrink and shrink and shrink... until he was a little man standing on the coffee table talking jibberish like a cartoon. At that Jesus entered the room, picked him up, put him in his pocket, turned, smiled and said, "With fear, you put flesh on the evil one."

Fear is faith in the devil.
But faith in God casts out fear until there is no space and time for the devil.

The devil is the presence of the absence of the Will of God—The Will of God, which creates all things. Evil is that which God does not will. And yet, God *does* will that you would encounter evil, so you might forever hate the evil and choose the Good—in freedom.

In other words, God is using the devil, in time, to create us in His Image for all eternity. That's the image of Love. God is Love, and Free Will is Love. You are a child predestined for freedom—the freedom of your Father, who as Karl Barth defines Him is "The One who loves in freedom." He is the One who does what He is and is what He does—Love.

You will Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and you will crush the head of the ancient dragon in the process.
That's what hate is for...

The Good is everything, and the evil is nothing.
You will cleave to the Good, and abhor the nothing.^{ix}
You will hate desecration and be forever grateful for all creation, in particular—your true

self.

And so, what is hate for? Nothing. You are to hate the nothing and fall in love with the Something—I am that I am, God. You hate the nothing by discounting it. You hate a lie by not believing it. You hate the nothing by loving the Something.

At the end of the Revelation, the voice from the throne says, “Behold I make all things new... All things!” You are a thing, but I doubt that satan is a thing...

I suspect he’s more of a no thing . . . and so there’s nothing to make new. And if he is a thing, he will no longer be the accuser, for in eternity everything is filled with God, and God is Love, and Love is Free. God is Grace. God is Reality.

God is Light and the devil is shadow. Sometimes I wonder if he’s the shadow cast by the creation of Adam. For God is Light and when we stand before him, we each must cast a shadow.

Well anyway, how do we battle the dragon?

Clip from the deleted scenes of *Lord of the Rings*

[An elf lord, Galadriel confronts Sauron, servant of Morgoth]
Galadriel: *You have no power here . . .*
Galadriel: *Servant of Morgoth.*
Galadriel: *You are nameless, faceless, darkness. Go back to the void from whence you came.*

Sometimes in my experience, it actually does look something like that. But in reality, from the perspective of eternity, I suspect it always looks something more like this:

[Video with children’s fearful responses to their shadows or the shadows of others]

The serpent battles the woman with a river that issues from his mouth. He is the father of lies and the river is a river of lies. And all the lies are based on His original lie: “You can take knowledge of the Good, and freely choose the Good, and thus make yourself Good. You can make yourself the Uncaused Cause, the Uncreated Creator, the Lord God.” That’s a lie.

In John 8, Jesus tells the Pharisees that they are of their father the devil. Well, the devil can’t father children (not human children), he can only father false children—that is lies . . . He is the father of lies...

He is the father of self-righteousness, that is, your ego...

- It’s your ego in which you are imprisoned in fear and shame...

- It's your ego that causes you to compete with your neighbor, blame and accuse your neighbor, and then accuse yourself...
- It's your ego that keeps you in bondage to the fear of death; for you think you have to create the Life . . . when Jesus is the Life.
- It's your ego that thinks it creates the Good, who is God.

Satan will tell you that your ego is free will, when in fact it's the bondage of the will . . . and you have been enslaved.

Little children can't create themselves; they can only create a shadow of themselves . . . We can't create ourselves only a shadow of ourselves, but the dragon tells us that this shadow is our selves. When you will what God does not will, you create a false self. And then the accuser tells you that false self is your real self. And terrified of that false self, you try to save your self, which is only more self—more false self—the product of the dragon.

Like Jesus told us, "With fear you put flesh on the evil one."
I think that maybe our own flesh... my own flesh and your own flesh become dragon flesh. And then we have to become "undragoned."

Why are all these people (Russians, Germans, Americans, and Jews) running around trying to kill each other? They're all scared of the shadow— especially their own shadow. They are beings, scared of non-being, for they think they must create themselves, save themselves, and justify themselves.

Little children can't create themselves; they can only create a shadow of themselves. In order to truly see themselves, they must turn around and look into the light. God is Light.

Our Father is Light and Scripture says we are the apple of His eye. In Hebrew, the *ishown* of his eye, literally the little man reflected in His eye. It's where we get the word pupil. You are the pupil, the little man in His eye. To know who you truly are, you must look into the eyes of your Father. "*If you've seen me, you've seen the Father,*" said Jesus.

And He prayed, "*Father the love you've given me, you've given to them.*"
The Father looks at you in the very same way He looks at Jesus.

Jesus is God's Judgment of you.
And so whatever is not true of Jesus is not true of you—it's a lie; it's sin; it's your shadow.

So how do you battle a lie? You simply see it for what it is . . . or should I say, what it isn't!? How do you battle sin? "Reckon yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus."

And how do you battle the shadow? You believe the Judgment of God.
You take God seriously and stop taking the dragon so seriously.
You expose the shadow to the light.

And how do we conquer the shadow? We become the light.
We believe what we truly are.

God is Light. Jesus is the Light of the World. And we are His Temple.
It's what John saw at the start of his vision; we are lampstands that shine the light. If you shine the light, you no longer cast a shadow.

And it's what John sees at the end of his vision. He sees the New Jerusalem that is the temple and the Bride. She is coming down from God. She's literally radiant. The Glory of God is her radiance; her light is the Lamb.

You were once darkness, wrote Paul (Eph. 5:8).
But now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.
You were once darkness. Now you are light.

For on the night the Lamb was betrayed in old Jerusalem. The Light of the World took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body, take and eat."
And He took the cup saying, "This is my blood of the covenant, take and drink."

This is how He conquers the dragon: He says, "Eat me."
In the morning, the dragon tempted humanity to take Christ's life.
And yet, the night before, Christ had *already given* His life to us.
We consumed the Life into our body of death.
We ingested the Truth into our body of lies.
We swallowed the Light into our darkness.
And Christ rose from the dead destroying the dragon and setting us free.

Another way to say that is that we overcome by the blood of the Lamb,
The word of our testimony, loving not our lives even unto death.

There will be more on that in the next message.
But for now, come to the table, hate what is evil and cleave to the Good.
Bride of Christ, in Jesus' name, believe the Gospel! Amen.

Prayer

"And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, loving not their lives (their "psyche" even unto death). You see? I think your psyche—the thing you call your "life" is your shadow, your ego. So, if you've been staring at your shadow, you've probably been thinking things like this: "Just look at myself. Wow! I'm pretty great! I'm better than Vince or Ted. I'm really something!" Then it will switch and you'll think: "No! I'm a piece of crap. Can't do this. I ought to just quit. So, if you've been staring at your shadow, turn around and look at the face of your Father. See your reflection. You are the righteousness of Christ, and I think this is what He is saying, "Don't you understand? I forgive you! In fact, I have forgiven you from the moment I thought of you, for you are my beloved son, you are my beloved daughter. I bled for you. Do you see

that my blood fills you. Let it be a testimony to you and the whole world that I love you! Walk in my Light; that's how you overcome the shadow. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel!

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.

Endnotes

ⁱ In 1960 Adolph Eichman was captured in Argentina, then tried in Jerusalem. A small haggard man named Yehiel Dinur, who had escaped death in Auschwitz was called to testify.

When he made eye contact with Eichman, he began to shout and sob, until he collapsed unconscious on the floor.

Later he was asked what horrifying thought had caused such a reaction.

Was he horrified at the sight of such a monster?

Dinur answered: "I was afraid about myself . . . I saw that I am capable to do this . . . exactly like he."

He wasn't afraid of monsters. He was afraid that he was a monster—a dragon.

ⁱⁱ Even Dr Carusso, who doesn't believe in free-will says we "shouldn't believe in free-will," which just sounds like blaming blamers which is just more blame...

After 9-11, or WWII, or Auschwitz, don't you long for someone to blame?

ⁱⁱⁱ His will in this world, which is you in His own image, the image of Love—many persons in one substance the communion of Love.

^{iv} CS Lewis wrote: "It is for this that Satan desires all his own followers and all the sons of Eve and all the host of Heaven. His dream is of the day when all shall be inside him and all that says "I" can say it only through him. This, I surmise, is the bloated-spider parody, the only imitation he can understand, of the unfathomed bounty whereby God turns tools into servants and servants into sons, so that they may be at last reunited to Him in the perfect freedom of love offered from the height of the utter individualities which he has liberated them to be."

^v In Luke 10:18, when the seventy-two disciples come back thrilled that they have authority over demons, Jesus says, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."

^{vi} Grace is the eternal reality that transforms space and time when we come to believe.

^{vii} In 395 A.D. Gregory of Nyssa said that "Christ's divinity was hidden under His humanity like a fish hook under bait, (The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot comprehend it," wrote John). "Christ's divinity was hidden under His humanity like a fish hook under bait, and Satan, like a ravenous fish, gulped it down."

^{viii} Then an experience that perhaps no good man can ever have in our world came over him--a torrent of perfectly unmixed and lawful hatred. The energy of hating, never before felt without some guilt, without some dim knowledge that he was failing fully to distinguish the sinner from the sin, rose into his arms and legs til he felt that they were pillars of burning blood. What was before him appeared no longer a creature of corrupted will. It was corruption itself to which will was attached only as an instrument... It is perhaps difficult to understand why this filled Ransom not with horror but with a kind of joy. The joy came from finding at last what hatred was made for. As a boy with an axe rejoices on finding a tree, or a boy with a box of coloured chalks rejoices on finding a pile of perfectly white paper, so he rejoiced in the perfect congruity between his emotion and its object.

^{ix} On this shadow side the creature is contiguous to nothingness, for this "not" is at once the expression and frontier of the positive will, election and activity of God. When the creature crosses the frontier from the one side, and it is invaded from the other, nothingness achieves actuality in the creaturely world. . . .

Nothingness is that which God does not will. . . .

This being which is alien and adverse to grace and therefore without it, is that of nothingness. . . . And this is evil in the Christian sense, namely, what is alien and adverse to grace, and therefore with it. . . . The grace of God is the basis and norm of

all being, the source and criterion of all good. Measured by this standard, as the negation of God's grace, nothingness is intrinsically evil. . . .

He knows nothingness. He knows that which He did not elect or will as the Creator. He knows chaos and its terror. He knows its advantage over His creature. He know how inevitably it imperils His creature. Yet He is Lord over that which imperils His creature. Against Him, nothingness has no power of its own. And He has sworn fidelity to His threatened creature. In creating it He has covenanted and identified Himself with it. . . .

And therefore it is He as the first and true and indeed the only man, as the Helper who really takes the creature's place, lifting from it all its need and labour and problem and placing them upon Himself, as the Warrior who assumes the full responsibility of a substitute and suffers and does everything on its behalf. In the light of this merciful action of God, the arrogant delusion of the creature that it is called and qualified to help and save and maintain itself in its infinite peril is shown to be evil as well as foolish and unnecessary. . . .

As God takes action on its behalf, the creature itself is summoned and empowered. It has no arrogant illusion as to its own authority or competence. It really trusts in God, perseveres in His covenant and chooses His help as the only effective good. . . .

If our thought is conditioned by the obedience of Christian faith, we have only one freedom, namely, to regard nothingness as finally destroyed and to make a new beginning in remembrance of the One who has destroyed it.

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, p. 137-138, 140-141, 143, 145-146

25

How to Conquer the Dragon

How to Conquer the Dragon

Revelation 12:7-13:18

#25 in our series "The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation"

June 17, 2018

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

Thank you Father, for this opportunity to speak about you. Father, I pray that you would help us to preach. In preaching through the Revelation, we see that it is an incredible picture of your love for us. Some of us might have missed parts of this series, and so I pray you would help us to connect the dots. And for those who are having trouble connecting the dots, I pray that you would help them to know that Jesus is the one who connects all the dots and so they don't have to worry about it. I pray that we all would just look at the dots and that your Spirit would connect them. Thank you that the picture you are painting is Jesus. So, Lord God, we trust you to reveal yourself to us, in His name, Amen.

Message

Last week, I began the sermon by talking about two Tibetan boys who didn't know Russian, German or English. They went for a walk in 1941 and ended up conscripted by Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Army, and then conscripted by Adolph Hitler and the German Army, and then finally captured by the Americans, who heard their story through a translator. When they were done listening to their story, they asked the boys: "Do you have any questions?" The boys only had one question: "Why were all those people trying to kill each other?"

I love that story because I think that story's about me; I think that story's kind of about all of us. Maybe you've been asking, "Why are all these people trying to kill each other?"

I've lost track of all the school shootings... There have been at least ten so far this year, including eight dead at Santa Fe High School in Texas, and seventeen dead at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High school in Florida. That's just school shootings, let alone church shootings like the twenty-six that died at the Baptist church in Southerland Springs Texas six months ago.

Recently in staff, we asked the question, "Should we develop a plan for an active shooter at the Sanctuary?" Fortunately, we're a small church: "*So listen all potential shooters, I think we make a bad target. Check out the Catholics down the street.*"

... But still the question is a bit disturbing . . . as may well be my response..

For me, it all began down the street at Columbine High School on Hitler's birthday in 1999... When Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold murdered thirteen people and then murdered themselves. (And you know? Far more kids die from shooting themselves than getting shot.)

One of my friends and parishioners, Rich Long, was the teacher that drug Dave Sanders down the hall after he'd been shot. He told me, Peter, I could just feel the presence of evil. Later, he told me a story about the tangible presence of Jesus, but he also felt evil.

Last week, we spoke of how evil is like a nothing that becomes a terrible something. This is something to ponder, but maybe nothing really is nothing, until we notice the nothing, name the nothing, and fear the nothing, and then make it a terrible something. As Jesus told my wife, "With fear you put flesh on the evil one." Perhaps, that flesh is our own flesh.

Well anyway, it's not a bad question:
"Why are all those people trying to kill each other?"
And then, *"What do we do about it?"*

Last week, in answer to that first question, I showed a video.
I hope it doesn't seem irreverent, 'cause I think it may be the right answer.
This is that video:

[Video with children's fearful responses to their shadows or the shadows of others]

We're all terrified of the shadow, and in particular our own shadow.

A little child cannot make himself...
And yet, he can make a shadow by blocking the Light.

I think the lie of the devil is basically this: "You are your shadow."
In other words, "You are the choices you've made, and the deeds that you've done."

In the Garden he tempted the woman to eat from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, saying, "Dying you won't die and you will be like God." It was very subtle lie, which we continue to hear every day.

It sounds something like this: "Something's wrong with you, so take knowledge of the Good, so you can choose the Good, and make yourself Good in the image of God. "Save yourself, redeem yourself, justify yourself, and create yourself."

So, we make our choices and do our deeds, and then, think *that* is who we are.
If we compare ourselves to others—at that point, it can make us feel proud.
And yet, over time, it will fill us with shame and then terror, for we realize that what we have made is nothing...

Not Good, but the absence of Good.
Not Life, but the absence of Life.
Not I Am, but I am not.

Not Light, but a shadow.

The devil will then say,
“Look! You’re nothing; you better make that nothing into something.”
“Look! You’re evil, you better take the good to make yourself good.”
“Look! You’re dead, you better take the Life to make yourself alive.”
Jesus is the Life, and Jesus is the Good in flesh hanging on a tree in a garden.

So why are all those people trying to kill each other?
Well... They’re trying to take the Life to make themselves alive.

And why are all those people killing themselves?
I think they’re getting “psyched out.”

They look at their shadow, and think “that’s myself,” I better destroy myself, but you see that’s only more self, more psyche, a deeper darkness . . . It’s choosing to fight the shadow with more shadow.

Sometimes we hide from our shadow in more shadow. Did you notice the little boy in the video that ran from his shadow and found he could hide from his shadow in more shadow?

[Image of a child hiding in a shadow.]

If you’re greedy, surround yourself with greed and you’ll feel less greedy. If you do it long enough, your whole world will go black. People who run from the Light hide in Hades (often translated Hell).

Even now we exist in the land of the “shadow of death,” the shadow that *is* death (Matt. 4:16). I don’t think that means death casts a shadow. I think it means death is a and death of death is Light.

I think Jesus, John, and Paul referred to this shadow self as the false self—the psyche. That’s a Greek word that gets translated as soul and sometimes life.

You have a soul (a psyche) but Jesus is the Life (the *zoe*, in Greek). According to the book of Hebrews, that life is indestructible... (7:11). But your psyche can be lost and found, destroyed—reduced to dust, and redeemed—re-made. It’s like your mental and emotional map with which you ascribe meaning to your experiences. It’s a Greek word that translates the Hebrew word *nephesh*.

The *nephesh* is like a container for the Life. In the beginning, God breathed into the dust and *ha adam* became a *nephesh*, a psyche, a living soul.

So, the psyche is something God originally makes of dust.
But at the fall on the sixth day of creation, we took over construction at the advice of the devil . . . and now the psyche we make is false . . . a false self.

Paul refers to the false self as the *old man* or *false Adam*. (Eph. 4:22,25; Col. 3:9; Rom. 6:6).

It's no longer a container for Life because we consumed it and killed it.

It's no longer a container for Life, but death,

No longer a vessel of truth but lies,

No longer a temple of light, but a house of darkness—a shadow.

Jesus said, "*The ruler of this world is coming, but he has no place in me*" (John 14:30).

Paul wrote, "*Give no place to the devil*" (Eph. 4:27).

But you see... we have given place, an empty place, to the devil... in our psyche.

That's how we put flesh on the evil one... we put our flesh on the dragon.

Have you ever thought about your flesh? ... I mean really?

Because it's a bit terrifying.

In one way, it's so amazing, as if it's an imprint of the very Glory of God...

And yet, in another way it's utterly broken, depraved, and terrifying.

In Scripture, the problem with flesh is not so much that it's physical, but that it's almost entirely self-centered. Except for in a few fascinating instances, your flesh knows only it's own pain and pleasure. And, this is the shocker, your flesh literally grows by eating life and excreting death... And Jesus said, "I am the Life."

Well . . . that's just something to ponder tonight when you go to bed . . .

Try not to get psyched out!

So, I was just saying satan tempts us to believe we are our shadow.

Then he gets us all anxious about our shadow.

Then he tries to get us to fix our shadow by consuming the Life, which only makes more death, more shadow, more dragon flesh, more psyche. He's trying to psyche us out.

When I used to play baseball, I'd get so worried about the game that I couldn't play the game. I'd get psyched out. Sometimes I get so worried about my life, I can't live my life. I get psyched out.

Your Father is Light. You cast a shadow.

The devil will tell you that you are your shadow.

But your Father wants you to turn around and see yourself reflected in His eyes.

When my children were little they lived in the light of my eyes.

They believed they were good because I saw them as good, and yet they didn't really know what the good was; they just enjoyed being themselves, and that was so good. If you're a parent you may remember something like that with your own children.

But in each of them, there came a day when they gained knowledge of the good, and they started trying to make themselves good. And ironically, it was like they covered up their goodness with badness; they covered it with self-consciousness, pride, fear, and shame.

That was the day they started building one of these?

[Image of a girl inside a cage shaped like a woman, by Igor Morski]

. . . An ego.

Remember these pictures?

[Image of a boy inside a cage shaped like a man, by Igor Morski]

One day when my daughter Elizabeth must've been about six, I took her for her annual physical. The young doctor had her sit on the examination table. I remember that she was smiling at me and swinging her legs back and forth. The doctor began with a question: "So Elizabeth, what do you like about yourself?" Without skipping a beat, looking at me, she smiled and said, "I like being with my daddy."

This young lady doctor reacted with a speed and intensity that betrayed a wound buried in her past. When Elizabeth said, "I like being with my daddy," she said, "NO... What do you like about *yourself*?"

Elizabeth looked at her as if to say, "Well, I just told you..." The doctor clarified, "I mean, what do you like about yourself... like that, you know how to sing or that you run fast?" And Elizabeth said, "Well, I guess I like that I can run fast."

I remember wanting to scream . . .

"Get behind me satan."

"How dare you tell my daughter that she is her decisions and deeds!"

"How dare you suggest that she like herself because she can beat her neighbor in a foot race!"

"How dare you tell my daughter that she is her flesh... One day her legs will fail; her flesh will fail; one day her flesh will turn to dust and blow away...!"

"But love is eternal, and she will always be my beloved in whom I delight."

"How dare you tell her that she is her shadow!"

I remember feeling so angry with that doctor. And then I had to remember that she had also been a little girl—a little girl that may very well have been cursed and abused by her father, a little girl that didn't know that God is her father and God is Good.

Satan wants us to believe that we are the decisions we have made and the deeds that we have done.

Our Father in Heaven wants us to turn and see, that we are the decision *He* has made and the deed that *He* has done.

When we see and believe that we are His Beloved One, we will choose the Good in freedom, and we will do the deeds, which God prepared beforehand that we would walk in them; we will do the will of God; we will love God and our neighbor in Freedom.

Now the Revelation: In chapter 12 we meet a woman giving birth to a baby who is the Will of God or the Judgment of God. The woman is us, and the Will of God in flesh is Jesus.

Revelation 12:4 *“[The dragon] stood before the woman, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.”* The dragon wants to eat the Baby. And the dragon tempts us to eat the baby—the dragon is evil.

Next, we meet Michael and his angels who go to war with the dragon and his angels.

Michael means, “Who is like God?”

Michael is “the Archangel” (in Jude 9), which means “chief of the angels,”

Which sounds like the “Commander of the Lord’s Army, the Angel of Yahweh.”

So, several scholars argue that Michael is a depiction of Jesus.

And that would make some sense, for we’ve learned that the whole revelation is like a picture of the conquest of Jericho on steroids . . .

And the Commander of the Lord’s Army plays a critical role. The Commander of the Lord’s Army, wasn’t on the side of the Canaanites or the Israelites, but He was against the wall that separated them.

A few weeks ago, we talked of how the dragon tempts us to build walls around our souls in order to protect ourselves from other self-centered souls.

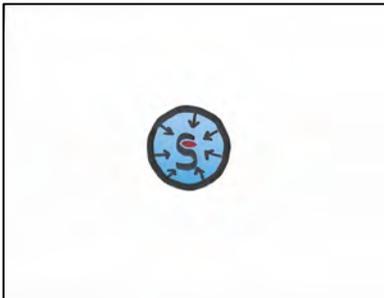


Figure 1 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

And we talked about how groups of self-centered souls will form covenants of self-interest to protect themselves from other groups of self-centered souls.

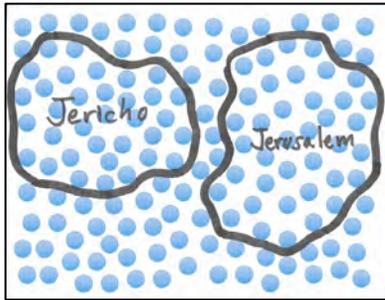


Figure 2 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

We call them nations, churches, and even economies . . .
That is politics, religion, and business.

Well, The Commander of the Lord's Army hates all the walls, and he especially hated the walls of Jericho, for on one side of those walls was his super great Jewish grandfather . . . Salmon. And on the other side, his super great Canaanite grandmother . . . named Rahab.

I've never known quite what to do with this, but Rahab means dragon.

You see? I think she's a picture of us.
She's been dragoned; she's like the Bride of Christ trapped in dragon flesh and acting like a harlot. She's been dragoned and she's about to be un-dragoned by the Commander of the Lord's Army.

Well anyway, the dragon tempts us to think that we are our shadow.
... And he tempts us to hide in that shadow, which becomes a prison, which also becomes a place for him.
... It's a place which scripture refers to as death and Hades (often translated Hell)
... Your ego is an outpost of Hell.
... Your ego is your shadow and as long as you seek to save it, you lose your life—the Life, and trap yourself in death.

"He who seeks to save his psyche will lose it, but he who loses it for my sake and the gospel will find it," said Jesus—Commander of the Lord's Army... and our Husband.

Revelation 12:7-16

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world

[oikoumenein like “economy,” the inhabited world the world of humanity]—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives [their psychen—that’s their psyches] even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.

The river is a river of lies all based on one lie.
And that lie is that you are your own creator.
It’s a lie that holds sway in the *oikoumenein*—the world of men.
But it’s a lie that’s swallowed by the Creation, the earth, which God created.

There are times when I get utterly terrified by the river of lies and the sight of my own shadow—I get psyched out thinking: “I can’t justify myself, save myself or make myself into the person that I should be.” And then I go for a walk in the mountains and I remember, “*Hey! I’m not my own maker; I’m not my own savior; I can’t justify me—but my Creator has justified me... and then I’m free, free to be me—the true me.*”

Revelation 12:16- 3:1

...The earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

And I saw a beast (therion) rising out of the sea...

The word translated beast means wild, ravenous, and untamed animal.

A beast sees the Good and takes the Good.

A beast sees the Life and just eats the Life.

The dragon is like a beast; it sees Jesus and waits to devour Jesus; it wants to eat the baby.

You may remember that in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, Eustace gets fascinated by a

dragon, thinks he did battle with the dragon, but in fact becomes a dragon and before he knows it, and to his horror, he's already eaten half the dead dragon.

Lewis comments:

"And there is nothing a dragon likes so well as fresh dragon. That is why you so seldom find more than one dragon in the same country."

In the introduction to the *Screwtape Letters* he writes:

I feign that devils can, in a spiritual sense, eat one another; and us. Even in human life we have seen the passion to dominate, almost to digest, one's fellow... On Earth this desire is often called "love." In Hell I feign that they recognise it as hunger... There, I suggest, the stronger spirit... can really and irrevocably suck the weaker into itself and permanently gorge its own being on the weaker's outraged individuality... It is for this that Satan desires all his own followers and all the sons of Eve and all the host of Heaven. His dream is of the day when all shall be inside him and all that says "I" can say it only through him. This, I surmise, is... the only imitation he can understand, of that unfathomed bounty whereby God turns tools into servants and servants into sons, so that they may be at last reunited to Him in perfect freedom of a love offered from the height of the utter individualities which he has liberated them to be.

That's an amazing quote, but I hope you see:

God does not desire to eat us...

At least not until we first hear Him say, "eat me."

God is not a beast.

He is the slaughtered Lamb standing on the Judgment Seat of God.

In the *Chronicles of Narnia*, Eustace can't un-dragon himself for that's just more dragon—more self. Eustace has to be un-dragoned by a lion that chooses to be a lamb. He is the Word of God that cuts like a knife separating soul from spirit, that's *psyche* from *pneuma*—the breath of God.

Well, anyway, in Revelation 12 the earth swallows the devil's lie, so now, to help him lie, the devil is calling up the beasts.

They are the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness.

They are politics and religion, and soon we'll meet the harlot—an economy of consumption.

They are all antichrists . . . antichrist means imitation Christ.

And who hasn't looked to government, religion or business to save them . . . or at least help them save themselves?

Revelation 13:1-8

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. One

of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. [Get that? "it was allowed"—by who? Who else but God? "it was allowed to make war on the saints and conquer them."] And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

Let me pause and point out what we just read...

"All who dwell on earth will worship it..."

- In verse 16 we'll read that another beast causes all to worship and be marked.
- In 14:9, we discover that all of these worshipers of the beast, who are all who dwell on the earth, will have no rest and be tormented by fire and *theion*, the presence of God.
- In Chapter 19 The Commander of God's Army, the Word of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus comes with a sword issuing from His mouth and a robe dipped in blood having just trampled the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God. In verse 18 an angel calls to the birds saying, "Come eat the flesh of all men." *All* men, not *some* men, or not the men left after some pre-tribulation rapture, but *all*.

All must have their flesh cut away and then consumed by fire.

You see your flesh, your psyche, your old man is a far bigger problem than you ever dreamed and your sin is far more heinous than you ever imagined.

And this is my problem with most liberals—they don't think we really need a savior for most of us don't really need to be saved.

And this is also my problem with most conservatives—they think they can save themselves with a policy, program, or a little will power.

They think they are the savior and capable of saving themselves and they aren't even aware that this idea is the very definition of sin.

Solomon wrote, *"I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them..."* not to see if some of them are beasts and others are not. He writes: *"God is testing them that they may see that they are but beasts."* Your problem is that you are a butt beast and you can't fix it. And you can't fix you with you. You are the problem.

Your sin is greater than you ever imagined . . .

But God's grace is more glorious than you could possibly dream.

John writes, "All will worship the beast . . . everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain."

OK? Wow! So, whose name has Jesus written in His book?

In John 3:35 Jesus says, "*The Father loves the son and has given all things into his hands.*"

Are you a thing? A shadow is not a thing, but I think you're a thing.

John 6:37 Jesus says, "*All that the Father gives me will come to me and he who comes to me I will never cast out.*" ¹ WOW!

All are given to the son and predestined for eternal life. So then, where are most people? They're enslaved in their own bodies of sin, their flesh, their pride, shame and fear, their psyches . . . they've been psyched out.

They're hanging on to their life, so they can no longer live life.

They're dead in their trespasses and sins on earth and the un-circumcision of their flesh.

They are the dead, whether walking or hiding from God in their graves.

In Revelation 20, "the dead" stand before the throne and they are judged by their deeds written in the books... the books of deeds... (This world is full of these books). But the living have already been judged, for their names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life from the foundation of the world.

"The dead" think that they are the choices *they* have made and the deeds they have done. The living, know that they are the choice *God* has made and the deed that He has done.

There is no way that I can understand the Bible, Jesus, John, and Paul except to believe what they clearly say, and that is that I have an old man or psyche or self that must be surrendered and destroyed . . . a man of dust that must return to dust.

And I have a new man, or psyche, or self that is being born out of the old sack of dust that I thought was "me"... That man is the heavenly man. "*Just as we have born the image of the man of dust, so shall we bear the image of the man of heaven,*" writes Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 (1 Cor. 15:49).

In Revelation 13:8-18, John continues:

...all who dwell on earth will worship [the Beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who

¹ All things will come to him, but no-things will not. Lies will not, the false self will not, those that are of their father the devil—the father of lies—will not. The tares will not, but the wheat will. Your false self will not, but your true self will.

was slain.” [or, more literally translated, “whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (NKJV)]

If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

Understand? This one looks like Jesus and talks like the devil.

Have you ever been listening to a sermon, when you realize the preacher isn't preaching, "God is salvation," which in a word is Jesus?

But instead, he or she is preaching "the government is salvation," or "our church is salvation," or "you and your giving are salvation?"

This beast is like that preacher. "*Beware when fighting the dragon lest you become the dragon,*" wrote Nietzsche.

Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man [or "it is a human number"], and his number is 666.

A "human number" would imply that the other numbers in Revelation are not merely human . . . like 1,260, 42, 3 ½ and 7.

But *this* number we are invited to calculate and it was common in that day to do so. There's a wall in Pompeii where you can read the graffiti from 79 AD. One of the things written on the wall says: "*I love her whose number is 545.*"

At that time, every letter in an alphabet was assigned a numeric value and then added together to get the number of the name. "666" is the number of the beast, but some

ancient manuscripts record “616.” Emperor Nero’s name is spelled two ways in Hebrew. In Hebrew one way adds up to 666; the other way adds up to 616.

That and a slough of other things (that hopefully we can talk about next week), point to Emperor Nero. In chapter 17 an angel tells John that the seven heads are seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and one is yet to come. That means the beast is “alive” and kicking at the time of the Revelation. However, it’s not just at the time of the Revelation.

The beast clearly refers to Babylon, Persia, and Greece, as well as Rome—the lion, the bear, the leopard and the heads with ten horns—the beast that rises from the sea in Daniel 7, written 500 years before the Revelation . . . ²

My point is that the beast is *political power* that manifests in different forms in every age. The second beast that preaches the first beast is *religious power*. It just looks like a lamb, but if you listen, you realize it talks like a beast.

The beasts don’t just attack the people of God outright the way Emperor Nero persecuted the early church and used both pagan and Jewish religion to do so. The beasts don’t just attack; they tempt you to worship. They teach you that politics is salvation and religion is salvation. And the Harlot will teach you that business is salvation while . . . Scripture declares over and over that God alone is salvation.

I find it utterly, horrifically, and tragically ironic that some will use the Revelation to scare people, and then ask those people, “How do we conquer the beast?” And then tell those people that they must support some earthly government like Israel or join some religious program and give money to their cause.

You cannot conquer the beast with politics and religion.
The beast *is* politics and religion.

Both beasts will tell you that you are the choices you make and the deeds you do, so if you take their knowledge of the good it will help you make those choices and do those deeds; it will help you conquer the dragon and his beasts, but they are the beasts under the control of the dragon.

The beasts will always appeal to your ego, even if they ask you to sacrifice your ego... You do it to make yourself good, which is your ego. The Lamb will not appeal to your ego; I think He already sacrificed your ego on a tree in a garden at the foundation of the world.

² The beast gets destroyed by “the ancient of days” (Dan. 7:9), “one like a son of man” (Dan. 7:14), a “rock hewn not with human hands” (Dan. 2:45) and even “Michael the Arch Angel.” (Daniel 12:1).

The Lamb is the Word of your Father. He is the Decision of your Father and the Way the Father makes you in His Image.

When you see Him you will know:

You are not the choices you have made, but the choice that God has made.
You are not the deeds that *you* do, but the deed that *God* has done.

The Lamb is the Light and when He sits on the throne in the temple of your soul, you will no longer cast a shadow; you will be un-dragoned. You will be what you are eternally and forever are: the Image of God your Father.

So anyway, all these people are shooting and killing each other because they believed the dragon.

So, How do we conquer the dragon?

I can reduce it to theological and philosophical Maxims,
But it's best if you get the picture, or allow the picture to get you.
It's best if you look to the throne and see the lamb.

John writes: *They have conquered him by the blood of the lamb, and the word of their testimony, loving not their lives—their psyches—even unto death.*

Rachel Scott was the first student killed at Columbine High school. The name Rachel means female sheep or lamb. That year in the school talent show she performed a dance to the song "*Watch the Lamb*" ...It's a rather sappy song, but does tell how we conquer the dragon.

On the throne is a lamb standing as if it had been slain.³
He is the Life and the Life is in the blood and the blood forms a river.
You don't need to *take* the life, for He is constantly *giving* you His life.
You see? Your life is His life flowing through you.
You surrender and receive it constantly. You are His Body.
If you try to possess the life, you damn the life and damn yourself . . . you die.

When Eve took the Life of the Good on the tree in the garden, she died.
I don't think death was a penalty for her sin; death is her sin.

And when God said you are dust and to dust you will return; I don't think that was simply a curse, it was a blessing . . . It was a promise, "You will lose your psyche and find it."

"We conquer by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony," wrote John.

³ The book of Hebrew calls him the "newly slaughtered and living way" (Heb. 10:20). He died once and for all yet I think He constantly bleeds for you.

We conquer by confessing. Although I took His life, He for-gave His life, and now He is my life. We conquer not by exalting ourselves . . . but humbling ourselves.

In a note to herself, she wrote, "*Self-esteem is irrelevant. Christ-esteem is all that matters.*" Rachel knew that she was not her shadow. She knew that she didn't make herself Good, but that her Goodness was the righteousness of Christ. She knew she didn't have to take life from others, for her Father in heaven had *already* given it to her and was giving it to all. ⁴

I think she learned about her Father in Heaven, from her Father on earth. Darrel is his name. He called me a few years ago, asked to take me to lunch and became a friend. He wanted to encourage me, for he believes in what we preach and he wants to declare God's unfailing love for all

Well, John writes, "*They conquered [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, loving not their lives even unto death.*"

At one point, Eric Harris grabbed Rachel by the hair. She was already shot twice in the leg. Harris held her up and said, "Do you believe in God?" She said, "You know I do." He pointed his gun at her head and said, "Then go be with him." And he shot her.

Was that the dragon's victory over the Lamb?
Or was that the Lamb's victory over the dragon?

I don't know how to stop an active shooter...
But I do know how we conquer the dragon...
We stop trying to save our lives and we lose them.

At Rachel's funeral broadcast on CNN, her friends performed "Watch the Lamb" A man watched the funeral on TV and had a powerful prophetic dream. He called Darrel and described the picture he had seen: Rachel's eyes crying tears that watered a rose. Darrel had no idea what it meant until the police returned Rachel's backpack. He looked in her backpack. Found her diary and found this picture.

⁴ Rachel knew that Life is not the survival of the fittest, but the sacrifice of the fittest for all.

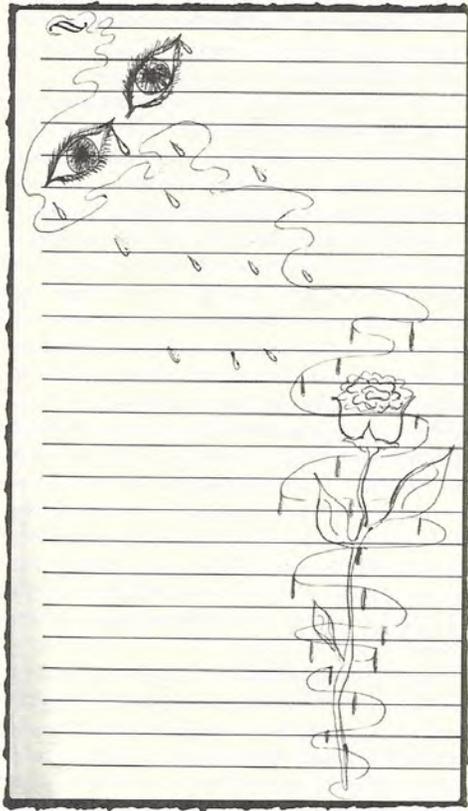


Figure 3 Image credit: Rachel Scott

From her tears grew the Rose—the Bride of Christ is the Rose of Sharon.

He also read pages of prayers in which she asked to be a witness, particularly to those that were bullied and picked on . . . those who believe life is the survival of the fittest, when in fact it's the sacrifice of the fittest—people like Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. She asked to be a witness to them. And he found a statement in which she claims that she knew she would soon be dead.

No doubt . . . God was in charge. So, nineteen years ago, Darrel started a program called Rachel's challenge. Along with about twenty-five other presenters, they just go into schools tell Rachel's story and encourage kids to see each with a different set of eyes—the Father's eyes.

Since they started, walls have come tumbling down.

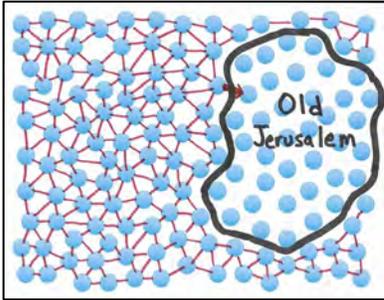


Figure 4 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

And people in bondage have been set free

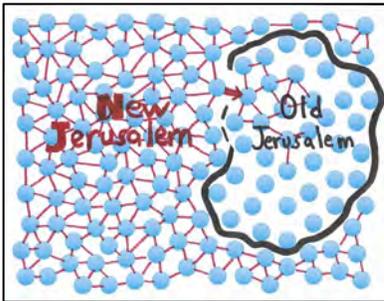


Figure 5 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

They begin to believe: maybe we're not 7.5 billion isolated and lonely souls

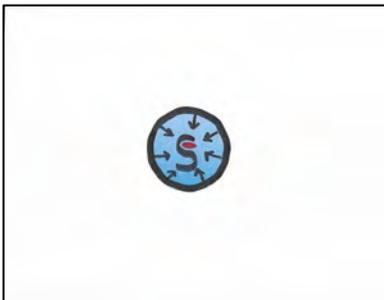


Figure 6 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Maybe we're 7.5 billion cells that all belong to each other in one body.

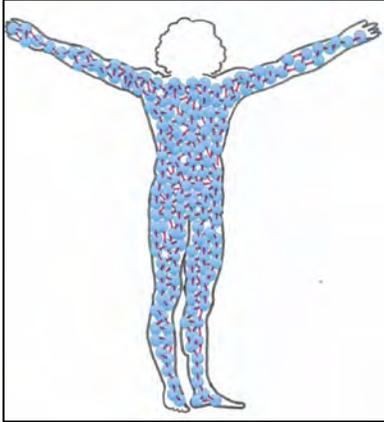


Figure 7 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

That body is the Body of Christ, slaughtered Lamb, and Son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased.

And of course, Rachel isn't dead, May 20th 1999 was the day she began to live . . . Well, according to their website over 1.5 million people are now involved each year in Rachel's challenge. Each year they present Rachel's story to 1200 schools and businesses. And each year, at least 150 suicides, that they know of, are averted.

Now that's probably a bad example cause it is a program; it's just that you can kind of measure a program... and use it as an example.

There is no way to measure the impact of one act wherein you simply love because you've been loved... but that's how we conquer the dragon.

You love because you've been loved... and you've been loved.

Jesus from the bosom of the Father took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you." And He takes a cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you." And He'd already told them, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Benediction

Scripture says that the enemy has kept us in life-long bondage through the fear of death. I think that is the power of death and Jesus gives us freedom from the fear of death, for the death of death is life. That's freedom to do what Rachel Scott did at Columbine High school. It's to risk your life for the sake of the Gospel. It's to "love not your life even unto death."

But it's not just freedom for the last day of your physical life on earth; it's freedom for every day because the thing we die to is our *psyche*— our ego. That's the thing that keeps us in prison and bondage every day. So, how do you fight? Well, today, after this

sermon . . . (I'm used to it) I'll hear a voice and it will say, "Peter, your sermon was way too long. It was way too confusing. People couldn't follow that. Peter, you suck. Peter, that's what you are . . . a piece of shit, so why don't you just quit? If you're too scared to quit, why don't you just run and hide in the shadows because you know where to find the shadow?"

Then I need to listen to the voice of my Father, it says, turn around Peter and look into my eyes and listen to me closely, you are not the sermon you preach. You are the sermon that I'm preaching. Even when you fail, it's in those very places that I reveal my greatest glory. You are my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. And now, if you'd like to talk about me, you are free to do so.

In the name of Jesus, believe the Gospel.

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.

26

How to Battle the Beast (Politics and Religion!?!?)

How to Battle the Beast (Politics and Religion!?!?)

Rev. 13:1-14:1

#26 in our series "The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation"

June 24, 2018

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

Lord God, we say together, in our hearts, we renounce the voice of the dragon and his beast, and the great harlot. We ask that you would help us, through your power, to hear the voice of Jesus sitting on the throne in the sanctuary of our soul. I am asking that you would help us to preach, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Message

For the last two weeks, we've been talking about the seven-headed dragon. And last week we met the beast from the sea and the beast from the land. I said that they were politics and religion.

Hopefully, you are aware that it was the beast from over the sea, the governor of the Roman province of Judea, Pontius Pilate, at the request of the beast from the land of Israelⁱ, the religious leaders of the Jews.

It was the beast from the land and the beast from the sea, under the direction of the dragon, that inspired the crowd to chant, "Crucify, crucify, crucify."

As the religious leaders of the Jews mocked, a Roman soldier took a spear and thrust it in the side of the Lamb of God. Blood and water gushed out, confirming that He was dead, and fulfilling the ancient prophecy of Zechariah that they would "look on the one whom they had pierced" (Zech. 12:10).

Now, the last verse of Revelation 12: "And the dragon stood on the sand of the sea . . .

Revelation 13:1-18

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer

them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. [or, more literally translated, “whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (NKJV)] If anyone has an ear, let him hear: If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of [a] man, and his number is 666.

It's “the number of a man,” or more literally translated “it's the number of man.” Hopefully, you remember that man is created on the sixth day and finished by the Seventh. Jesus was crucified on the sixth day of creation, the sixth day of the week, at the sixth hour of the day, just before the start of the Seventh Day. He cried, “It is finished,” and delivered up His Spirit—that Spirit that now romances the human heart. Well, 666 is the number of man . . . the number of fallen humanity.

As we talked about last week, it's also the number of Emperor Nero. In John's day, the common practice was to assign numbers to letters, and then add the numbers together to come up with a name. And then you might use the number as a code for the name, particularly if you were being persecuted by the person and government that carried that name.

And we know from the start of the Revelation that the early Church was experiencing persecution. In fact, Asia Minor, where the seven churches were located, was something of a hotspot for the cult of Emperor Worship.

The Jews were exempt from the requirement, for Judaism was a recognized religion. Most early Christians, even Gentiles, identified as Jews for they had been grafted into the family tree by the blood of Jesus. However, if the folks in the local synagogue disliked the followers of Jesus, they only had to say, “*These Christians are not Jews,*”

and then those believers would be handed over to the Roman *Concilia*, the Roman Body, tasked with enforcing emperor worship.

Some believers were killed and many were forced out of the trade guilds and turned into refugees—they couldn't buy or sell—for they refused the mark of the beast.ⁱⁱ

Nero was the fifth emperor of Rome.ⁱⁱⁱ

And he died by a self-inflicted head wound; he took a knife to his own throat.

Upon his death, the Roman Empire fell into a period of confusion, and many thought the beast was dead until Vespasian came to power, the empire revived, destroyed Jerusalem, and people throughout the known world wondered out loud, "*Who can fight against it?*" The Empire of Rome?

No matter who or what you think the beast is, one thing is clear, it seems almost impossible to kill. If you kill it in one form, it will come back in another.

The seven heads are seven kings or emperors. In chapter 17, we learn that they are also seven mountains or hills. Rome is the city built on seven hills.

The beast also has ten horns, and we'll discover that these are ten kings still to come.^{iv}

There have been all sorts of ideas as to who or what those ten horns symbolize; no one seems to know. Perhaps the ten is figurative, and it tells us to just keep counting using all of our fingers.

The beast is at least Rome, and at least many kings and kingdoms still to come. It's also many kings and kingdoms that *have* come and *gone*. They seem to keep coming back.

What John sees in the Revelation, Daniel saw 500 years before in Babylon. It's important to read your Bible so you recognize this stuff.

In Daniel 7, Daniel sees four beasts rising out of the sea. They are Babylon, Persia, Greece, and apparently Rome. The fourth beast has ten horns and it's defeated by the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man, whom all people will serve and whose dominion is an everlasting dominion (That's Daniel 7:14).

The four beasts are one beast and also appear as an image in a dream that both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel have. You can read about it in Daniel chapter 2. And check this out: God even reveals that the head is Babylon, and in particular, Nebuchadnezzar.

You may remember, that God gives him the mind of a beast until he is humbled and writes one of the most beautiful hymns in all of Scripture—He's a beast, but he gets un-dragoned, or un-beasted, by God.

The head is Babylon, the torso is Persia, the loins appear to be Greece, and the legs and ten toes, appear to be Rome. Then a great stone, hewn not by any hand, strikes the toes of the image—breaking it into pieces and then grows into a Kingdom that eventually fills the whole earth... and will never fade away.^v

Well, the Lamb has conquered, for the stone has struck the image, the son of man has cried out, "*It is finished,*" and he did it just when Daniel prophesied that he would.

Christ has conquered,
And yet, in John's day, they still battled the beast.
And it seems that we still battle the beast... in our space and our time.
So, what and where is the beast in our time?

In Revelation 13 there are two beasts, the political beast and then the one that looks like the Lamb and talks like the dragon. For hundreds of years among Protestants the most popular candidate for beast was the Pope in Rome. Read about the inquisition, the crusades, and the power exercised by the papacy and you'll see that it became incredibly beastly.^{vi}

But it's not just the Pope; it's the institutional church . . . Protestant, Roman Catholic or Orthodox. When politics and religion get together some incredibly evil things seem to happen.

In the 20th Century, Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Empire were great candidates for beast. Their communism wasn't just politics but religion. It was a faith statement about the ultimate nature of reality. Twenty to thirty million were slaughtered under Stalin and the Church was persecuted on a level that makes Nero look like an amateur.

Ironically Marx, Lenin, and Stalin were pursuing a definition of the Good that comes right out of Acts chapter 2—a group of people that shares everything in common with glad and generous hearts. They saw the Good, but they didn't really know the Good, and tried to take the Good like a beast.

Most of my Conservative friends are deeply concerned about that Communist beast, but sometimes in their fervor, they can act a bit beastly.

Joseph Stalin was a great candidate for beast, but Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich may have been the best candidate. And it wasn't just politics it was religion. The First Reich was the Holy Roman Empire, the Second Reich was the German Empire, and the Third Reich they believed to be the Nazi Empire—the new humanity. Hitler was known for family values.

A U.S. delegate to the Baptist World Alliance Congress in Berlin in 1934 sent back this report of what he found under Hitler's regime:

It was a great relief to be in a country where salacious sex literature cannot be sold; where putrid motion pictures and gangster films cannot be shown. The new Germany has burned great masses of corrupting books and magazines along with its bonfires of Jewish and Communistic libraries.

Hitler was all about family, the German Family . . . and that's called a race. Family isn't bad. Family is Good.

So what happened? Hitler saw the Good, didn't understand the Good and tried to take it like a beast. Like Stalin, he was fascinated with power; he saw it as the ability to force one's will upon another will. And so absolute power would be to consume and subsume all other wills—including the will of God—into one's own will.

In 1973, historian Trevor Ravenscroft wrote a book entitled *The Spear of Destiny*. The spear is supposedly the lance, which the Roman soldier stuck in Christ's side as He hung dead on the cross. There are all sorts of legends surrounding this spear, involving rulers like Alaric (who sacked Rome) and Charlemagne—the first of the Holy Roman emperors. The legend was that whoever possessed the spear would be able to conquer the world.

On March 14, 1938, Hitler annexed Austria and obtained all the relics in the Hofburg Museum. He ordered that the spear be brought to Germany. In 1944 he placed it in an underground vault. On April 30, 1945, at 2:10 p.m. American forces took possession of that vault and the spear. Eighty minutes later, Hitler killed himself in a bunker in Berlin. (It was suicide, like Nero . . . and according to many a gunshot wound to the head is what killed him.)

Hitler spoke of the day he first saw the spear in that museum in Austria:

I stood there quietly gazing upon it for several minutes quite oblivious to the scene around me. It seemed to carry some hidden inner meaning which evaded me, a meaning which I felt I inwardly knew yet could not bring to consciousness...I felt as though I myself had held it before in some earlier century of history. That I myself had once claimed it as my talisman of power and held the destiny of the world in my hands...

Creepy huh?

Most of my Liberal friends are deeply concerned about that Fascist beast, but sometimes in their fervor, they can act a bit beastly.

Many say that the 20th century was the most violent in all of history. It was the century of the beast.

I suspect that this was largely due to Charles Darwin's study of beasts . . .

But I wouldn't blame our beastliness on Darwin; most people don't understand Darwin.

It's common to hear people say things like, "*Life is the survival of the fittest.*" But competition clearly doesn't explain life; it explains the limitations of life. It does have something to do with the origin of different species—but it can't explain species themselves.

Press any biologist worthy of the name and I think they'd have to admit that Life is not the survival of the fittest . . . but something more like the sacrifice of the fittest . . . and that's a great mystery.

We can understand why one beast would eat another beast. But we can't understand why one cell within a beast would sacrifice for another cell within that same beast; why one member of a body would bleed for another member of that same body . . . why one molecule would seemingly choose—freely choose—to serve another—even sacrifice itself for another.

Many have postulated some sort of a "Life Force" . . .

We know that "The Life Force" is the Will of God, and the Will of God is the Slaughtered Lamb standing on throne bleeding for each and for all.

We also believe that God is Creator and therefore, creation is Good.

And yet creation has been subjected to futility.

In other words, creation is literally eating itself; it has become beastly.

In Romans 8, Paul writes that one day "*creation will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.*" In that day, "*The wolf shall dwell with the lamb... and the lion shall eat straw like an ox... and the nursing baby will play over the den of the Cobra... and they shall not hurt or destroy on my holy mountain*" says the Lord in Isaiah 11, "*for the whole earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.*"

The Lord is Love.

And so the whole earth, even all the beasts, will be filled with Love (that knowledge, that Word, that Presence).

Well, the dragon cannot comprehend Love and so wants to eat the Baby.

He calls up the beasts to help him battle us with a river of lies.

The beasts are politics and religion.

We've been talking about the beasts for months, although that's not what I've called them.

You should be familiar with this picture:

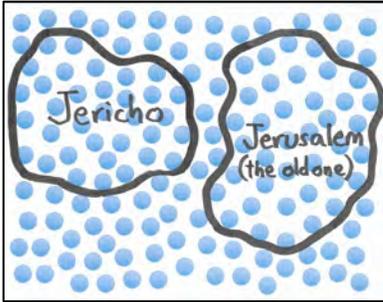


Figure 1 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

The blue dots represent souls.

And the blue dots inside the black lines represent members of a society. It's what we previously called "a covenant of self-interest." I suspect it's what John is calling the beast. Another word for it might be politics or religion... or at least, human politics and religion.

It's a society bound together by "*The knowledge of Good and evil*," and the *power of the flesh*. It's not a living knowledge and it's not an interior knowledge. It's knowledge that's written down and put on a stone or in a book, but it can also be something like a custom or ritual. Scripture calls it "the law."

In a place like Jericho or Jerusalem, the law would take the form of a physical wall. Well, John's beast is a society bound together by legislation, enforcing its will through coercion—the power of the flesh.

In the best case scenarios, people inside the wall want to be inside the wall because the government works for them and so they work for the government—it's a covenant of self-interest or self-preservation . . . a way to save your life; it may look Good on the outside, but it's a world away from the communion of self-sacrifice that *is* Life and manifestation of Love.

In the worst case scenarios, people inside the wall are forced to remain inside the wall . . . And people outside the wall are threatened with death, if they don't agree to surrender their will to the will of the beast, which is walking death.

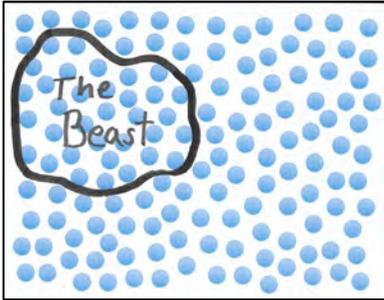


Figure 2 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

When people feel threatened by the beast, they naturally want to battle the beast, BUT how do you battle the beast?

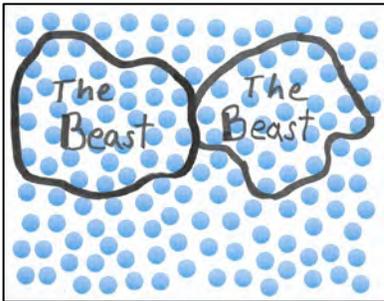


Figure 3 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

What we naturally do is form a new beast.

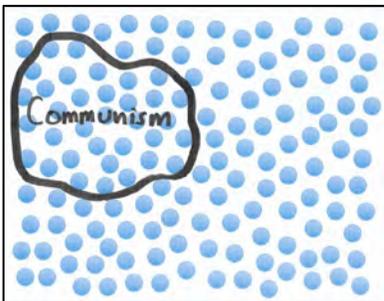


Figure 4 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

If the first beast is Communism . . .

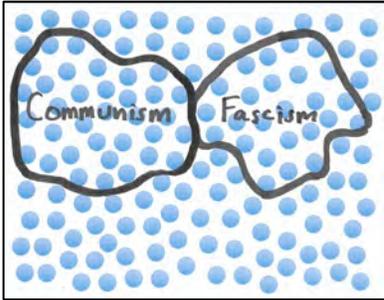


Figure 5 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

The second beast might be National Socialism or Fascism . . .

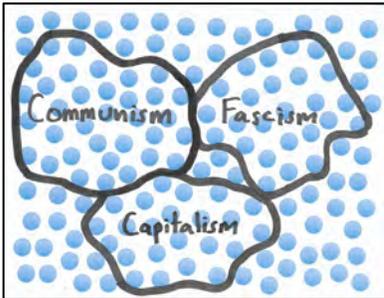


Figure 6 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

It might be Capitalism, advanced by an army of marketing, propaganda, and protected by the world's largest military.

We might think we kill the beast, but maybe we just become the beast . . . in a new form.

You know Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome were all successive beasts trying to replace the previous beast, and yet they were all still "the beast."

Listen closely: the Kingdom of the Lamb is *not* a new beast...

And yet, we're tempted to turn it into a beast every time we feel threatened.

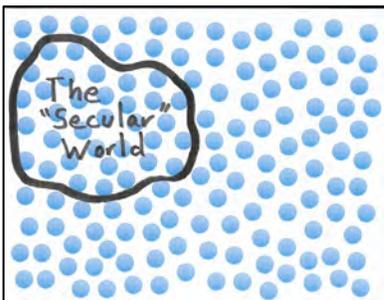


Figure 7 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

In America, when we feel threatened what do we do?

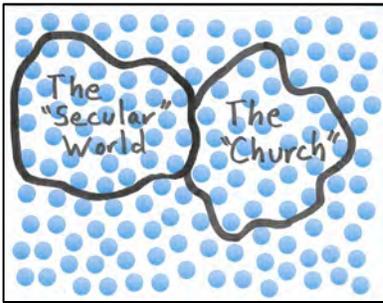


Figure 8 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

We write our congressman and then complain that the Church is no different than the world.

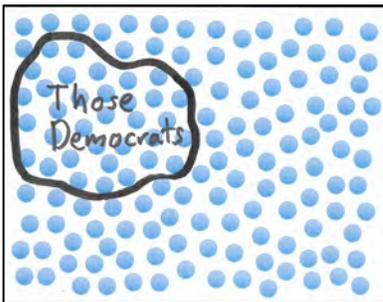


Figure 9 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Maybe we feel threatened by some Democratic legislation, and we think we need to go to battle, and maybe we really should go to battle . . .
But how do you battle the beast? Do we create a new beast?

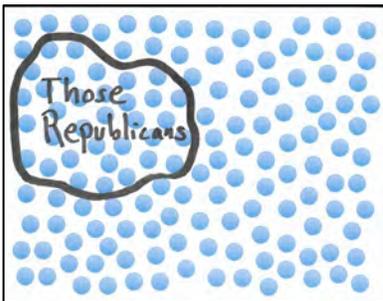


Figure 10 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Maybe we feel threatened by some Republican legislation, and we think we need to go to battle, and maybe we really should go to battle . . .
But how do you battle the beast? Do we turn the Church into a beast?

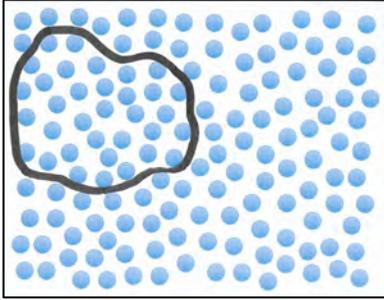


Figure 11 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

How do we battle the beast?

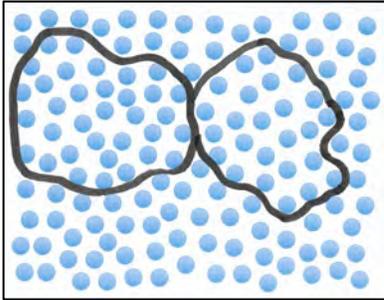


Figure 12 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

We Americans seize power and create another beast...

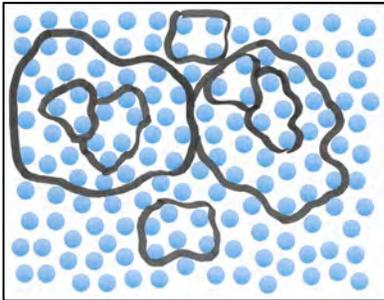


Figure 13 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

And then, beasts within beasts, battling more beasts...

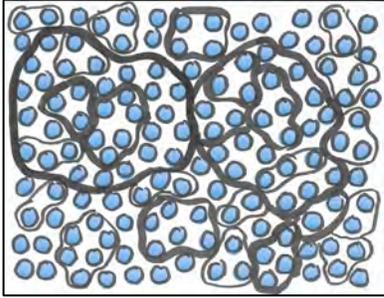


Figure 14 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Until everyone is a tired and lonely old beast.

The Kingdom of the Lamb is *NOT* a new beast!
But if you think it is, you will sacrifice the Lamb . . . for the sake of the beast.
You will join the priests chanting, “Crucify, crucify . . . we have no king but Caesar.”

Karl Barth wrote:

The divine state is quite incompatible not merely with the wicked totalitarian state but with every conceivable human regime. . . . We do not know God at all if we do not know Him as the One who is absolutely opposed to our whole world which has fallen away from Him and is therefore self-estranged; as the Judge of our world; as the One whose will is that it should be totally changed and renewed.

Well, the beast *is* politics and religion...

But now you might say . . .

“Well dang, I’m grateful for a little politics and religion. It’s better than anarchy.” “Peter who was it that stopped Hitler in 1949 and brought the Soviet Union to an end in 1989? . . . Didn’t we kill the beast?”

Well . . .

I think our government restrained one or two beasts, but we may have helped create some other beasts . . . and in the process become a little more beastly ourselves.

I’m certainly not saying we shouldn’t have entered WWII.
Personally, I’m very grateful that we did.
I’m just saying that the US Government didn’t kill the beast.

You might say...

“Well Peter, God instituted the governing authorities.”
Romans 13:1 Paul wrote, “*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities (exousia). For there is no authority (exousia) except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.*”

This last week, Jeff Sessions famously quoted that verse in defense of President

Trump's no tolerance immigration policy.

He quoted the verse, but he forgot to mention a few things...

- Like the fact that Saint Paul often wrote from prison where he was kept by *the authorities*...
- And that Jesus was crucified by *the authorities*...
- And that most of the Bible, including the Pentateuch, most of the Prophets and the New Testament was written by people on the run from *the authorities* BECAUSE they didn't do what *the authorities* told them to do...
- Even the United States of America exists cause we didn't do what *the authorities* told us to do... we said, "*Shove off King George, and take your tea with you.*"

In Ephesians 6:12 Paul wrote,

...We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities (exousia—same word), against the cosmic (world) powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

It seems that Paul obeyed the *authorities*, unless he felt compelled by a higher *authority* to do something different. No matter what, he never battled people, but he always battled *the authorities*...

Do you suppose he battled *the authorities* by subjecting himself to *the authorities*? (He didn't write, "Obey..." but "*Be subject to*" the authorities.

Jesus battled *the authorities*; He certainly didn't agree with *the authorities*.

... But did He subject Himself to *the authorities*?

Did Jesus *LET the authorities* nail Him to a tree . . .

Or did He call down a legion of angels to kick their ass?

A lot of folks seem to think He messed up the first time, so He needs to come back and conquer—He still needs to kick some ass, for "It is *not* finished."

In Colossians 2:15, Paul wrote that on the cross, "*God disarmed the rulers and authorities [exousia] and made a public example of them triumphing over them in Christ Jesus.*"

That means that on the cross, God, in Christ, kicked their ass.

And yet, in Romans, Paul wrote that "God instituted the authorities..."

Do you suppose He wanted us to watch Him kick their ass?

God "*instituted the authorities*" wrote Paul, in Romans.

God "*triumphed over them in Jesus*" writes Paul, in Colossians.

And now "*we battle them*" writes Paul, in Ephesians.

How do you put that all together?

Well, this thought helps me:

In 1950 the great Dutch theologian, Hendrik Berkhof wrote a ground-breaking book titled

Christ and the Powers—that is “Christ and the Authorities”—*exousia*. In it he argues that Paul saw the principalities and powers, the rulers and authorities as “structures of earthly, human existence,” “social facts,” ideologies, nations, governments and even religions. These “rulers and authorities” were created *by* God, but like humanity, they had fallen and could become inhabited by evil.

- So, we battle against *the authorities* inhabited by evil . . . like Stalin and Hitler.
- And yet I think, maybe, we battle against them all... even the ones, perhaps, not quite so saturated with evil—like Denver County, the Home Owners Association, or maybe even a 501c3 non-profit religious organization that we refer to as “our church.”
- I mean maybe we’re supposed to battle *the authorities*, the way a child battles to grow up and become an adult.

That would mean that God instituted the authorities for a time, but not to rule us for all eternity. The authorities are institution governed by *law* in the power of the flesh.

In Galatians 3:19-20 Paul wrote, “*Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed [that’s Jesus] should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.*”

A mediator works to turn several wills into one will, but God is one will. And if we all had the will of God, sitting on the throne in the sanctuaries of our souls, we would all be one, and each of our wills would be free. We wouldn’t be bound by law, but united in Love—for God is free.

In Ephesians, after Paul writes that we “*battle against the rulers and authorities,*” he asks the Ephesians to pray for him that he’d be given courage to “*proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, for which he is an ambassador in chains.*”

In Ephesians 3:6, he tells us the mystery.

This mystery is that the gentiles (that means “the others,” the people on the other side of the wall, even the unbelievers) *This mystery is that the gentiles, are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.*

He goes on to say that our job is to proclaim this to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Our job is to proclaim that we are truly not divided.
But that Christ has made us one Body in Him.

My body is governed by a radically different sort of government than that of Babylon, Persia, or the state of Colorado...

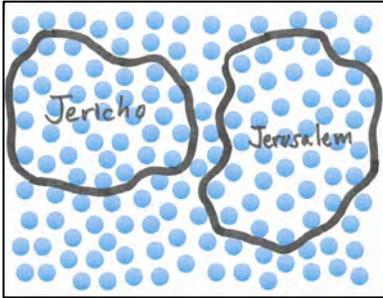


Figure 15 Image credit: Peter Hiett

The cells in my body don't look like that.
They look more like this:

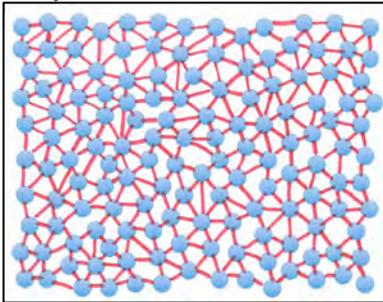


Figure 16 Image credit: Peter Hiett

My body isn't dead. And it's not many individual lives, but one life.

Each member feels its neighbor's pain, and all members together feel their harmony as absolute joy. My body is not governed by a list of laws, and I never have to argue or force the members of my body into submission. Every member is free, even though entirely subject to me, the head.



Figure 17 Image credit: Peter Hiett

The cells in my body don't look like that.

They look more like this:

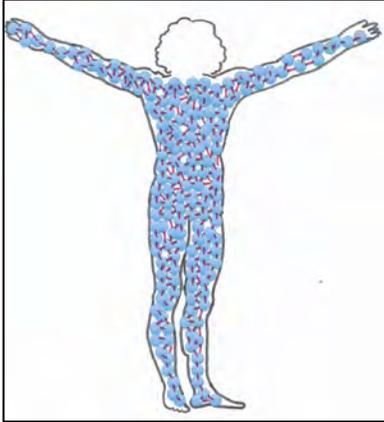


Figure 18 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

You could say that each member has faith (trust) in the judgment of my head.
And each member is fed by the blood pumped from my heart.
Each member constantly surrenders blood and receives blood.
Each member constantly surrenders its life and finds its life.
Each member is happy.

Well in Galatians 3:23-25 Paul continues talking about life under the law:

...before faith (trust) came, we were kept under guard by the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor (paidagogos—"child conductor") until Christ came, that we might be justified (made right) by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. But you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

I think Paul is saying that the rulers and authorities are like babysitters.
There are relatively good babysitters and relatively bad babysitters.

You hire a babysitter so your kids don't kill each other while you're out to dinner, but you never trust the babysitter to raise your children. Likewise, a government can keep people from killing each other, but a government cannot create in you, or your neighbor, a new heart, a heart trusts the Father; a person in the image of God..

Well, Christians arguing over government is like two parents arguing over rules for the babysitter. That's fine, rules for the babysitter really matter, but if those parents divorce over the rules for the babysitter, they're worse than the babysitter; they've become the beast.

In America, we get to choose our own babysitter. And often we don't choose well...
But a Christian doesn't put faith in the babysitter; he or she puts faith in the Father, who's coming back and claims us as His own.

Usually, we don't choose well . . . and most of the world can't choose at all.
And with my analogy, I don't want to diminish the fact that babysitters can be downright evil.

I didn't watch it, but I saw the trailer for this new movie: *The Babysitter*; it's about a young boy attracted to his babysitter, who happens to be the babysitter from hell, who plans to sacrifice him to the dragon. Maybe it's a stupid analogy, but my point is don't trust the babysitter; trust the heart of your father in heaven,

Inspired by the dragon, the pastors and priests of Israel colluded with the government of Rome; they convinced the children of Israel to chant, "*Crucify, crucify, crucify*, and then, they did. They nailed the heart of their Father to a tree in a garden.

"*We battle not against flesh and blood*," writes Paul, "*but rulers and authorities...*"
So, how do we battle the rulers and authorities?
How do we battle the beast... not just in places like Iraq, but even our church?

In 2nd Corinthians 10, Paul writes that our weapons aren't of the flesh, but they do have power to destroy strongholds and every proud argument.

In Ephesians 6 he gives us armor . . . and all the armor *is* Christ.
In Revelation 13 we read about the beasts that slaughtered the Lamb.
In Revelation 14:1 we see the Lamb: "*Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads...*"

As we preached earlier in this series, we are the 144,000, and we battle like the Lamb, with the very blood of the Lamb flowing in our veins.

He is the Light of the World. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.
And so here are just a few suggestions:

<p><u>How do we battle the beasts?</u> With Jesus: 1. Jesus is the Light</p>
--

We shine the light on the beasts...
We know what they are, and we know what they are not . . .
And we know we battle them, and not each other . . .

So we should get together and argue about the rules for the babysitter, but never break up the marriage.

In sermons, I try to avoid rules for the babysitter, for I think I'm called to preach our Father's heart. But I would love to host discussions during the next election, or even now, around any political issue that you'd like—not so you could win an argument, but so that we could all shine the light on the beast, listen for Christ in each other.

And never surrender your thinking and feeling to an institution like Fox News, CNN or even the institutional Church (I am sharing with you, and this is also an institution. Hopefully, you can hear what I say, and you know enough about me to listen to me as a person. But beware of institutions!)

And we can argue, and we don't have to panic, for the Lamb has already conquered... and nothing can be done by the beasts that hasn't been allowed by God, our Father. When Jesus stood before Pilate and the High Priests, Pilate said, "*Don't you know I have the power to crucify you.*" Jesus said "*You have no power over me, except that which is granted you from above.*"

How do we battle the beasts?

With Jesus:

1. Jesus is the Light
2. Jesus is the Way

Jesus is the way.

And Jesus said, "*I only do what I see the Father doing.*"

John writes that the beast "*was, is not, and is to come.*" This may fry your brain, but in some utterly profound way, the beast has no power now... perhaps it doesn't even exist now.

The beast derives its power from fears in your past and your fears for the future . . . it makes you fear death and form strategies to save your own life, so you'd never lose your life. It uses death as a trump card; the resurrection has utterly transformed the meaning of death.

Can you imagine how the beast tempted Jesus on that Friday?

"Jesus if you do this; if you refuse to fight, you will die . . . And not only you will die, most all your disciples will suffer and die. Jerusalem will be destroyed." All that your people have struggled to build, the labor of one-thousand years will be destroyed.

But Jesus didn't navigate with strategies and maps...

He walked in the now with His Father.

That's the presence of the Kingdom.

And so He said to Pilate, *"If my kingdom were of this world my servants would fight, that I might not be delivered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this world."*

How do we battle the beasts?

With Jesus:

1. Jesus is the Light
2. Jesus is the Way
3. Jesus is the Truth

Jesus is the Truth. He sits on a throne in the temple of your heart, and you know Him not as just law in a book, but a voice in your soul that's called honesty.

Jesus said to Pilate, *"For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."*

The beast from the land looks like a lamb but talks like a dragon. You may have noticed in chapter 13 that he is allowed to deceive the people that dwell on the earth with signs.

On the day that Jesus conquers the beast, He does no signs. He wants you to hear the Truth and love the Truth apart from the signs. Jesus *is* the Truth, and Jesus means *"God is salvation."*

The Beast may look like a lamb and do all sorts of amazing signs, but he won't preach *"God is Salvation."* He'll preach, "I am salvation" or "Your choices and deeds are salvation." "We—the beast—are salvation. We are life. Don't lose your life."

How do we battle the beasts?

With Jesus:

1. Jesus is the Light
2. Jesus is the Way
3. Jesus is the Truth
4. Jesus is the Life

Jesus is the Life.

And Jesus doesn't save His life; He offers it for all. What the beast takes, Jesus gives—He *for-gives*.

Life is literally a river of constant forgiveness; it's a river of blood.
The Life is in the blood.

We are His Body and we bleed His blood.

It's the ultimate weapon against the Beast.

It destroys the accuser and it tames the Beast.

The Beast is allowed to conquer the saints, for that is how the saints conquer the beast . . . and are made in the image of God the Father.

"Conquering in both cases," writes commentator Eugene Boring, "that of the Christ and that of Christians, means no more or less than dying."^{vii}

You know we already have a wall at the Mexican border? I used to see it every few months when we'd go build houses in Tiajuana. It's a wall of cement, steel, regulations, customs, and laws.

What's been happening at our southern border has been an absolute tragedy for as long as I can remember . . . and lately, it's only gotten worse.

But as long as we have two separate governments there will be some sort of wall... and we can bicker about what it's made of, and how big it should be. But if you really feel called to tear down the wall, you don't need the backing of the beast: Mexican or American—you just need the blood of the Lamb.

Find a Mexican immigrant and love him, her or their kids the way you love yourself . . . because you know they are yourself; they are your own body. Even better, book a flight to El Salvador, find some teenage boys filled with fear and pledged to the beast, MS-13. If they attempt to take your life, forgive your life . . . bleed for them, "*loving not your own life even unto death.*"

If you wonder, "What good will that do?"

Well, that's just Good, and it's the way we conquer the beast. "*The blood of the lamb, the word of our testimony, loving not our lives even unto death.*"

How do we battle the beasts?

With Jesus:

1. Jesus is the Light
2. Jesus is the Way
3. Jesus is the Truth
4. Jesus is the Life

*"The Blood of the Lamb, the Word of our testimony,
loving not our lives even unto death."*

- It was precisely when the beast from the land conspired with the beast from the sea,

under the influence of the dragon—when they took the life of the Lamb on the tree . . . that He gave His life on the same tree and conquered *all things*.

- It was precisely when that Roman soldier thrust the spear in our Lord's side that the beast was conquered, and could no longer conquer.
- It was then that the Roman Centurion dropped to his knees and said, "Surely this was the son of God."
- It was then that he looked on the One whom He had pierced.
- It was then that Jerusalem began mourning for Him and begging for mercy.
- It was then that the fountain was opened on Mt. Zion.
- It was then that the river of Life began to flow, half to the western sea and half to the eastern sea, all as prophesied by Zechariah.
- It was then that the Great stone, hewn not by any human hand, struck the image of the beasts in Daniel's vision, and the kingdoms of this world began to crumble and the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ began to fill all empty things with the fullness of God.

Don't get sidetracked by a world of politics and religion.
You already know how to battle the beast and conquer the dragon.

Communion

For on the night that the Lamb was betrayed, the beginning of that day, the Lamb took bread, broke it and said, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat. And in the same way, He took the cup saying, "This is *the* covenant [It's not a covenant of self-interest, but it's a covenant of love] in my blood. It's poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it *all* of you."

Benediction

So, John was imprisoned on the island of Patmos being pursued by the beast from Rome. And I imagine he was hated by the beast from the land—his own people. The city of Jerusalem was about to be destroyed and God gives him a vision. He looks to the throne and sees the Lamb. That was the Lamb he saw when he stood at the foot of the tree—the cross. He sees the Lamb and 144,000 redeemed from the earth. That means these people had been harvested from the earth. They had died in arenas and been persecuted and tortured, many had been his friends and he sees them on the throne singing and dancing. Do you see how that totally undoes the power of the beast? They're liars and they keep us in a lifetime of bondage through the fear of death.

So, by way of benediction, believe the Gospel. And if you say, "How do I know the Gospel when I hear it?" Believe the One who has freely chosen to hang on a cross, for that One has chosen truth over the beast—of Rome: politics, over the beast—of Israel: religion, and over the Great Harlot, which is an economy of consumption. He has chosen truth over politics, religion, and business. He has not only chosen truth, He is Truth.

You've come to the communion table, which means that Truth is sitting on a throne in the sanctuary of your heart. He speaks directly to you. You don't need the babysitter. Listen to the voice of the Father, in your heart, when you surrender yourself in prayer. In

Jesus' name, believe the Gospel!

ⁱ "The Land" is a common Biblical designation for the promised land, the land of Israel.

ⁱⁱ Emperor Nero was notorious for his insanity and his persecution of believers. He would roll them in pitch, strap them to poles, and then, use them as human torches in the Coliseum so that even at night, Roman citizens could watch others believers fed to the beasts on the arena floor.

ⁱⁱⁱ Depending on how you count, Vespasian or Titus could be numbered as the 7th. Jerusalem was utterly annihilated in 70 AD by Titus under the direction of his father Vespasian.

^{iv} That's why people got all worked up about a Ten-Nation European Confederacy . . . and then those dang Europeans went and added too many countries to the European Union.

^v In Daniel 9, the Angel Gabriel appears to tell Daniel that this would all happen in 490 years—it would be an end to sin, atone for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness... seal vision and prophet, and anoint a holy sanctuary.

Church Fathers like Athanasius and commentators like Matthew Henry clearly thought this referred to the death and resurrection of Christ.

But in the 20th century, in particular, many seemed to think that the kingdom hadn't come with Jesus the first time, so he'd need to do it a second time... but this second time he'd really kick some ass...

In Daniel that time of struggle before the end is referred to as "time, times and half a time, that is 1 year + 2 years + a half a year, which is 42 months, 1,260 days or 3 ½ years, a broken 7.

It's the time of struggle before the end.

I believe what the New Testament teaches that Jesus is the End, and the cross is the Revelation of the End, so when we come to the cross and believe the Son of Man as he cries "It is finished," we are finished in the image of God.

We pass from the 6th day to the 7th day, where everything is Good.

We pass through Judgment from death into life, when we believe.

All of us believe, but struggle to believe, and so we still battle the beast.

And clearly, John thought the seven churches battled the beast.

The Lamb had conquered.

And we are called to conquer by faith.

"This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith." Wrote John

^{vi} Most think that the church conquered Rome in 313 AD with the Edict of Milan and the conversion of the Empire. But some make a pretty good case that, at the same time, the Beast conquered the church, by turning her into a beast.

The demise of the Constantinian world view, the gradual decline of the notion that the church needs some sort of surrounding "Christian" culture to prop it up and mold its young, is not a death to lament. It is an opportunity to celebrate. The decline of the old, Constantinian synthesis between the church and the world means that we American Christians are at last free to be faithful in a way that makes being a Christian today an exciting adventure. -Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, Resident Aliens, (Aningdom Press: Nashville, 1989) Chapter 1, pg. 17

See also, Malcolm Muggeridge, The End of Christendom, (Eermans: Grand Rapids, 1980)

^{vii} Joseph Tson was the friend of some of my friends in Romania and the pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Oradea. He was persecuted by the Nazis and then the Communists.

One day, the secret police brought him in for interrogation and threatened to kill him if he didn't stop preaching the Gospel. Joseph said, "Sir your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying... so go on and kill me." Not knowing what to do, they let him go... And yet, largely due to the blood of some of his friends, Romania is now free of its dictator.

Soren Kierkegaard wrote, *...as long as this world lasts and Christ's Church is in it, it is to be a militant Church. Although it has the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, woe to the Christian Church when it is triumphant in this world, for then it is not the Church that has triumphed but the world . . . Did he not come into the world in order to suffer; is not that what he called being triumphant?*

27

The Dead Who Die and Dance

The Dead who Die and Dance

Rev. 14:1-13

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

July 8, 2018

Peter Hiatt

Band Plays “Long Tall Glasses” by Leo Sayer

I was travellin' down the road, feelin' hungry and cold
I saw a sign sayin' food and drinks for everyone
So naturally, I thought I would take me a look insi-ide
I saw so much food, there was water comin' fro-om my eye-eye
Yeah there was ham an' there was turkey, there was caviar
An' long tall glasses, with wine up to yar
Then somebody grabbed me, threw me outta my chair
Said before you can eat, you gotta dance like Fred Astaire-aire...
You know I can't dance...

[During the rest of the song, a clip of funny home videos with people of all ages dancing is played on the screen]

What a silly song? Why would we play such a song for the offertory?

I was travellin' down the road, feelin' hungry and cold
I saw a sign sayin' food and drinks for everyone
So naturally, I thought I would take me a look insi-ide
I saw so much food, there was water comin' fro-om my eye-eye
Yeah there was ham an' there was turkey, there was caviar
An' long tall glasses, with wine up to yar
Then somebody grabbed me, threw me outta my chair
Said before you can eat, you gotta dance like Fred Astaire-aire...
You know I can't dance...

Prayer

Let's Pray: Lord Jesus, we ask this morning that you would help us to preach *the* Gospel—the eternal Gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Message

About seventeen years ago, on a Tuesday morning, I woke up thinking, “*How can I make the Sermon relevant?*”

I was preaching through the Revelation for the first time (this is the second time). That Tuesday morning we were at the exact same spot in the Revelation that we are today at the end of Revelation 13, and the start of chapter 14.

We saw that the beast from the sea was political power. And we saw that the beast from the land was/is religious power. Politics and religion, human religion, are both covenants of self-interest, ways that people band together to save themselves.

They are both antichrists, which means imitation christs.

They are both beasts, for they see the Good and consume the Good to make themselves Good, which only makes them more beastly.

They both have the will of the dragon, for they want to eat the Christ child.

We saw that politics and religion combined are especially evil. It was the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate and the Jewish Religious Leaders that took the life of Christ on a tree in a garden on the side of Mt. Zion.

Seventeen years ago, there was a new beast on the radar of most Americans: the nation of Islam.

Islam combines religion and politics in a rather terrifying sort of way. And yet the violence of Islam is largely a response to the violence of Christendom—both at the time of its inception (shortly after the Church allied with Rome) and during the middle ages, when the Pope in Rome, ordered military crusades to conquer the land of Palestine.

Instead of teaching us to pick up a cross and *be* crucified . . .

The beast in Rome taught us to pick up crosses and *to* crucify.

When George Bush instituted our war on terror, he called it a crusade.

Islamic violence today is largely a response to the creation of the nation-state named “Israel”... an endeavor largely funded by the United States of America, and Great Britain, for a multitude of reasons (some of which are pretty questionable in terms of biblical exegesis).

I’m not saying that the teachings of Christ are like the teachings of Mohammed.

The tragedy is that most people seem to think that they are.

Islam has much in common with Christianity, except it categorically rejects the idea that God would become a man and freely choose to suffer for *all*.

Modern Judaism has much in common with Christianity, except it categorically rejects the idea that God would become a man and freely choose to suffer for all.

The modern nation-state of Israel, and the nation of Islam, as well as the United States of America, are all covenants of self-interest. But the Kingdom of God is a covenant of self-sacrifice.

People always look for the United States in the Revelation . . .

Some think it’s the Kingdom of God and some worry that it will become the beast. Seventeen years ago, I began to see that we ought to worry most about the harlot.

We first encounter her, in Revelation 14:8 · which is our text for today:

Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion (thumos: “anger”) of her sexual immorality (porneia).”

The Greek translated passion means anger.
She doesn't love Love; she consumes Love in anger.

Porneia comes from the verb *pernemi*, which means to sell.
Porneia is the attempt to buy and sell Love as if it were a consumer item.

The beasts want to consume Love, which is the Good.
The harlot wants to buy and sell Love as if it were a commodity.

The US leads the world in the production of pornography and is the world's largest economy.

In chapter 17, we'll read how the harlot sits on many waters...
And the entire world is addicted to the wine of her *porneia*.
The kings of the earth commit *porneia* with her—they're in bed with her.
And yet, they despise her and long to burn her with fire. That's what often happens to harlots.¹

The harlot is like a global economy.
And the beasts are the institutions of this world—in bed with that economy (the harlot rides the beast).

A global economy, or world trade, is not bad in and of itself.
In fact, the very definition of heaven is a type of world trade—it's a global economy of mutual self-sacrifice in which everyone loves, and is loved, by all.
But this world trade is not freedom and life; this world trade is an economy of self-interest, in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer through trade.

The harlot promises freedom and life, but she produces bondage and death.²

The thing most terrifying about the harlot is that the people of God are seduced by her, have entered into her, and don't even know it. Listen closely! In Revelation 18:4 a voice from Heaven cries, "*Come out of her my people...*"

The harlot is world trade, and yet, she's also a city.
In the Revelation she looks like Babylon, Rome, and also Jerusalem.

¹ Men lust after whores, sleep with them, and then hate them.
Men lust after idols, worship them, and thus destroy them, as they destroy themselves. The harlot rides the beast and the beast uses the harlot, but hates her.

² Americans are insanely rich compared to most of the world.
I don't think we even begin to understand the power we wield when we spend our money in places like Mozambique, Tijuana Mexico, or the Gaza Strip.

Today she'd be the city that contains the markets that most control the global economy. She's a city, world trade, and she's a tower.

In Genesis 4, Cain builds a city in disobedience to God's explicit command.
In Genesis 11, the whole world comes together and builds a tower.
It's the Spirit of the harlot, for they are attempting to conquer heaven.
It's called the Tower of Babel, as in Babylon. In what ways have you built a tower? What might God be calling you out from??

The Whore of Babylon is a city, World Trade and a tower that falls. Revelation 14:8
"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great."

Tuesday morning September 11, 2001, I was preparing my message on Revelation 14 and wondering if the Revelation was at all relevant for us today when the phone rang. It was my sister and she said, "Peter just turn on your TV. Any channel."

I did, and I saw this picture:

[Image of the Statue of Liberty & the Twin Towers on fire on 9/11 before they tumbled to the ground]

Then I watched as a plane flew into the second tower, both burned, and then I watched them fall.

I think maybe . . . it was politics and religion that flew that plane, and a harlot that built the tower—the World Trade Center.

It crumbled behind an image of the Roman goddess "*libertas*," who holds a declaration of independence . . . from the King . . .

So what am I saying?

That the statue of Liberty is evil?

I don't know. Is what we see below Freedom?

[Image of the Statue of Liberty & the Twin Towers on fire on 9/11 before they tumbled to the ground is repeated]

And do you worship it?

Am I saying that the people in the tower were evil?

I think I'm saying that the whole world is under the power of the evil one, and Jesus suffered and died for each and for all . . .so the people in the tower were no more evil than you or me.

Am I saying that I hate America?

No, I'm saying that I love America (right now).

Am I saying that I would rather live in another country?

No, I think the United State of America is my favorite country in the world . . .
I'm just beginning to realize that I don't want to live in any country in this world . . .
I want to live in the Kingdom of God.

So what should we do?

How does His Kingdom come and His will get done on earth as it is in Heaven?

That night, not knowing what to do, we gathered on Lookout Mountain, prayed and sang songs. After the service, my friend Tom came to me rather disturbed. He said, as you were speaking, "I kept seeing this white horse, running up and down the aisles." Later he told me that Jesus was on the horse, He was agitated, and ready for war. Behind Him were mounted troops. Tom didn't say how many. I'm guessing 144,000.

During the service and the weeks that followed, I preached. I preached that this was an opportunity; we could go to war like Jesus or we could declare war like a beast.

Within days the President declared a War on Terror.³
How do you go to war with terror?

[Image of pie chart showing American casualties versus Iraqi and Afghan civilian casualties. The source of the chart, and the data it includes, is unknown.]

Now, this is just a chart that I pulled off of the Internet eight years ago.
Many of the numbers are highly debatable, and now, out of date.

The Yellow represents 2,974 American Casualties on 9-11.
The Blue represents 1,035,587 Iraqi and Afghan civilian casualties in the following nine years after 9-11.

That's the debatable number... but even if the actual number is just a quarter of that number, it means we killed about one hundred times more civilians than were killed on 9-11.

As I said, these are old numbers, and so don't include the rise of ISIS, deaths in countries like Syria, and the US soldiers that took their own lives after returning from active duty.

All of this violence happened under Republican and Democrat leadership.

³ At first he called it operation "infinite justice." Ironically it was the Moslem community that protested saying "only God can bring infinite Justice." The name was changed to operation "enduring freedom," as if the US government could bring enduring freedom . . . no one seemed to protest.

None of this violence resurrected the 2,974 people that died on 9-11.
And I don't feel any safer today than I did on 9-12-2001.

I'm not saying this to make us feel guilty and try harder.
I'm saying this to expose our egos to the Glory of God so that the Truth might burn our pride to dust and ashes, leaving nothing but a Word: *Yeshua* —“God help us!”

Perhaps you may be thinking,
“*Peter, what could the government have done differently?*”
Well, I have a few suggestions, but I don't know if they're any good.

As I said last time, the beast is extremely hard to kill.
And “Beware when fighting the dragon, lest you become the dragon.”
I honestly don't see a political solution.
I don't know what the government could've done differently.

“OK Peter, what could we have done differently?”

Well, we could have not be so terrified of death.
We can only battle terrorism, by no longer being terrified.
We could drink the blood of the Lamb, speak the Word of our testimony, and love not our lives even unto death.

Last time we ended by remembering how Jesus battled the beast.
It's also the way, in which, he redeems the harlot and turns her into a Bride.

It was precisely when that old harlot, Jerusalem, chanted “Crucify crucify” . . .
At the instigation of the beast from the land, colluding with the beast from the sea . . .
That Christ conquered.
It was precisely when we took His life that He gave His life.
It was precisely when the Roman soldier thrust the spear in Jesus' side . . .
That the blood began to flow, and that beast dropped to his knees and began to worship
the Lamb enthroned on the tree on Mt. Zion.
It was precisely when the harlot wounded His side that the Bride was created from His side.
It was precisely then that she began to know, “*Yahweh* is my Helper”
It was then that we began to know The Good . . .
God alone is Good. And He gives us His Life. He is Beauty.

I love the scene at the end of *King Kong* when King falls from the Empire State Building.
In the 1976 version, it was the World Trade Center.
He falls because he tried to capture beauty in the form of the beautiful actress Ann Darrow. He captures beauty and beauty captures Kong's heart.
A reporter says, “It was the planes that got him.”
And Carl Denham played by Jack Black (in the 2005 version) says, “It wasn't planes that got him. It was Beauty killed the beast.” I love that line.

On the cross, beauty conquered the dragon, killed the beast, and turned the harlot into a Bride. That's how Jesus goes to war.

How do we go to war?

How does His Kingdom come His will get done on earth as it is in Heaven?

Revelation 13:18 says, *"This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of [a] man, and his number is 666."* (...like the sixth day of creation, the sixth day of the week, and sixth hour of the day, when we crucified the Lamb of God on a tree, in a garden, on Mt. Zion.)

Revelation 14:1-5

Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.

In Chapter 13, John sees the beast and now he sees something entirely different.

He sees the Lamb and 144,000 on Mt. Zion.

According to Orthodox Jews, this is where the woman was made from Adam's side.

This is where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac and became the father of faith.

This is the site of Jerusalem, the harlot, who turns into a bride.

This is the site of the temple of stone that becomes a temple of flesh.

This is where the Lamb is slaughtered.

But now He's singing or He is the Rhythm of the Song.

They all sing the New Song.

It appears to be the same "New Song" that's sung in chapter five.

*"Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth."*

—Revelation 5:9-10

In chapter five they sing it outside the scroll—outside of space and time, but now they're *in* space and time—*inside* the creation on Mt. Zion singing.

In the beginning, God spoke creation into existence or perhaps He sang it into existence.
That's how Tolkien describes it in the *Silmarillion*.
That's how CS Lewis describes it in the *Chronicles of Narnia*.
That's how many Hindus picture it . . . God sings or dances creation . . .
He is the dancer and creation is His dance.
That's even how physicists describe it today...
Quantum Field Theory pictures all matter as vibrations that manifest on multidimensional strings.

God speaks creation into existence with His Logos—His Word.
That's how John describes it in his gospel.
God is the singer. Jesus is the Song. And we become or *are* His dancing Body.

You are His creation, created on the sixth day and perfected on the Seventh Day.
The 144,000 have the name of God printed on their heads: *Yahweh*, I am that I am.
He is the Creator. On their foreheads they have the name of *Yahweh* and the name of *Yehoshua*, *Yeshua*, it means God is Salvation. They are perfect so if they had a number, I think it might be 777.

The Song they sing is praise! "Hallelujah...Hallelujah!"
[Peter begins to sing].
"It goes like this, the 4th, the 5th, the minor fall, the major lift (that's the 7th)."

The fall on the sixth day makes them long for the perfection on the seventh.
No one can learn the Song except the 144,000 redeemed from the earth.

You see? God has literally turned their sin into Grace, their sorrow into laughter, and their mourning into dancing.

They are the firstfruits of mankind (*ha adam* in Hebrew).
In Romans 11, Paul writes, "*If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump.*" These are holy. And *all* mankind is the whole lump!

As we preached on extensively in chapter seven, they are a picture of Israel, but not the Jewish nation-state named Israel, but the Israel of God. All 12 tribes times 12, times a 1000—the largest denomination in Biblical Greek. They are what theologians refer to as the Church Militant. They are soldiers.

They are soldiers and what are they fighting? Not the rest of mankind!
They're fighting *for* the rest of mankind in order to deliver *all* of mankind from the dragon, his beasts, and the great whore.

They have not defiled themselves with *women*.
In ancient times men of honor, like Uriah the Hittite, would keep themselves from sexual relations when called to war. Well, whether or not, that's what this means, the 144,000 have not defiled themselves with women.
But more than that, actually they *are* women.

They are “virgins,” it’s a female noun used for female persons like the Virgin Mary.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying, “*I betrothed you to one husband, one helper, to present you as an undefiled virgin to Christ.*” If you know anything about the Corinthians, you know they were the least un-virgin-like people in all the Roman Empire. Paul is saying, I washed you in the blood of Christ, and turned you hookers and harlots into a spotless Bride; remember who you are!

The 144,000 are singing soldier brides—or Bride—that follow the Lamb wherever He goes, whether it’s a party or a cross that’s where they all go—in perfect harmony with the Lamb, the Head, the Word, the Rhythm of the Song of God. They move as a Body.

When the beast moves, it looks like this:

[Image of an army marching in unison]

The Kingdom of God is not another beast.

The Kingdom of God is a Body.

- It’s not a covenant of self-interest that binds uniform individuals together for the sake of self-preservation.
- It’s a covenant of self-sacrifice that binds unique members together for fun, for joy, for no reason . . . for it is *the* Reason; it’s Love, and when everyone loves, it is Eternal Life.

It doesn’t look like this:

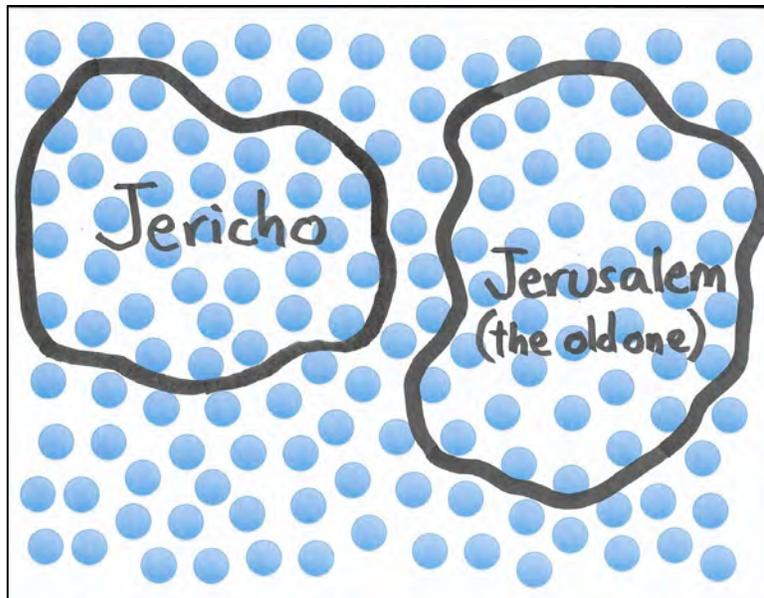


Figure 1 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

(We’ve talked about this in the previous sermons in this series)

It looks a little more like this:

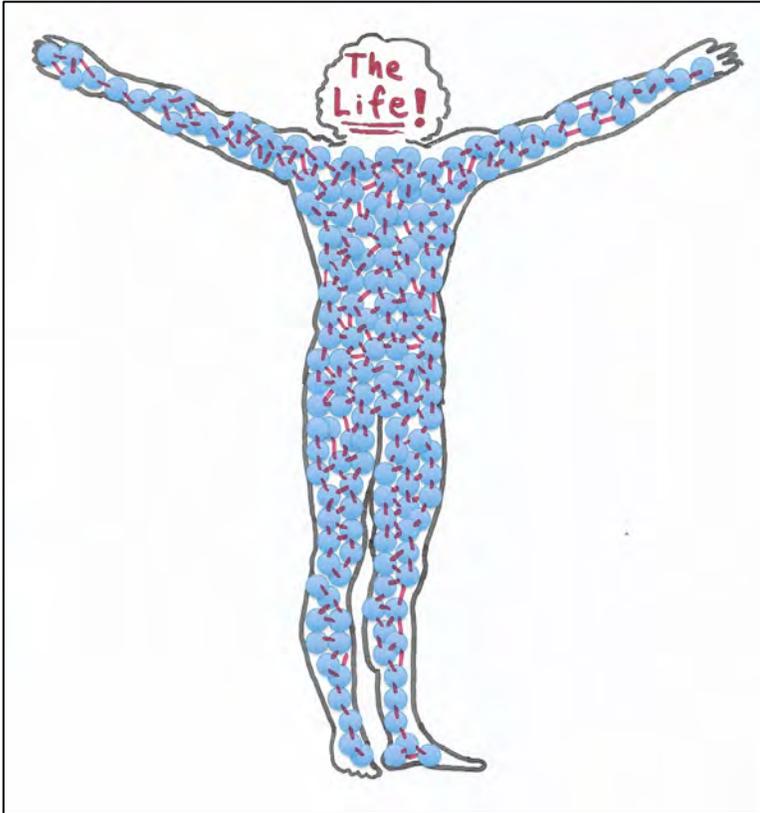


Figure 2 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

It doesn't move like this:

[Image of an army marching in unison]

It moves more like this:

[A clip of this couple dancing in perfect harmony—in silence—is shown]

[Peter begins to sing.]

I was travellin' down the road, feelin' hungry and cold
I saw a sign sayin' food and drinks for everyone...

Then somebody grabbed me, threw me outta my chair
Said before you can eat, you gotta dance like Fred Astaire-aire...
You know I can't dance...

You know I can't dance...

I can *march*... but I can't *dance*...

How do Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers do that?
That's got to be work, but it looks like rest.

How do they get billions of cells to move in perfect harmony, such that they manifest such beauty and seem to have such fun?
How can they manifest such order and experience such freedom all at the same time?
How do they do that? . . . They must be listening to music.

[A clip of this couple dancing in perfect harmony—to music—is shown]:

So . . . how do all 144,000 on Mt. Zion move in perfect harmony with the Lamb?

Revelation 14:6-7

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal (aionios) gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

Gospel means Good News or *Beautiful News*.

This Gospel is eternal and Paul writes that there is only one Gospel.

This Eternal Gospel must be the New Song.

And that's why the Song is always new; things don't get old in Eternity.

And that's why the dance is rest; it's the Seventh Day and everything is Good.

On the Seventh Day, you don't move to accomplish anything; you move because all things have been accomplished . . . "*It is finished!*"

And that's why the dance is free; you don't will to be anywhere else doing anything else other than what you're doing. You will what you want and want what you will.

This Eternal Gospel is the Good News that God's Judgment *has* come.

And where is it now?

You know we thought that God's Judgment was like a dead thing, like knowledge of Good and evil that we could take from a book; we thought it was the law.

But what if the Judgment of God isn't *knowledge* of the Good, but it *is* the Good?

What if the Good is not dead but alive?

What if the Word of God, Will of God, and Judgment of God is a Person?

And what if that Person could sit on the throne in the Sanctuary of your soul?

And sit on the throne in the sanctuary of your neighbor's soul...

And on the throne in the sanctuary of everyone's soul?

Well, then everyone could be coordinated and animated from the inside, rather than constrained and manipulated from the outside.

And what if that Person didn't want to possess your soul but wanted to commune with you in that sanctuary of your soul?

I mean what if that Person wanted you to sit on the throne with Him?

Well, then He might not possess your soul (like a demon) but romance your soul.

Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world, now will the ruler of this world be cast out, and I when I am lifted up from the earth—and he was speaking of being lifted on his cross—when I am lifted up from the earth I will romance all people to myself."

They're dancing on Mt. Zion because at the end of the sixth day Jesus delivered up His Spirit... the same Spirit that fills His disciples forty days later at the feast of Firstfruits, the feast of Pentecost, where they all begin praising God in tongues undoing the curse on the tower of Babel. They give glory to God and they all begin sharing everything in common like a great dance; they share all things with glad and generous hearts.

Faith in you is Christ in you—His Spirit in you.

Through Faith, we hear the Word of God that surrounds us like a song.

You know? There is incredible logic in every song... every bit of music. It's the insanely advanced math of seemingly infinite harmonic oscillations in the atmosphere all around you. You cannot comprehend all of the logic in a song, but the logic of a song can comprehend you... and make you dance.

The Gospel is Eternal and the Gospel is the New Song.

You don't create the Song.

It's the Song that creates you.

The Song is all around you.



Figure 3 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Everything Good, everything Beautiful, everything True, everything Reasonable, everything Truly Logical is a manifestation of the Song...

So, why aren't we nothing but Good, Beautiful, True, Reasonable and Logical—that is, full of *Logos*? Why aren't we dancing?

Well, maybe we can't hear the Song . . .

The Song is sung to the glory of God. (By the way, that's how you can distinguish between the voice of the Lamb and the voice of the beast that looks like the Lamb. *The Song* is to the glory of *God*.)

But almost everything I do is to the glory of me.

I think I have to glorify myself to make myself in the image of God.

But the glory of God is to make me in His own image.

So maybe I'll have to lose the self that I've made.



Figure 4 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Maybe I have to lose myself to see the Glory of God...
Maybe I'll have to forget my ego to hear the Song and start dancing.
It's hard to dance if I'm all self-conscious.

Maybe I'm imprisoned in one of these . . .

[Image of a boy inside a cage shaped like a man, by Igor Morski]

Imprisoned in an ego—the self that I make.

Maybe I've become beastly, just as we spoke of in the last sermon.

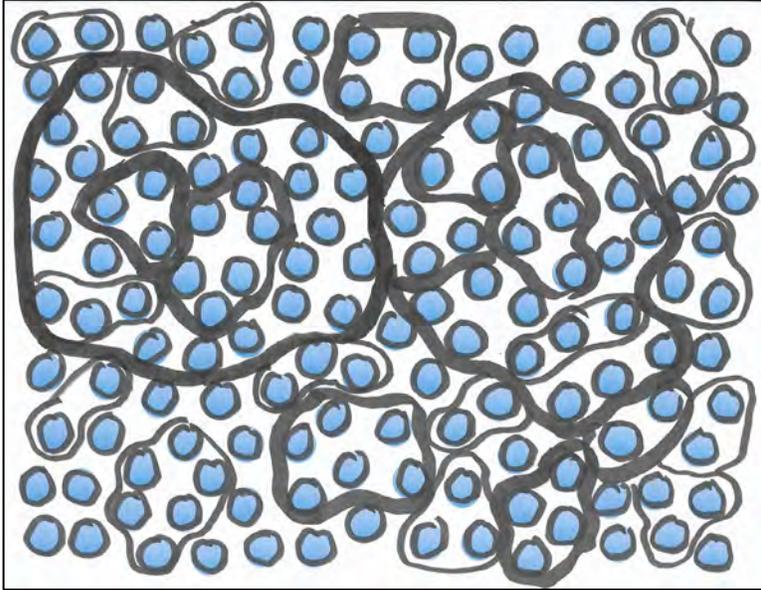


Figure 5 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

My city is a fortress, and my soul is a fortress, and inside the fortress is a lonely harlot—like Rahab, in Jericho.

Another angel, a second, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion [thumos: “anger”] of her sexual immorality [porneia].”

—Revelation 14:8

The Walls of Jericho fell on the seventh day, the seventh time around, as the seven priests blew seven trumpets before the Ark of the Covenant, and the people began to shout and sing.

You know?

It was the practice of the Israelites to put the choir in front of the Army.

It was when Jonah, sang a prayer in the belly of the beast, that the beast barfed him up on dry land.

It was when Jesus began to sing on the cross... the first line of Psalm 22, “My God my God why have you forsaken me...”

At the end of the sixth day, Jesus started singing on the tree in the garden on Mt. Zion and He kept singing even as He descended into Hell. He sang Psalm 22 all the way to the end: “Before him shall bow all who go down to the dust... they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.” “It is finished.” That’s the Seventh Day!

He sang and Matt. 27:51, the earth shook, tombs were opened and saints came out and went into the city.

It was when Paul and Silas sang that the earth shook and the prison doors flew open.

They sang to the glory of God and joined the Eternal Song that's sung around the throne and sung into creation making all things and making all things new.

Now you may scoff and think that's ridiculous. And yet, it's why you're here this morning.

We're not here because of the Edict of Milan when Constantine declared the Empire Christian...

We're not here because of the US military or any human institution.

We're here because some folks heard the Gospel and started to sing and their life became a dance.

The ancient dragon isn't in the least bit concerned with all the threats of the strongest militaries in the history of the world or the empty threats of terrorists. But . . . he himself, the ancient dragon, is utterly terrified when you hear the Gospel and begin to sing along, and maybe even dance.

In chapter 17 we'll read that the dragon, the beasts, and the harlot will make war on the Lamb and the Lamb will conquer them... the Lamb and those with Him—the 144,000 singing dancers.

The Song destroys the beasts, both the big ones and the little ones...

Remember Solomon wrote that God is testing us that we might see that we are but beasts.

Revelation 14:9-11

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast [Any worshiper of the beast (and remember last chapter 13:8, "all who dwell on the earth will worship the beast")] and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine [In the Revelation wine is blood and blood is wine] of God's wrath [thumos: translated "passion" last time in v.8] poured full strength into the cup of his anger and he will be tormented [basanizo: The last time we read this word it was translated "anguish." In chapter 12:2 the woman was in "anguish" to deliver... and we spoke of how our old man, must give birth to our new man which is the life of Christ.]

Any worshiper of the beast will be made to drink this wine that is also torment or anguish. They will be tormented or in anguish with fire and *theion*... [*Theion* is a word that can be translated brimstone or divinity... We'll come back to this a lot in the future.]

- *Theos* means God or the Divine.
- *Theion* is an adjective that can function as a noun meaning Divinity.

- It can also refer to sulfur and means something like “God stone,” for the ancients pictured it as coming from the mouth of God, like a word, just as it does in the Old Testament (Isaiah 30:33).

They will be anguished with fire and theion in the presence of the holy angels [“He makes his angels a flame of fire,” says Scripture]...”in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” [The Lamb appeared as the man of fire at the start of the Revelation. And Paul writes that Jesus will destroy the antichrist with just the “manifestation of his appearing—parousia.” 2 Thess. 2:8]

And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, [literally for “eons of eons” or “ages and ages.” Scripture says that we have come to the end of the ages in Christ Jesus. He is the Lord of the Sabbath—the Eternal Day. Jesus is the End. Jesus is eternal life—the life of God’s age] and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”

Maybe they have no rest because they’re stuck in the sixth day of creation,
And they won’t surrender to the symphony of the Seventh Day, which is God’s rest.
Maybe they have no rest because they think they have to make Good.
And they haven’t yet heard that the Good has made them; that’s Gospel!
They don’t rest because all their works are an arrogant illusion.

Cities, empires and nations do not abide . . .
But Faith, Hope, and Love are Eternal. The Great Dance is Eternal.
Every step in the dance is a deed that cannot be destroyed.
In fact, every step is a good work prepared beforehand that you would walk in it . . . or more accurately dance in it.

“You know I can’t dance. You know I can’t dance.”

Rev. 14:12-13

“Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of and their faith in Jesus” [literally: the faith of Jesus].

The faith of Jesus is literally in the saints... That is how it reads in Greek.
But why do they need to endure?

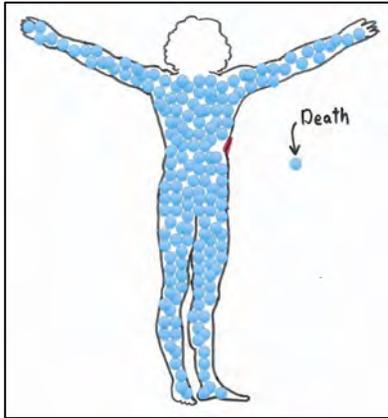
Unless perhaps their beastly old self is in the process of being burned away...
So that they’d be free to join the dance on Mt. Zion.

Paul writes, that we “were dead in our trespasses and sins and the un-circumcision of our flesh...” Dead... and “we are constantly being given up to death,” writes Paul.

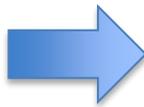
And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed [that means “happy”] are the dead who die in the Lord [as if Jesus came to help the dead die in Him] ...Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

Jesus, John, and Paul all speak as if we, humanity, are *already* dead.
And so physical death really isn't death; it's only a symbol of death.
Death is being cut off from life.

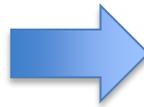
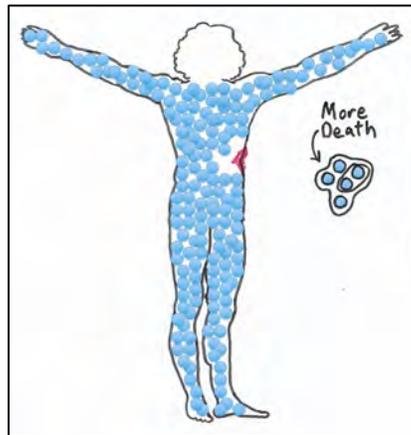
So . . .



This is death.

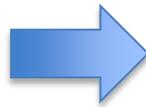


This is more death.

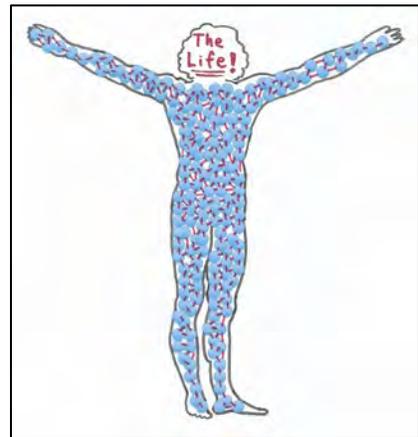


This is the death of death.
This is the second death.





This is Life!



Images by Peter Hiatt

The death of death happens at the cross.
Satan keeps us in lifelong bondage through the fear of death...
And we're already dead . . .
And the death of death is Eternal Life.

Do you see how we conquer?

- We conquer by the blood of the Lamb; it's the life that flows through our veins.
- The blood of the Lamb and the Logos of our testimony; it's the message that connects each cell to the Head and it's the Rhythm of the Song that animates all things.
- Blood of the Lamb, Logos of the testimony, Loving not our psyches (our individual lives) even unto death.

I hope you see how that liberates us from the tyranny of the beasts...
And I hope you see how that liberates you from the tyranny of your own ego.

Peter starts singing: "You know I can't dance... you know I can't dance."

Once I saw a movie about a boy that couldn't dance . . .
And the harder he tried to dance, the worse he was at dancing...
In the words of CS Lewis, *"As long as you have to count the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance."*

At the beginning of the sermon, maybe you felt yourself getting a bit burned; I was trying to burn all of us. But to dance, you have to lose yourself in the music to find yourself dancing. Slaves and children dance best because they don't have much self to lose.

It may feel like wrath when God reduces you to a slave, or a child, when he humbles you, cuts you, and burns your arrogant flesh away. It may *feel* like wrath, but it's *always*

Mercy. He's helping you lose yourself so you can finally listen to the Song and surrender to Joy.

One night this boy, sank into despair, gave up on dancing, and just listened to the radio...

Clip from *The Jerk*

[Steve Martin, the jerk, Navin, is settling down in bed for the night. All hope of being able to dance well is lost. He turns on the radio and is about to eat a Twinkie. The announcer says, "That's the gospel from the Full Gospel Tabernacle, now...music for it"...nice music begins to play. Just as Navin's about to bite into his Twinkie, he notices his toes moving back and forth to the music. A look of unbelievable excitement fills his face; he puts down his Twinkie...suddenly his fingers begin to snap along to the music. He gets up from his bed, taking care not to bring an end to the "miracle" that is taking place. He is beginning to dance. He enjoys his new found ability and then just *has* to share it with others.]

Navin: *Grandma! Grandma, Look!!* [His grandma gets up out of bed.]

Grandma: *What? What?* [She begins to turn off the radio.]

Navin: *Don't touch that radio!!*

[Navin runs over to turn it straight back on.]

It's unbelievable...unbelievable!!

[Now others join them in his Grandma's bedroom]

It speaks to me. This is unbelievable!

[Navin pushes everyone out of the way so he can unveil his new found gift!]

Now watch, watch!

[Navin begins moving up and down awkwardly on beat with the music and snapping his fingers.]

If this is out there...think how much more is out there!! "This kind of music speaks me; it tells me to go out there and be somebody!"

That's Navin... I've reflected on that scene for years.

In the end, Navin didn't dance to make himself Good.

The Music is Good, so Navin lost himself and found himself dancing.

The Dance destroys the work of the devil, but that's not the reason we dance.

The Dance is the Reason for all things.

The Great Dance is Love.

And God is Love—three Persons, One Dance, and He's inviting you to join the Dance.

Communion

This is the Logic of the Dance.

He took bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body which is for you."

And He took the cup saying, "[My dear,] This is the covenant in my blood; drink of it all of you."

[Peter starts singing.]

*I was travellin' down the road, feelin' hungry and cold
I saw a sign sayin' food and drinks for everyone...*

But this is the law: Before you can eat, you gotta dance like Fred Astaire.
And this is the Gospel: The Lord of the Dance says, "Here! Eat my body; drink my blood."

Why do we come here each week? Isn't it to confess, "You know I can't dance."
And the Lord of the Dance says, "Eat my body and drink my blood..."
And then we list to the Gospel and ingest the Gospel.
And then we start singing and dancing. We sing, "I can dance. I can dance."
And we know that we dance by Grace, *through* Faith, and this is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God. So, God alone gets the glory, and we are free.

In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Come to the table; it is the Life and Logos of God.

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.

28

**Glory, Glory, Hallelujah
(The Grim Reaper Isn't Grim)**

Glory Glory Hallelujah (The Grim Reaper isn't Grim)

Revelation 14:13–20

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

July 8, 2018

Peter Hiett

Band plays “Battle Hymn of the Republic” Lyrics by Julia Ward Howe

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on. Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory!
Hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps,
His day is marching on.

I have read His fiery gospel writ in rows of burnished steel!
"As ye deal with my condemners, so with you My grace shall deal!
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel, "
Since God is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

Prayer

Lord God, we pray that your Truth would march on. We pray that you would help us to preach, in Jesus' name, who is the Truth, and who is a double-edged sword, Amen.

Message

Last week, we began preaching on Revelation 14.

In chapter 13 John sees the beasts making a mess of things on the earth.

In chapter 14 his eyes see the glory of the coming of the Lord.

The Lord comes many times in the Revelation and yet, it's all one time.

It's the point at which eternity touches time. I think that's now.

“Now is the Judgment,” said Jesus.¹

¹ The beast was, is not, and is to come.

And now is the only way to dance—you have to be in the now.

Well, John sees the glory of the coming of the Lord and the 144,000 with Him. They all move in perfect harmony with Jesus, as they sing the new and eternal song, the Gospel.

John sees Jesus and His dancing Body.

Last time, we noted that learning to dance is less about seizing control and more about surrendering control. You have to lose yourself in the music to find yourself dancing.

The harder Navin tried to dance, the more self-conscious he got, and the worse he was at dancing. Until one day, he stopped thinking about dancing and just listened to the music.

Clip from *The Jerk*

[Steve Martin, the jerk, Navin, is settling down in bed for the night. All hope of being able to dance well is lost. He turns on the radio and is about to eat a Twinkie. The announcer says, "That's the gospel from the Full Gospel Tabernacle, now...music for it"...nice music begins to play. Just as Navin's about to bite into his Twinkie, he notices his toes moving back and forth to the music. A look of unbelievable excitement fills his face; he puts down his Twinkie...suddenly his fingers begin to snap along to the music. He gets up from his bed, taking care not to bring an end to the "miracle" that is taking place. He is beginning to dance. He enjoys his new found ability and then just *has* to share it with others.]

Navin: *Grandma! Grandma, Look!!* [His grandma gets up out of bed.]

Grandma: *What? What?* [She begins to turn off the radio.]

Navin: *Don't touch that radio!!*

[Navin runs over to turn it straight back on.]

It's unbelievable...unbelievable!!

[Now others join them in his Grandma's bedroom]

It speaks to me. This is unbelievable!

[Navin pushes everyone out of the way so he can unveil his new found gift!]

Now watch, watch!

[Navin begins moving up and down awkwardly on beat with the music and snapping his fingers.]

If this is out there...think how much more is out there!! "This kind of music speaks me; it tells me to go out there and be somebody!"

It's not that Navin didn't try to dance—it's just that his efforts were no longer labor but

He only has power in your fears about the past or the future.
But you can only know Jesus now.

rest; they were no longer constrained but free.

It's like the rhythm of the dance was incarnate in Navin's body. Navin couldn't comprehend the logic in the song, but the logic in the song comprehended Navin and set his feet to dancing.

The sermon was titled: "Blessed are the Dead who Die and Dance."

We ended at Revelation 14, verse 13 *"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!'"*

Blessed are the dead who die, not that have died . . . but who die.

We talked about the fact that Jesus, John, Paul, and much of the Bible talks as if physical death really isn't death . . . but separation from life is death.

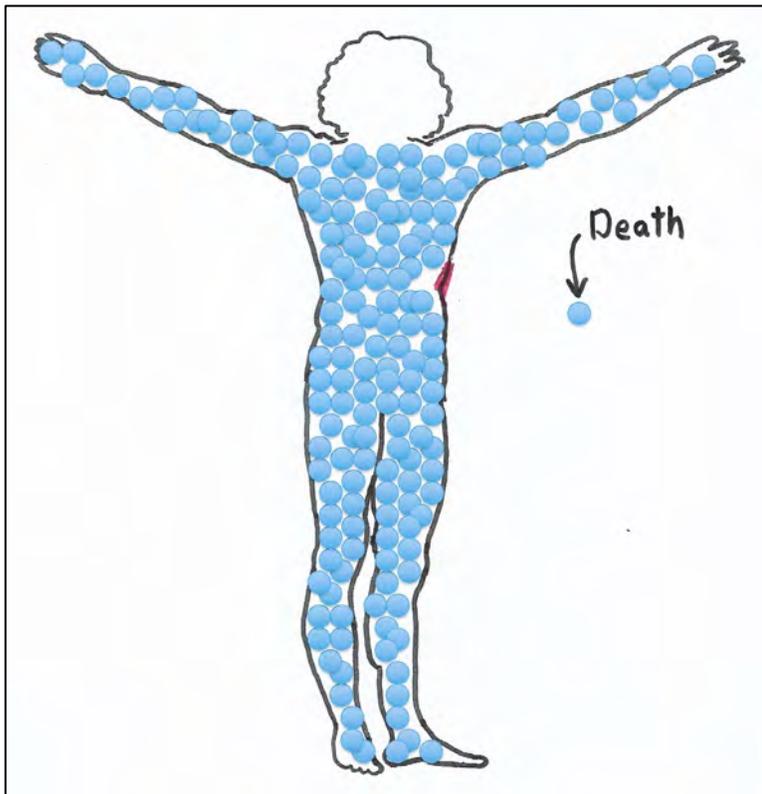


Figure 1 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

This is death . . . death is not the result of sin. Sin is choosing death. Those blue dots represent souls, and that one is lost and alone. The Lord said, *"The day you eat of it dying you will die."*²

² They took from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, They were separated from God who is Good and whose Word is Life,



Figure 2 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

This is more death. They built a city and hoped it was life.
These souls may pretend to Love, but they can't comprehend Love.

And cut off from the tree of Life, they died.



Figure 3 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

This is the death of death, which John calls the second death.

The death of death is Life.

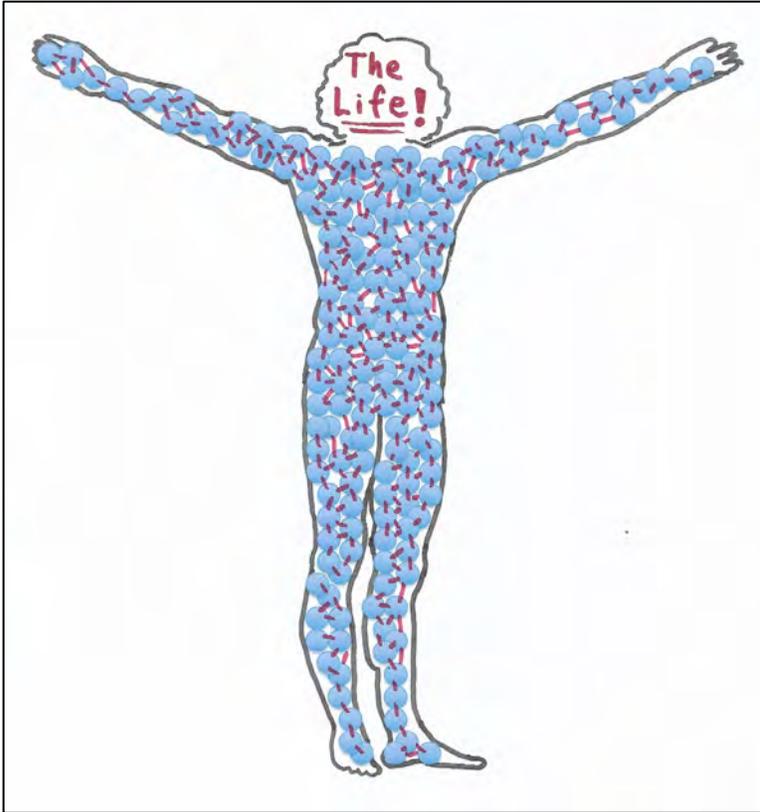


Figure 4 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

And Life is the great dance of Love.
God is Love: God is three persons and one Dance.
God is Love: And He is calling you to join Him.

You don't have to physically die to do so, but you do have to die...
It's not clear whether the dancers on Mt. Zion have physically died or not...
But they were dead and have died because they are redeemed.³

"Blessed are the dead who die" . . . and dance.

³ Paul taught that we were all dead in our trespasses and sins...
And then, before he physically died, Paul wrote, "It is no longer I that live"—that would mean he had been dead and died—"It's no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me."

See? Something else was in control of Paul's flesh and that something was the Logos of God, the Logic of the Song, the Rhythm in the Dance—Paul was dancing.
Paul was living through loving . . . and when he loved, he enjoyed the ride.
It wasn't labor but rest, it wasn't bondage but freedom.
He didn't dance for his own glory, but he reflected God's glory.
He became the manifestation of God's glory—the image of God.

Last week after the service, a friend asked me a great question: “How do you die?”

See? It’s not as easy as you think, once you realize that the true death isn’t the death of your body but the death of your soul. That’s why suicide won’t work. You can’t kill your self with your self; it’s just more self.

But my friend wasn’t asking about suicide; I think I know what he was asking:

- How do you stop thinking about the dance steps, and start dancing?
- How do you lose yourself and find yourself dancing?
- How do you forget yourself?

Have you ever tried to forget something?

The harder you try to forget the more you remember: *“Peter stop thinking about the fact that some of these people think your sermons are too long, and that you think you might be washed up, and you sometimes struggle to find your words and you want to be as funny as Alan but you’re not; you better stop thinking about you, you’re so stuck on you. What’s wrong with you?”*

How do you forget you?

How do you go to a party and stop worrying about yourself, long enough to really enjoy another self and so enjoy your own self?

How do you lose your self, and then find yourself loving, living and dancing?

Well, if you’re English, this is one way:

Clip of a British Crowd Watching a Football Match

[Several British people watch one of the final soccer games leading up to the World Cup together. They watch intensely in anticipation of the outcome of a play, then all together they cheer in glee and then begin dancing and celebrating together.]

Isn’t that amazing hundreds of boring, uptight, socially repressed British people... and suddenly they break out dancing, and in a few minutes they’re all singing the same song and moving together in an impromptu dance.

None of them are worried about looking silly or stupid.

None of them are worried about being judged; they just received the judgment: *England wins*, which means we win, which means I’m dancing.

That’s the power of Gospel—Gospel means Good News.

Unfortunately, none of those people are dancing today, for England lost to Croatia in the semifinals, and even if they hadn’t lost, the dance would’ve gotten old and they’d be worried about the final game.

But imagine if there really was Good News—an “Eternal Gospel.”

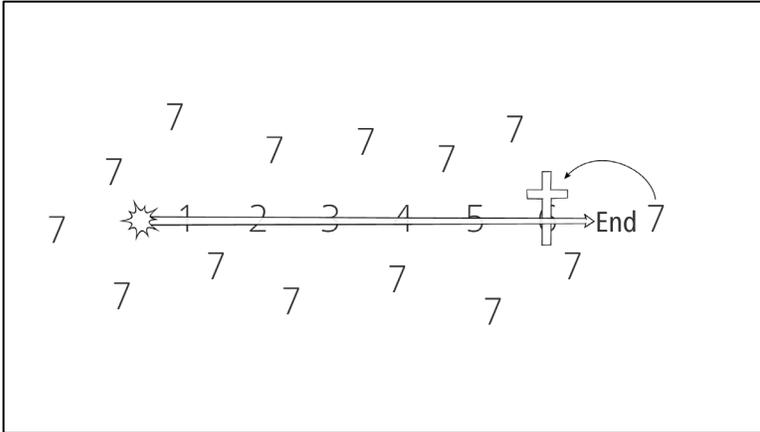


Figure 5 Image credit: Peter Hiett

I mean Good News that touched and transformed every moment in space and time and never got old, for things never get old in eternity.

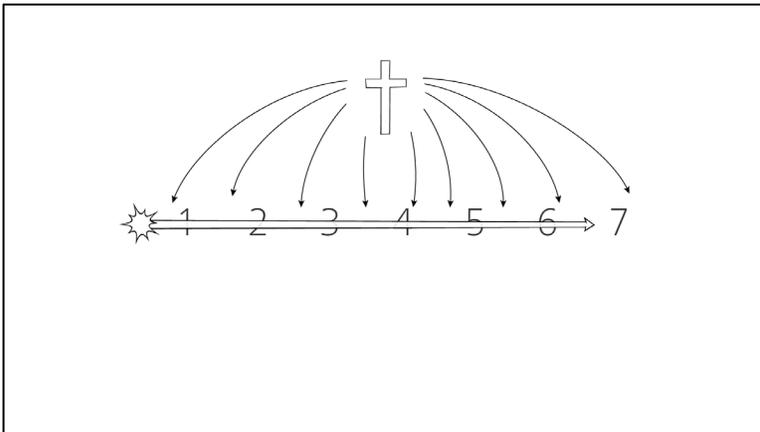


Figure 6 Image credit: Peter Hiett

In the Seventh Day, everything is new—every moment in space and time is filled with the Logos of Life, the Rhythm of the Dance. Jesus wins every where, every when, and every how.

Well, to lose yourself, you have to become pre-occupied with something bigger, better, or more beautiful than yourself. As we said last time, “It was beauty killed the beast.”⁴

Navin had his self humbled by circumstances and his inability to dance...
And then he heard beautiful music, lost himself in the music, and found himself

⁴ A great beauty can kill the selfish beast that is you... and it's a wonderful death.
When I first started dating Susan, I couldn't remember a thing. I drove through stop lights and stop signs; drove over the median on Broadway and bent the frame on my Dad's car...
And over the years I've come to actually think about her, rather than myself, every once in a while.

dancing... He was humbled and then exalted by a song.

So how do you die?

You look or listen to something bigger better or more beautiful than yourself.

If you really want to die, you look to God.

In Scripture, no one can truly see God and live . . .

That's how you die... And why are we so afraid to die?

Well, isn't because we're terrified of judgment?

We think, *"It's best just to be a wall-flower and not get carried away by the song."*

We think, *"I better maintain control because I might be judged."*

*"In fact, I better get to work on myself to prepare for judgment;
I better judge myself, save myself, and so redeem myself;
I better get to work."*

And so you do. And you know how it is... You work, and you work, and you work, but you can't rest; none of your deeds last, they all turn to dust.

And yet you know you'll be judged and you're not prepared for judgment.

So you think: "I better hide myself until I am . . ."

And yet you're fast becoming "I am not..." nothing but a shadow, alone in the dark—a ghost.

"Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord, from now on."

I suspect that also means, "Woe to the dead, who don't die."

My wife and I have had some weird encounters with ghosts.

The Old Testament refers to them as the *raphaim* or the familiar spirits, *obe*.

The New Testament uses the word *phantasma*.

I think they're the dead who won't die...

I have a slew of weird stories that we don't have time for...

But suffice it to say, I think that ghosts are souls that are convinced they must justify themselves before the Judgment. That is they're dead, but terrified to die and so they're stuck in space and time, in a place called *Sheol* or *Hades*.

"No one can truly see God and live . . . or stay dead."

When you truly see Him, you'll lose your *psyche* and find it.

Scripture commands us to never consult with the dead—that's necromancy.

And yet, I have preached to the dead . . . on at least three or four occasions of which I'm very much aware.

My wife is the church cleaning lady and our old building was built in 1890 on a graveyard. One day, she came and got me because she kept hearing weeping through a little door in the back of a closet. Together we went down into this dark space under the Sanctuary, where she saw figures huddled in the darkness. I had already bound evil

spirits and told them to leave, so I began telling these figures who Jesus was.

My wife (whom I've learned to trust with these things over the years) saw Jesus appear in the darkness, and a door open behind Him. And so I preached. I preached Gospel to the ghosts: "He loves you. You can trust Him. All is forgiven. You can go home." Susan said, "Peter, some are looking up. The moment they look up and see Jesus they're like transformed, they rise and go to Him and Jesus is taking them through a door. On the other side is daylight and an entire new creation." And then she said, "But Peter, some won't look up." She then heard Jesus say, "I'm leaving this door here, for those that will still come."

On Sunday mornings, I used to think of them when I'd preach, for that room was right under the spot in which I would be standing . . .

Why wouldn't they listen?

Why wouldn't they look up?

Why wouldn't they join the dance that is life?

Well, they were terrified of Judgment.

They were convinced they had to justify themselves before they could be judged.

They didn't realize that the Grim Reaper is not grim.

They didn't know that the Judgment is a harvest...

In Scripture, a harvest isn't grim; in fact, God always commands a party.

In Scripture, there are three harvests every year, and every one of them is a commanded party.... a feast, a festival, a holy day—that means holiday.

Passover comes at the barley harvest—it's the first in early spring. Jesus is the Passover Lamb and firstborn of all creation, firstborn from the dead. 1 Cor. 15:20 *"He is the firstfruits of them that have fallen asleep."*

Pentecost comes seven weeks after Passover at the wheat harvest, also called "the feast of first fruits" . . . the 144,000, the Church, is a kind of firstfruits.

The feast of ingathering—or tabernacle—comes at the grape harvest, when all the fruit of the field is gathered in and the winepress is trampled.ⁱ

A *Walk in the Clouds* video clip is shown. (See the next page)

Paul, the groom of Victoria Aragon strenuously harvests grapes under the morning sun. Victoria reaches over and grabs his pruning shears and shows him how to easily snip a bunch. Paul laughs as she moves back to her own.

The scene changes again to show a huge vat with a bunch of people dancing inside it in a circle. Everyone is singing and dancing outside it with a band playing as they stomp the grapes.

Song: *Crush the grapes! Crush the grapes!*

The scene focuses in on Paul and Victoria facing each other in the middle of a wine vat. People dance around them. The couple smiles and they move towards each other to kiss.

You should be familiar with that video clip. I've used it a gazillion times. They're harvesting grapes and dancing in a winepress—bride and groom. That might be painful if you're a grape, but it's definitely not grim.

[Peter begins singing] *"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."*

That's Revelation 14

- John sees the Lamb on Mt. Zion with the 144,000 singing warrior—brides dancing in perfect harmony (vs.1).
- An angel flies overhead with an "eternal gospel" to proclaim to all people (vs.6).
- The angel says, "*Fear God and give him glory for the hour of his judgment [krisis] has come.*"
- And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "*Write this: Blessed ["Blessed" means "not Grim"] are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.*" "*Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"* (v. 13) ⁵

Revelation 14:14-16

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.

So, John sees Jesus, our Passover Lamb.

⁵ Their dance is rest and it is eternal; all their deeds are movements in that great Dance.

Then, in verses 14-16, John sees Pentecost, the harvest of the wheat.
Next, in 17-20, John will see the Feast of Tabernacles, the grape harvest.
That feast lasted seven days and ended with an Eighth Day, which was viewed as an endless Seventh Day in which “all is finished and everything is good.” (*shemini atzeret*)

Well, here in verse 14, John looks and sees the Reaper.
He has a golden crown and is one like a son of man.⁶

According to Scripture, the devil had “the power of death,” but the power of death is the “fear of death” (Hebrews 2:14).

And the death of death is the Life . . . Jesus is the Life, the Resurrection, and the Life.
Jesus is the Angel of Yahweh, and Jesus is the Reaper. He said, “I will come for you.”
“Another angel” calls to Jesus from the heavenly temple, which is us: “Maranatha—
Come and get it; the harvest is ripe”

This angel must be the Holy Spirit in us, coming out of us or through us.

In Matthew (13:9) Jesus says that the Harvest is at “*the close of the age.*”

In Mark (4:26) He says, “*When the grain is ripe, at once the reaper, puts in the sickle.*”

In John (4:35) He says, “*look... the fields are white unto harvest.*” *They’re ripe.*

That’s fascinating in several ways.

For *one*, it means The Judgment was two thousand years ago, and probably still is now.
And *secondly*, it means that something rather strange is being harvested.

Think of what Jesus was looking at: A crowd of sinners, who would eventually abandon Him and crucify Him.

In John 12 Jesus says, “*The hour has come for the son of Man to be glorified. Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit... Now is the Judgment of this world.*”

Jesus is the Promised Seed, and Scripture says that we are God’s field.
That makes Jesus the thing that is reaped, as well as the Reaper.⁷

⁶ Now that shouldn’t surprise you, “Jesus said, ‘I will come for you...’”

It’s the Lord who numbers our days, not the devil.

⁷ “If it dies it bears much fruit,” says Jesus.

If the first death is seizing control and remaining alone, the second death is surrendering control and bearing much fruit.

You know all the scientists in the world can’t make a single piece of fruit.

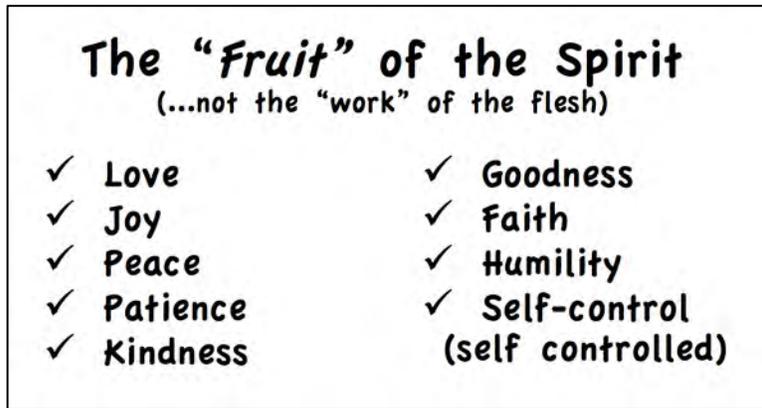
Every farmer knows he can’t make a single piece of fruit.

At best he can break up the field and throw some dung on it.

And if you were the field, all you could do is be broken and dunged . . . and then maybe watch as a seed in you turned your dirt and dung into a plant that absorbed the light and produced a miracle called fruit.

"If it dies it bears much fruit," said Jesus—The Passover Lamb.

When He died He delivered up His Spirit—the same Spirit that fell on the Church at Pentecost, when they all began to share everything in common with glad and generous hearts, as if their lives were a dance of Love."



According to Paul, the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faith, Humility, (*prautas*: meekness, humility) and Self-control (or self under control.)

If Love is a law, I end up hating Love because I can't fulfill it.

But Love is not a law, God is Love, and He fulfills me and sets my feet to dancing.

The dance is Joy, but when I manufacture joy, I make everyone sick.

And if I think I'll be judged on my ability to have peace, I'll get neurotic.

If I think I have to manufacture fruit to justify myself before God, before the Judgment

- I'll compete for kindness and become the worst kind of mean.
- I'll take the Good and crucify goodness.
- I'll manufacture faith, which is faith in my own faith, which is just the opposite of faith.

If I have faith in Susan, it's not to my glory but her glory.

She's the farmer and I'm the field.

She grew faith in me through years of faithfulness to me.

If I think I'm responsible for humility, I'll become to proud to dance.

Every mother knows that she must labor, but she cannot make a baby.

It's the baby that makes her a mother.

As we've learned, we are the Mother of Christ, born from our dirt and dung, like a baby born in a manger in a cattle stall.

Humility is not being ashamed of yourself or hating yourself.
Humility is forgetting yourself.

Jesus said, “*When you do good deeds, don’t even let your right hand know what your left hand is doing.*”

The only way I can be totally unaware of what my body is doing, and yet still be doing something logical, beautiful, and good is if I’m dancing—if I’ve lost myself and found myself dancing.

Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faith, Humility, **and Self-control**, which means self under control: *engkrateia*. (*Engkratia* is like a body no longer controlled by its own logic, but controlled by the Logos of God, the rhythm of the new and eternal song.)

Well, good deeds are “the *fruit* of the spirit.”
And bad deeds are “the *work* of the flesh.”

When I think I can manufacture the fruit of the Spirit, I make fake fruit.
I make works of the flesh that I advertise as a fruit of the Spirit:

I make envy and pretend it’s Love.
I make pride and pretend it’s Faith.
I make factions and pretend it’s Peace.
I make fake fruit, imitation fruit, in Greek, anti-fruit, like and antichrist—not just opposed to Christ but an imitation Christ—a lie about Christ.

Jesus told a parable about a farmer who sowed wheat and an enemy that sowed tares.

[Image of wheat and tares]

Tares look like wheat and yet are an entirely different species... they are imitation wheat or anti-wheat. Jesus said the enemy is the devil and in John, He tells us that the devil is the father of lies and that the Pharisees were of their father—the devil. The devil can’t father people, but he sows lies and those that believe the lies can make imitation people, proud people, and false people.

We can’t just pull up the tares without rooting up the wheat, according to Jesus.
We can’t judge because the roots are entangled.
We can’t judge others, and we can’t even judge ourselves for each of us is a field of good choices and bad choices, a field of good deeds and bad deeds.

Jesus said, “You can’t pull up the tares; you have to wait for the harvest.”
You see? It would be Good News if the harvest was now.
That would mean that the farmer would free you from your weeds...
And maybe he’d plant more seed, in your broken and dirty soil.

John the Baptist said that Christ will gather the wheat into the barn and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. After the wheat is separated from the tares (the weeds), it’s threshed to separate the chaff from the grain.

[Image of grain and chaff]

Some think, that some folks are wheat and others are chaff. But every grain of wheat grows within a casing that is chaff. (Isaiah 27:12) In the same way, Scripture claims that there is a New Man growing in the casing of your old man; a True Self growing in your false self.

That New Man is born of God and the old man is the work of your flesh.
The New Man gives glory to God & the old man receives glory from men & glorifies itself.

So, if you're proud of yourself, that self is chaff.
And if you're grateful for yourself, that self is wheat.⁸
If you're proud, if you exalt yourself and so are ashamed and arrogant all at once, you've confused yourself with the chaff, and you will be tormented by fire...

If God would separate you, from the chaff, before the fire, that would be very Good News.

Chaff is restlessness, bondage and makes you a terrible dancer
And yet, God does grow a kernel of wheat within the confines of chaff....

Well, thank God for good deeds in you because they are the deeds of God in you.
But should you thank God for the chaff and the tares?
And why did God ever allow bad deeds, and bad people, in the first place?

Many commentators seem to think that Revelation 14:14-16—the harvest of wheat is the harvest of good deeds. And that Revelation 14:18-20 is the harvest of bad deeds, for the angel harvests grapes that are thrown into the winepress of the wrath of God.

⁸ The New Man is wheat

And the old man is chaff—He is the restless work of the ego that will be burned and turn to ash.

The New Man consists of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, humility and self under control, the fruit of the spirit.

The old man is the work of the flesh, which is more flesh—Gal.5:19:

- It's *porneia*, the attempt to buy and sell love.
- It's desecration instead of creation; it's debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, rivalry, jealousy, anger, ambition, divisions, factionalism.
- It's thinking you've won because another has lost and so delighting in their damnation for you think it means your salvation.
- It is the beast that is your ego.
- It's the old self in control.
- It is everything that keeps you from dancing.

It thinks good deeds are bank accounts, houses, businesses, degrees, awards, titles like doctor or reverend, institutions like seminaries, and programs like mission projects. One day they will all burn, but the faith, hope and love in those mission projects, seminaries, institutions and bank accounts will not burn. And it could be that the faith in a widow's mite offered at the temple, was greater than the faith of King Solomon who thinks he built it.

Revelation 14:17-20

Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.

It says "another angel" came out of the temple . . . maybe it's not Jesus.
And "another angel" that came from the altar called to the first.
This may still be a picture of Jesus and His Spirit, but if it's not where are they now?

Well, in Chapter 19 verse 15 we read that Jesus treads (present tense), He treads the winepress of the *thumos*, the passion of the wrath of God. That's where you'll find Him, Bride of Christ, in the winepress.

The Lord says, "Vengeance is mine" and we all want vengeance—*ekdikesis* in Greek—it literally means "out right" or "bring out righteousness," as if it was stuck in something.

Around 800 BC Joel prophesied that someone would tread the winepress, filled with the enemies of Israel, filled with evil (Joel 3:13). If you're an oppressed people group, that's pretty good news.

Around 500 BC Isaiah prophesied the same thing . . . In chapter 63:1-10
He sees a great warrior, covered in garments stained red.
He comes from trampling winepress.

At first, we might think Isaiah is prophesying that the Lord will trample Israel's enemies, and in that way save Israel . . . and He is. But then we wonder if Israel is God's enemy.

v.10) We read that the Lord became the enemy of Israel.

v.6) The Lord says, "*I trampled down the peoples...*"

That might include His peoples.

v.5) The Lord says, "*So my own arm saved me and brought me salvation.*"

Why would God need salvation? Why would God save God?

- You know if my children need to be saved, I also need to be saved.

- If my children have an enemy, I have the very same enemy, even if the enemy is them . . . or me.

- "*My own arm brought me salvation,*" says God the Father.

v.4) "*I have trodden the wine press alone and from the peoples none was there to help me.*"

v.1) The watchmen sees that this warrior comes from Edom.

Edom is another name for Esau.

Esau was the first-born and Jacob cheated Esau out of his birthright.

Jacob is another name for Israel.

Israel is another name for us... And Jesus is the firstborn...

Well, we all want vengeance upon our enemies—and that it might happen is truly Good News. We want vengeance upon those who are evil, but as we grow we realize that we too are those that are evil.

We gain knowledge of Good and evil, and in the words of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, we come to realize that “the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart--and through all human hearts. . .”

I love the Battle Hymn of the Republic because it’s not really about the republic. In 1861 Julia Howe heard some soldiers singing a similar song, and a pastor friend suggested to Julia that she could write better lyrics for their song. She did. And so the soldiers sang a new song. I think it’s eternal [Peter begins to sing]:

“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword.”

In Revelation 19, we read that He treads the winepress and that He wields a sword, which comes from his mouth, with which he slays the nations... the peoples. In verse 18, we find that the sword severs the flesh from “all men,” not “some men.”

In Scripture, grape juice is called the “blood of the grape” (Deut. 32:14). It is pressed from the flesh of the grape.

It appears that “all flesh” is in the winepress of the passion of the wrath of God. In Romans, Paul writes about “sin in the flesh.” He talks as if sin in the flesh, is like juice in a grape, which is like the blood in our bodies. And at the winepress, Christ crushes it, and that is God’s vengeance.

But this is the crazy thing: a winepress makes wine—this is blood that’s wine and wine that’s blood—and the reapers are not grim. And the one who treads the winepress is named “*God is salvation.*”

The winepress is trodden outside the city. That’s where the flesh of the sin offering was to be burned. And that’s where our Lord’s flesh was crushed on a tree. Isaiah 53 says, “*The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... it was the will of the Lord to crush him... when his soul makes an offering for sin.*”

So, Jesus *tramples* . . . and Jesus is the one who *is trampled*.

Romans 8:3 “*God sent his son in the likeness of sin . . . full flesh and for sin, to condemn sin in the flesh.*” How did Jesus get His flesh full of sin?

2nd Cor. 5:21 “*For our sake, God made him to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God.*”

In the winepress, God transforms our sin into righteousness. And this must be the vengeance of God—How he brings out righteousness.

Life that we've kept as our own, becomes life for others, and that's righteousness.

On the cross, God in Christ Jesus transforms our sin into righteousness.
On the tree, in the Garden, just outside the walls of Jerusalem our Bridegroom is crushed and we gain the knowledge of Good.

We take God's life and see that He's always given His Life.

We gain the knowledge of Good and evil.

Taking the Life is evil... and offering the Life for another is Good.

We gain knowledge and receive life, and begin to bleed Life of others.

The Life is in the blood and the blood is wine and the wine is blood.

What else could the winepress of the passion of the wrath of God be, other than the cross of Christ? But I never hear anyone talk about that.

But the church fathers taught that (such as Gregory the Great and Augustine of Hippo).
And it's been represented in art down through the ages.

This is a painting from 1490



Figure 7 Christ in the winepress; in: Kuttenger Kantonale; Vienna, Austrian National Library, Music Collection; Mus. Hs. 15501; fol. 86v

This is from a Calvinist in 1596



Figure 8 Image credit: Karel van Mander (Meulebeke, 1548 - Amsterdam, 1606)

This is from Germany in 1649

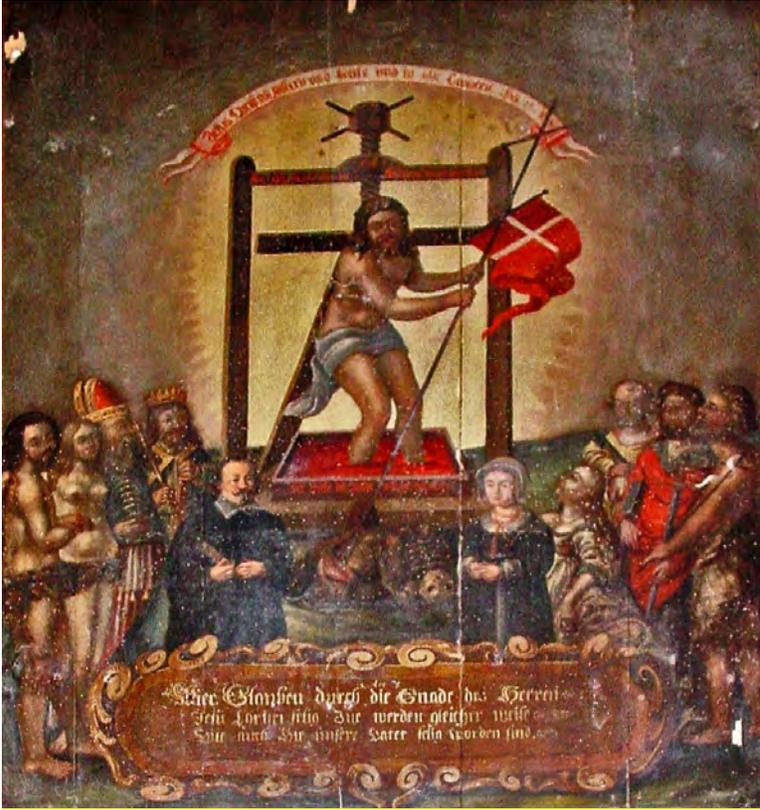


Figure 9 Image credit (photo by): Dieter Horst Steinmetz [CC BY-SA 2.0], via Wikimedia Commons

The naked folks to the left are Adam and Eve; you see they're no strangers to this press, this cross, and this tree.

And so what are the grapes of wrath?

Well, I'm pretty sure these are the grapes of wrath . . . (See next page)

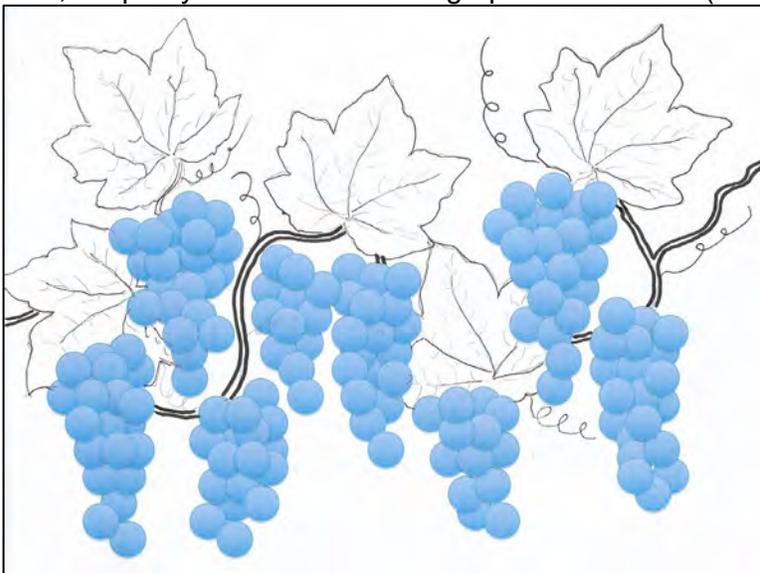


Figure 10 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

And now if you've been tracking with these sermons (in this series), hopefully, you'll think,

"Hey a blue bubble represents my soul, my psyche!"

Exactly: You have to lose your psyche, to find it, and start dancing.

You might think: *"But didn't God create my soul when He breathed the breath of life into the dust?"*

Yes Exactly: Your life is God's life and Christ is that Life. He is the Life. He is the Life in your soul.

If you refuse to surrender the Life, if you hold the breath of Life as if it were your own life, you'll puff up and turn blue. If you refuse to expire, just as you were inspired, you're dead and will remain alone. Adam didn't know that it was not good to be alone.

So, in the Garden, God planted a tree and on the tree was Life. And on the tree was the knowledge of the Good, for the Life is the Good. God is Good and Christ is Life.

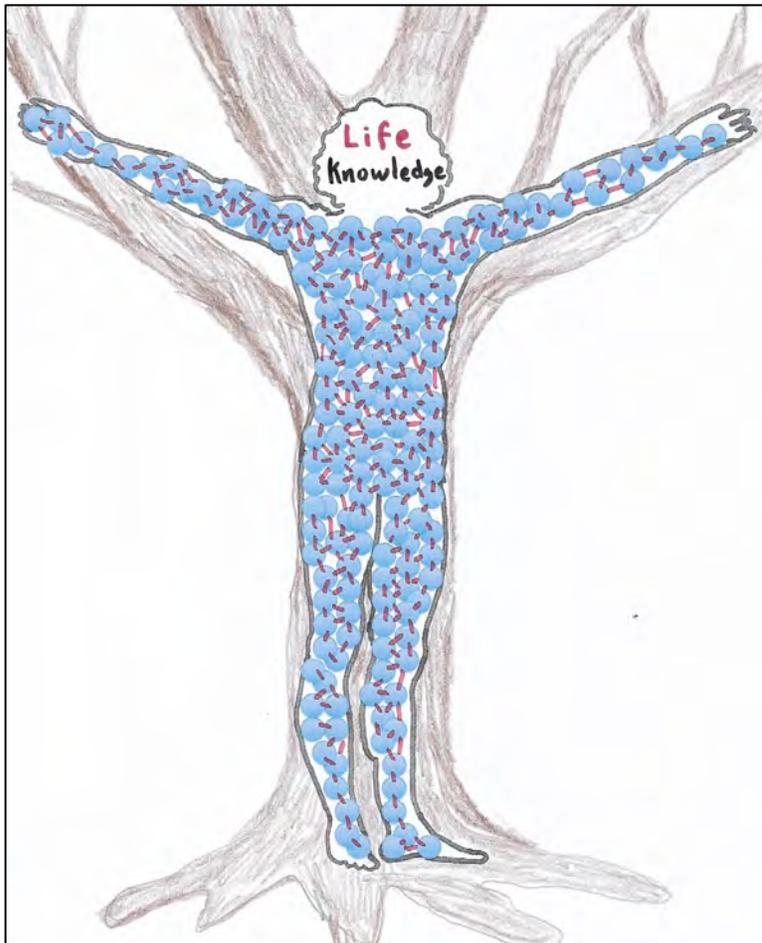


Figure 11 Image credit: Peter Hiett

We took the Good, to make ourselves Good, which is evil.
Which means we took the Life, which is death.

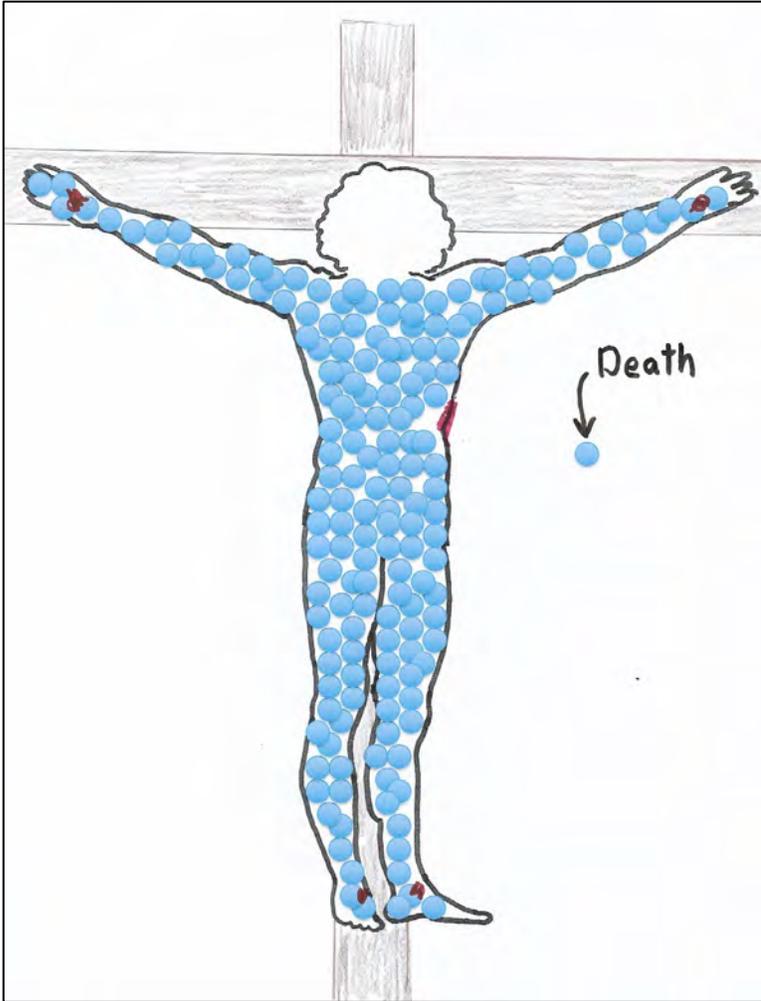


Figure 12 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

We took the Life, which is death.
But Christ revealed that God has always given the Life, which is the Good.

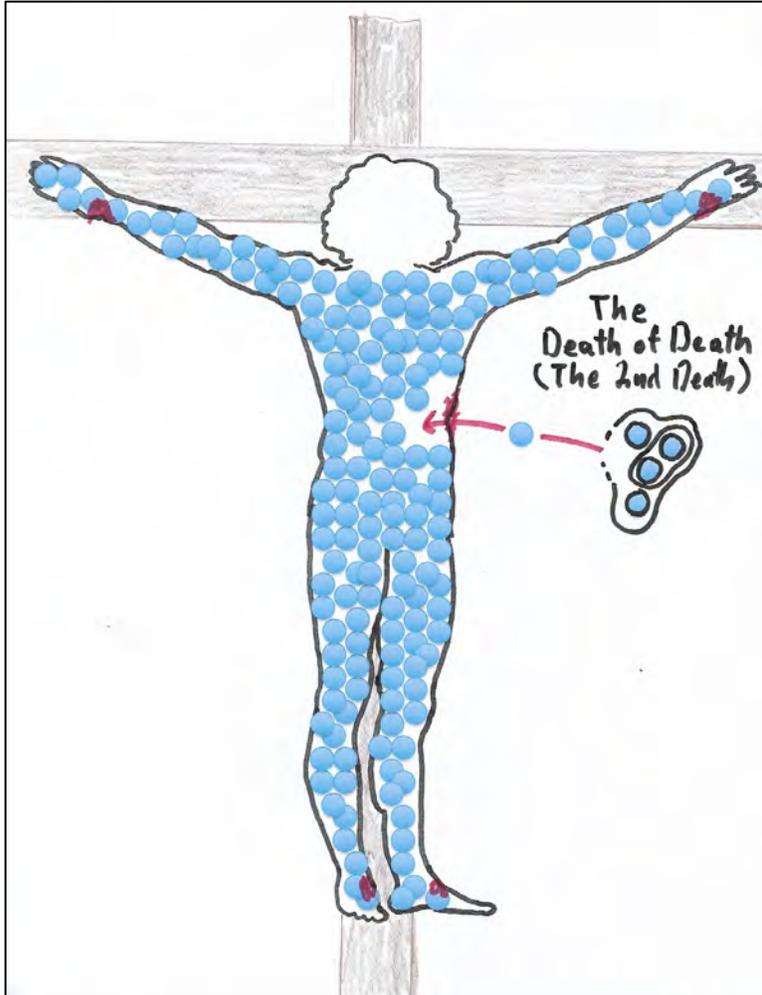


Figure 13 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

So, at the cross we gain knowledge of the Good, which is giving your life.
And so we surrender our lives, for Christ has given His Life.
We surrender our lives, which are actually dead.

But the death of death is Eternal Life.

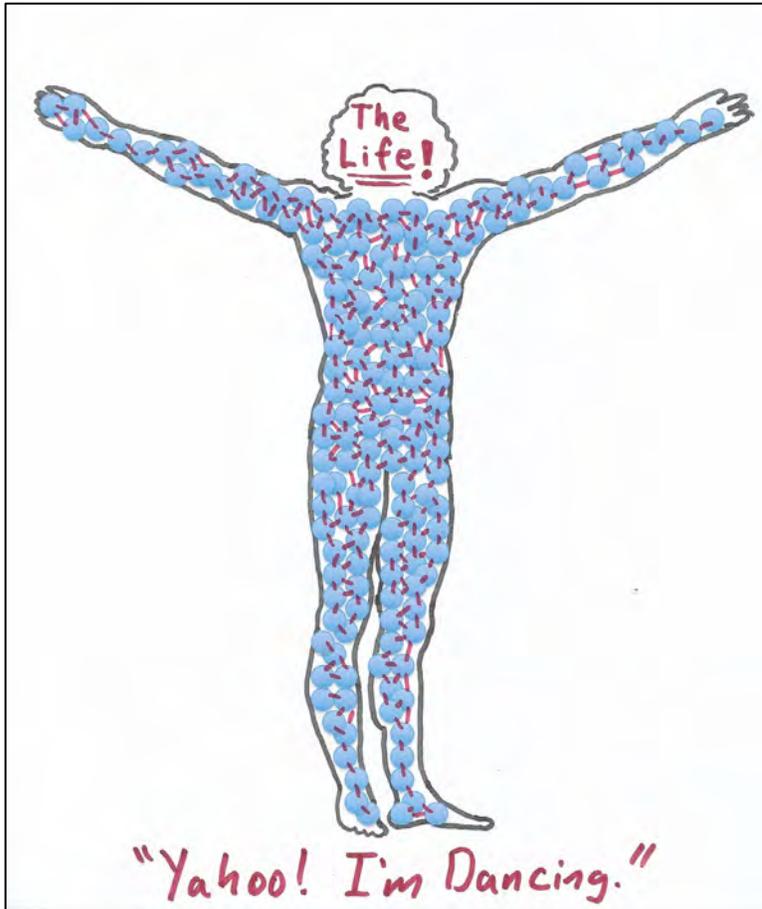


Figure 14 Image credit: Peter Hiett

And what is Eternal Life?

It's an endless Communion of Life that circulates through Body of Christ.

It's a River of Life coursing through vessels of Mercy that were once vessels of wrath.

So, what is a grape of wrath?

It's you separated from God, holding your breath, holding on to your "own life."

And with what is God so angry?

He's angry at the separation, which is death.

And what is His desire?

The death of death, which is Life, a Communion of Love.

And what is His solution—He tramples the winepress, and He is also the One that is trampled; He is absolute Mercy

It's how He saves Himself from the pain of being separated from you.

And it's how He creates in you a desire . . . the desire for Life, and He is Life . . .

Such that you would know the Good and choose the Good in Freedom.

Such that you would no longer be a vessel of wrath but a vessel of Mercy.

Such that you would bleed Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faith, Gentleness, and Self-control.

You would bleed it; you wouldn't hang onto it as if it were your own.
Such that you'd grow fruit and rejoice at every chance to give it away.
Such that you would join the great Dance.
Such that you would love as you have been loved.
Such that you would be made in the very image of God.

You see? The Judgment of God not only separates Good deeds from bad.
It takes your bad deeds and transforms them into God's good deed, which is you, the new you—your new and eternal self.

That's how God makes a St. Peter, St. Paul, or St. John
He lets them sin and then He reveals His Mercy.
And Peter the coward becomes the rock on which He builds His Church.
And Paul the chief (meaning first and foremost) of sinners becomes the apostle of Grace.
And John the son of thunder (called the son of thunder because he had so much anger) becomes the apostle of Love.

The Judgment of God reveals that all your good deeds are God's deeds.
And it transforms all your bad deeds into mercy.
So the Judgment of God is the death of your ego.
The Judgment of God is the only way to truly die.
The Judgment of God is the death of death that will set your feet to dancing.

People don't dance because they're afraid of Judgment.
But God's Judgment will make you dance.

You cannot justify yourself before the Judgment of God.
But the Judgment of God justifies you.

You can't comprehend the Judgment of God.
But the Judgment of God will comprehend you.

The Judgment of God is the Great Dance.
The Judgment of God is Beauty.
(It's Beauty that kills the beast and transforms the harlot into the Bride)

The Judgment of God can look painful in this world,
But it's the ecstasy of the next.
When one person loves it looks like a man on a cross.
When two people love, it looks like a great marriage.
And when everybody loves it looks like a party or a dance, it looks like a living, dancing, blessed Body—the Body of Christ.

The Judgment of God is the harvest of the earth, and have you noticed what it is that's being harvested?
It's wheat and grapes.

It's bread and wine.
It's Body and Blood.
It's the Body of Christ.
It's humanity in the image of God . . .

When and where everything is good and all is finished.

The Judgment of God is everything that you truly desire.
The Judgment of God is the eternal Gospel.
The Judgment of God is Jesus.

And why am I telling you this? Why am I telling me this?
Why do I preach to the dead?

So we'd look up and run to the Judgment of God, and maybe even start dancing.
[Peter begins to sing]

*He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.*

Close your eyes. You are now sitting before His Judgment seat of the Living God.
Pray this prayer with me, in the Sanctuary of your heart.

Lord God, I am your field and I am your vineyard.
You are the Lord of the harvest. Judge me Jesus.

Lord, I am your field and I can't separate the wheat from the tares. I try, but I can't
But I give you the field.
Thank you for the good that you have grown in me. Thank you for the wheat.
And I surrender the tares . . . all the ways I've pretended to be good when I'm bad.
Lord, I don't know what is wheat and what is a tare, but you do; it's your field.

And I surrender the chaff . . . perhaps some of these things were necessary in the
past, but I need them no longer. Thank you for the grain that you grew in the chaff.
It's yours.

I am your field and I am your vineyard.
You are the Vine and I am the branches...
You supply me with Life—that is your very self—you are “the Life.”
But I have considered my life to be my own; that's sin.
Take it to your winepress, where you turn it into Grace.
Thank you that where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more.
It's yours.
Judge me Jesus.
It's not my harvest. I am *your* harvest.

Communion

He took bread and broke it saying this is my body given to you; take an eat.

And He took the cup of saying, "This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you, and do it in remembrance of me."

This is His judgment seat. And I think He's saying something like this to you:

"Come die with me and rise with me....

Let's enjoy *our* harvest...

We can start dancing even in the winepress."

That's Good News.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

I don't know if the dead are listening right now.

I don't know if some of the *raphaim*, the *phantasms*, or *obes* are still cowering in the dark under the sanctuary refusing to look up.

If they are, I believe Jesus is with them.

Because I'm a dad, and I'm not a great dad, but if one of my kids is going to be lost, I'm going to be lost with them. So, I think He's there by the power of His Spirit whispering, "You can open your eyes."

Isaiah prophesied that the earth would give birth to the *raphaim*, the dead.

And we will read in three chapters that, in the end, that place will be thrown in the lake of Holy Fire, and death will be no more.

[See the next page for the benediction]

Benediction

This is my point this morning: You don't need to fear death.

If you've been to this table (the communion table)... you were dead... and you just died.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," from now on.

If you believe it . . . you will start dancing.

You believe, but also don't believe... (He's still growing belief in you. Faith is a fruit of His Spirit) so you dance a little, but not a lot.

And so every day, even every moment, come and sit before the Judgment seat . . . sit before Him and remember that you are not the Lord of the harvest...until you know with every fiber of your being that the harvest is not yours, but you are the Lord's harvest.

That's Gospel!

And He is an excellent farmer, a wonderful reaper, a marvelous baker, and He makes the most exquisite of all wine.

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.

¹ It seems that Paul is referencing the three great feasts in 1 Corinthians 15:23-26. Notice that God redeems all in Christ, just as all suffer the fall in Adam (Christ is the *Eschatos* Adam). Then Paul describes how this happens: Christ the Passover and firstborn is resurrected (That's the first feast, the barley harvest, Passover). Then the Church, the 144,000, the "Israel of God" is resurrected (That's the feast of Pentecost, the wheat harvest). Then in the end of the growing season, all are resurrected to Life (That's the feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles, when the grapes and all fruits (olives, etc., etc.) are harvested.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. – 1Cor. 15:20-26

29

The Gospel of Perfect Wrath

The Gospel of Perfect Wrath

Revelation 14:19–16:1

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

August 12, 2018

Peter Hiett

Prayer

Father, I pray that you would help us to preach so this isn't just me rambling on but that you, would speak to us, maybe even through my lips and through your Spirit in our hearts. So, Lord God, we offer ourselves to you and we ask that we would preach that it wouldn't just be me, it would be us, it would be you. May you be glorified in Jesus' name.

Message

Revelation 16:1 “*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.’*”

If you haven't been to church in a while you picked a great day to come. We're preaching through the Revelation and today we're beginning to discuss the seven bowls of the wrath of God... Yippee!

Wrath translates the Greek word: *thumos*. That noun appears to come from a verb that means to sacrifice. It's also translated passion or fury; it refers to a burst of passion or anger... In one way, it may seem very esoteric and hard to understand... And yet I think y'all have a pretty good idea as to what it means.



Figure 1 Image credit: Peter Hiett

This is a picture of the rearview mirror and windshield in our old Dodge Durango. It died a couple of months ago and before I left it at my friend's shop, I took this picture.

I took the picture, because of the spitball stuck to the mirror. About seventeen years ago on family vacation, my son shot this spitball at me. It stuck to the mirror and I left it there to remind me of him. To me, it's worth more than the car.

To the right of the mirror, you can see something like an impact crater. It's not directly related to the spitball, but it might help explain my wrath. About seventeen years ago, we were driving down a freeway in Phoenix Arizona on our family vacation. Jonathan, Elizabeth, Becky, and Coleman were in the back. My bride Susan was sitting next to me in the front.

All at once, I caught a glimpse of something out of the corner of my eye and almost immediately heard an impact that sounded like a bomb. A huge chunk of mud and rock had hit the windshield on the passenger side and, for an instant, I thought my bride was dead.

In front of me—just far enough away so you couldn't see the sign on the back: "*Not responsible for broken windshields*"—was a huge gravel truck changing lanes and dropping dirt and rocks onto the freeway.

Once I saw that Susan was alive, I was suddenly overwhelmed by this raging passionate fury that just seemed to well up from somewhere deep in my soul. I started chasing this huge gravel truck with my Dodge Durango... I pulled up next to it honking, pointing to the windshield and pointing to the truck, and I'm not sure that I always used the appropriate finger.

I wanted to run this gravel truck off the freeway, but the Dodge Durango was too small and this guy wouldn't pull over... I wanted to catch him and consume him with a raging ball of *thumos* fire. I couldn't stop. I couldn't rest. It was like my blood was on fire. It freaked the kids out and later it freaked me out.

But you see, for a second I thought he took my bride's life and maybe my children's lives... and now I wanted to take his life. In the words of John Rambo, "*He drew first blood...*" and now I wanted his blood. And that's pretty much a summary of the history of our world, isn't it?

- It's why armies ride war horses into war... (They want blood).
- It's why people demand blood for blood until the whole world is swimming in blood...

And yet, that wrath of mine was a testament to my love. I mean I wouldn't have felt wrath if I didn't first feel Love my bride, my children, and even my self. I mean, I knew that what happened was so wrong because my wife and kids were so right... so good... And to take the Good, which is the Life, is the very definition of evil. "The life is in the blood," says Scripture. If you've never felt wrath, I highly doubt that you've ever felt love... not even for yourself.

CS Lewis wrote, "Wrath is the fluid love bleeds."

Well, the *thumos* didn't subside until I remembered that I'd been a truck driver and not always a good one. I once drove a supply truck the wrong way down a parking garage exit destroying thousands of dollars worth of high-pressure sprinkling system and creating a flood of water and *thumos*...

So anyway, I think that was *thumos* that day; it's the fluid love bleeds.

Now, I'm kind of a coward, and not much of a fighter, so it surprised me that day and it really surprised me as a new father. A husband loves his Bride and Scripture says that our Maker is our Husband. And a father loves his children and Jesus taught us to pray, "*Our Father...*"

One day when I was a new father, I took my son Jonathan with me to Walgreens. Along with him, he brought this little Mickey Mouse Candy Pez Dispenser that I had bought him earlier in the day.

All that day he'd been interrupting me saying, "*See Mickey Mouse, see Mickey Mouse,*" which really meant, "*See me, see me, see me.*" I'd stop what I was doing and say, "*Wow that's awesome. You're awesome!*"

Well, while we were at the counter at Walgreens, Jon was standing on his tippy toes, held up his Mickey Mouse candy Pez dispenser and said, "*See Mickey Mouse. See Mickey Mouse. See Mickey Mouse.*" Some high school kid was checking us out... and he just wouldn't stop and see...

Finally, Jon was just screaming, "***See Mickey Mouse, See Mickey Mouse,***" when this kid finally stopped and said, "*Yeah kid, I see Mickey Mouse*" and went right back to ringing up our items, and I don't think he saw Mickey Mouse.

All of a sudden, I felt it. I remember grabbing the railing behind me because my blood began to boil. I pictured myself jumping the counter grabbing that kid by the throat and screaming, "*Look at Mickey Mouse; that's the best Mickey Mouse candy Pez dispenser in this whole damn world. **See Mickey Mouse and see my son!***" That's *thumos*.

I was about to go off on this kid: "*See my son you moron. See my son.*" When I think I felt God go off on me: I think I heard Him say, "*See my son, Peter. See My son.*" "*See my son behind the counter, having a hard day.*"

Jon is twenty-nine now, and he's had some hard days and I can easily imagine him, on one of those days, not truly seeing a four-year-old and his candy Pez dispenser.

*"See my son behind the counter. See my son in the last and the least of these."
"See my son in the poor and naked. See my son in the sick and imprisoned."
"He calls out to you... and Peter you don't see... you don't even want to look."
"Peter? Did you know I'm a father? Don't you think that I feel wrath?"*

“I’m his father, and I’m Jon’s father and I’m your father.”

What does a good father do when one of his children won’t see another one of his children... ?

What do I do when Jon won’t see Elizabeth and Elizabeth won’t see Jon...?

What do I do when Jon won’t see himself and love himself?

What do I do when one of my kids becomes his own worst enemy?

What do I do if my bride becomes her own worst enemy?

What do I do if my son wants to harm himself?

Do I kill him or do I kiss him? Or maybe both?

What does a good father do with all his wrath?

Jesus said, “Don’t let the sun go down on your anger.”

How does God not let the sun go down on His anger?

What does a good father do with all his wrath?

When I read the word wrath in Revelation 15, I immediately thought of those two experiences of wrath... And then I thought of a third.

It was a spring night almost thirty-seven years ago...

I was sitting in the back of a large ornate sanctuary and I was watching as my dad was being tried by the Presbytery of Denver . . . (that was the local governing body of the Presbyterian Church USA.) I knew my father to be the most loving and honest person I’d ever met. But there were some people that wanted power and they felt that they could get it by accusing my father and taking his church. (The Church is the Bride of Christ and consists of the children of God the Father.)

A man from a committee had just stood up and called my dad a liar. And then I watched as they took his church away, took my church away, and took my life away. They took the church away and they were the church—I watched the church crucify my father. Last week, Karl’s sermon was entitled “Healing the church wound.” Well, the church wounded me and yet, I am the church. And blood was just gushing from every wound.

I remember this absolutely intense rage... I wanted to beat the hell out of that guy and consume that entire place with a giant bowl of burning *thumos*... but I couldn’t without being arrested...

I honestly did not know what to do with all my anger... I was angry at the church, I think maybe even angry with my dad for letting it happen, and maybe most of all angry at God—because God did let it happen.

Ironically, it was around that time that I decided to go into the ministry. I had wanted to be a geologist, but now I wanted to be a pastor. I didn’t know what to do with all my anger. I was so angry, and, even more, angry that God didn’t seem to get angry.

I think that's why most folks don't believe in God. And by that I mean, they don't trust God, and usually, hate God. Because God won't get angry the way they get angry.

I think that's why we crucified Jesus.

He didn't seem to get angry at the right people in the right way.

He obviously didn't condone robbery and prostitution...

And yet, He would host dinners for tax collectors and whores.

He obviously didn't condone Roman tyranny and oppression, but instead of leading an insurrection against Rome, He allowed Romans to nail Him to a tree in a garden just outside the walls of Jerusalem. He allowed it and He obviously could've stopped it.

Most seem to think He messed up on His first visit and that's why He needs to come again...

[Image of Jesus with a halo over his head and holding a machine gun]

"The first time He was nice, but the second time He'll be mean," they say. But Scripture says that Jesus is the same yesterday today and forever, and it says that God does not change.

People don't trust God, and people don't trust the Gospel we're called to preach. Whenever I point out what Scripture clearly says about God reconciling all things to Himself making peace by the blood of Jesus, someone will invariably say, "*What about Hitler?*"

And by that, they mean "*What about my ex-wife, who broke my heart*" or

"What about the man who abused me as a child?"

You see, they don't trust that God is angry enough;
they don't trust that God hates evil enough.

And so, even though the Bible *never* teaches this, it's pretty popular to preach...

It's pretty popular to preach,

"Well God is forgiving now, but you just wait, one day He'll change."

"God is Love, but also justice... and by justice, we mean the opposite of love."

"God is Love, and the very opposite of Love."

"One day God will be angry, and the sun will never go down on His anger because

He'll stop the sun and be angry forever without end...

"He will torture people forever without end."

That's popular to preach...

There are a lot of folks that really like that message.

It's good news to them, but it's not good news to God.

It would mean that He's endlessly angry, which means that He can never rest—*Shabbat*—Seventh Day.

It would mean that He must be endlessly unsatisfied with His own creation.

It would mean that He must endlessly hate His own children.
It would mean that He must endlessly endure the work of the devil.
It would mean that His wrath has no purpose, no goal... so God tortures people just for the hell of it... and that *doesn't* sound like God, but everything God is not... It sounds like the devil.

Well, I'm just pointing out that some folks don't believe in God 'cause they think He doesn't get angry enough...
And some folks don't believe in God cause they hear He gets so angry that His wrath never comes to an end...
Some don't trust God 'cause He doesn't seem to have enough wrath.
Some don't trust God 'cause He seems to have too much wrath.
And all don't trust God 'cause His wrath seems to be indiscriminate.

You know what I mean:
Some very good things seem to happen to some very bad people.
And some very bad things seem to happen to some very good people—like Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Job... or Jesus.

Well, we're all angry about God's anger... aren't we? And that because we've all judged God's judgment... That's why I was angry with the truck driver in Phoenix: He had bad judgment; he should've never driven that truck without sweeping the dirt clods off of the fender. And God should've never put two naked people in a garden with an evil talking snake and a tree in the middle of that garden that could get a person killed... or crucified.

Well anyway, our text begins where we left off last time (we've been building up to this in the previous sermons of this series):

So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia. Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last (the eschatos), for with them the wrath (thumos) of God is finished (from teleo, "to end" and telos "the end").

—Revelation 14:19-15:1

The *thumos* of God is finished.
On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished" same Greek word *teleo*.
And John points out that Jesus was referring to all things.
Jesus is the *eschatos*, (which means "the last"), and Jesus is the *telos* (which means "the end.")

As you remember, according to Scripture, and Jesus, and even some physicists, time looks like this.

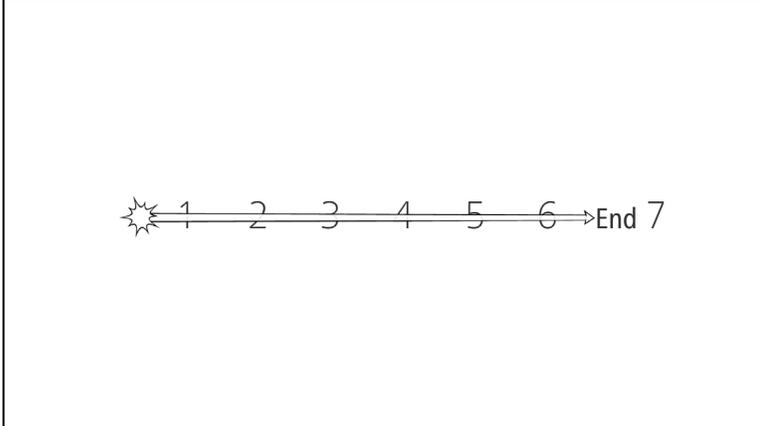


Figure 2 Image credit: Peter Hiett

Six days are six ages that, to us, appear to be about 14 billion years. Humanity is created in the 6th day and finished by the Seventh Day when everything is Good and you are good and so God rests from all His labor. So, if you aren't perfectly good, God is still working, making you in His Image and God is not yet finished, and so for you, it must still be the sixth day of creation. Scripture says that we come to the end of the ages, the end of days, the end of time, when we come to Jesus and He cries, "It is finished."

So, time looks something like this.

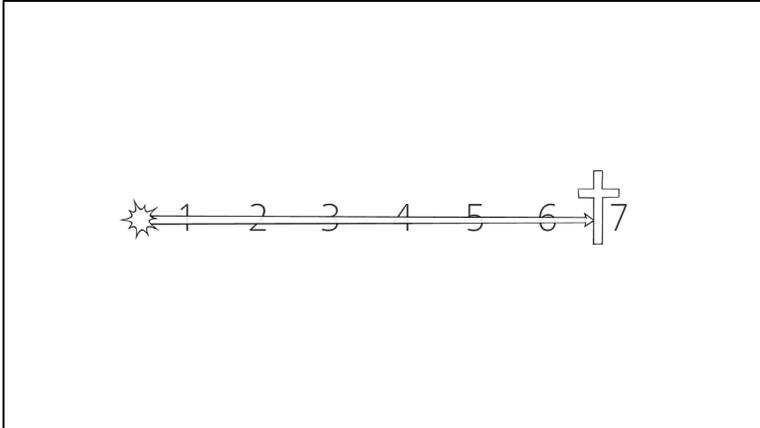


Figure 3 Image credit: Peter Hiett

Or maybe something like this.

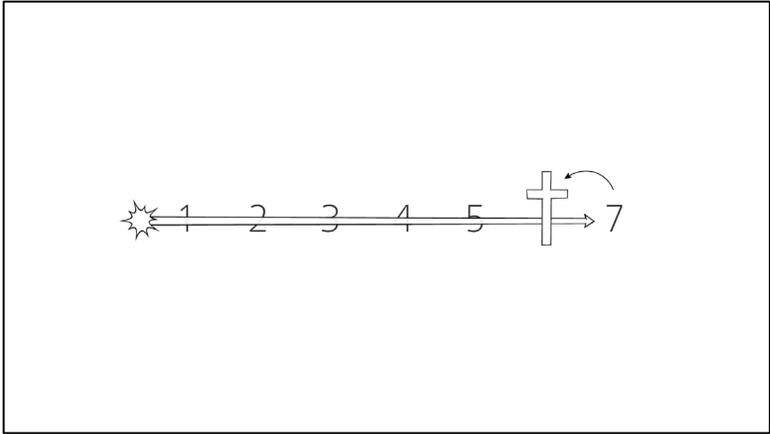


Figure 4 Image credit: Peter Hiett

Or maybe something like this. We've talked about all of that.

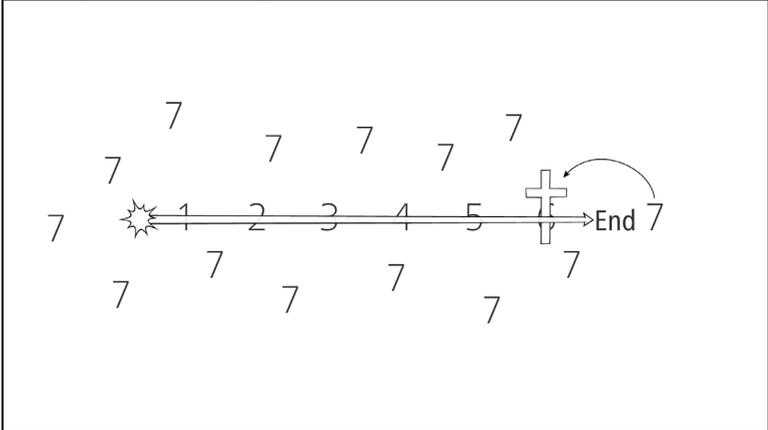


Figure 5 Image credit: Peter Hiett

Whatever the case, Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead is the door from time into eternity... The door from the sixth day when God creates man, to the endless Seventh Day, when all is finished and everything, everything, *everything* is Good.

He's crucified on the sixth day of creation, on the sixth day of the week, during the sixth hour of the day (666). And they make sure His body is taken down from the tree before the sun goes down and the Sabbath begins... the Seventh Day. So you see, maybe God doesn't allow the sun to go down upon His anger.

Well, no matter whether you followed that or not, did you notice that the *thumos* of God comes to an end? God is not angry forever without end. But not only does his anger come to an end, it comes to a *telos*. That means it comes to perfection.

That means that all of God's *thumos* has a purpose.
That means that with His *thumos* in time, God accomplishes His purpose for all eternity... and God has purposed to make us in His own image.

You know God's wrath is not like our wrath.
In Scripture, God even like plans His wrath.
Paul writes, "He consigned all to disobedience..." (And disobedience is what ticks Him off). "*He consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all.*" He plans His wrath and His wrath accomplishes His purpose, and unless you're already perfect, haven't yet seen what His wrath will accomplish.

Well, you see, we get angry 'cause we don't trust God's anger.
That is, we judge God 'cause we don't trust His judgment.
But we haven't yet seen what it is that His Judgment will accomplish.

Remember this cartoon?

[Cartoon: "The Far Side" by Gary Larson: God taking the planet Earth out of the oven, thinks to himself, "Something tells me this thing's only half-baked."]

"Something tells me this thing is only half-baked," says God...
But we look at the world, assume it's finished, and get angry 'cause it's not Good.
Well if it's not all good, God is still creating it, and still creating you, and we just learned that He uses *thumos* to do it. (It needs to go back in the oven for a time.)

The *thumos* of God has a *telos* (a goal) .
It means that one day you'll see things as they truly are and you'll thank God for His wrath, for it accomplishes that for which it is sent.
It's perfect.
It's not too little, and it's not too much, and it's not indiscriminate...
It's applied to each in just the right way to create just the right person that is the absolutely perfect and eternal you... and each one of us is gloriously different.

Now I can't fully explain God's judgment or His wrath, especially as it's applied to over seven billion utterly unique, but equally loved, people...
I can't fully explain His wrath, but I can believe what He says about his wrath:
It comes to an End and the End is Good. The End is perfect.
I can't fully explain it, but I can believe it, and maybe I can even see it.

What is John looking at?
Remember this book is titled *The Revelation of Jesus*. It is NOT titled
The Revelation of Weird Things That Might Happen 2500 Years From Now.

What is John looking at?
Revelation 14:19-16:1

So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia. (That's the length of the land of Israel.)

- This winepress is just outside Jerusalem & just where Jesus was crucified.
- It makes blood that's wine and wine that's blood.
- It forms a river that fills the land to the depths of a horse's bridle.
- In John's day horses were used almost exclusively for war.
- The warhorses come to a stop in a sea of blood that flows from the winepress. (Like... "You wanted blood...now you got blood.")

Then I saw another sign in heaven...

[“another sign,” I think it's the same thing from a different angle.]

Then I saw another sign in heaven great and amazing, seven angels...

[*angelos* that means messengers in Greek]

with seven plagues...

[*pleges* in Greek. It's where we get the English word plague, but it means wound or

more literally “stripe” like the mark made from a whip... like the prophecy in Isaiah 53: “*with his stripes we are healed*”. Jesus already told us, “I am the *eschatos*—the last.”]

seven angels with seven wounds, which are the last (the eschatos), for with them the wrath (the thumos) of God is finished.

[“*It is finished. It is accomplished. It is perfected.*” In chapter 22, Jesus will say, I Am the End.”]

*And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number [666] of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps [*kitharas*: “guitars”] of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,*

“Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?

*For you alone are holy. All nations [not some, **all**] will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”*

*After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, (*pleges*, stripes or wounds) clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath (the passion) of God who lives forever and ever, ⁸ and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no*

one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues (stripes or wounds) of the seven angels were finished (teleo). Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth (the land) the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

And as we'll see next time, these wounds from heaven become wounds on earth, just like the wounds you see every night on the evening news.

So, what is John looking at?

Well it starts with a vision of this.

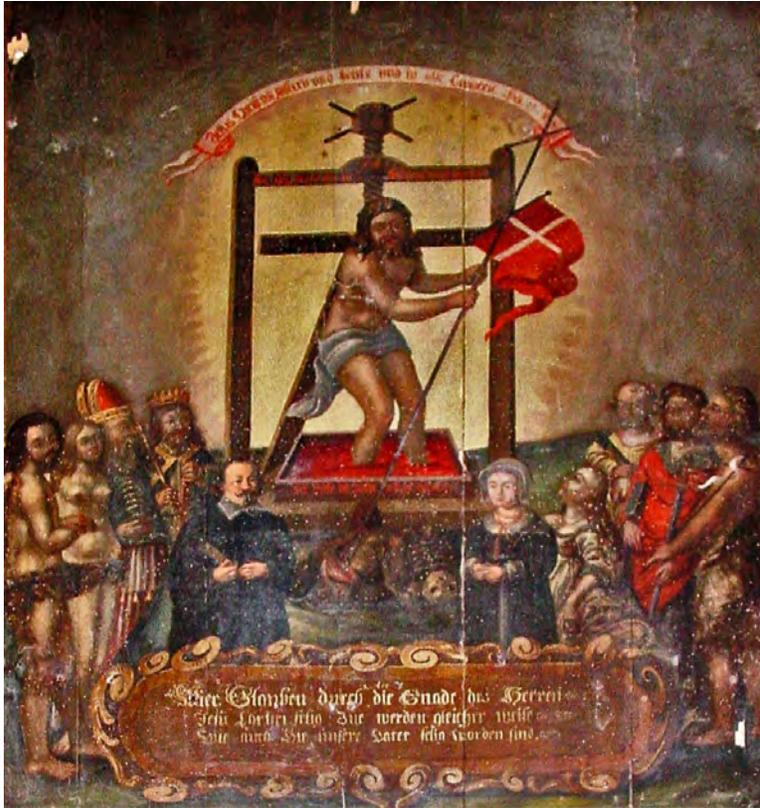


Figure 6 Image credit (photo by): Dieter Horst Steinmetz [CC BY-SA 2.0], via Wikimedia Commons

The winepress of the fury of the wrath of God.

Last time we saw, what the early church saw, and that is that the winepress must be the cross of Christ. And *the grapes of wrath*, which are *vessels of wrath*, must be the *human soul*. God is angry at the human soul that is separated from Him. He's angry at the separation because He loves every soul, for each soul contains His breath, His life.

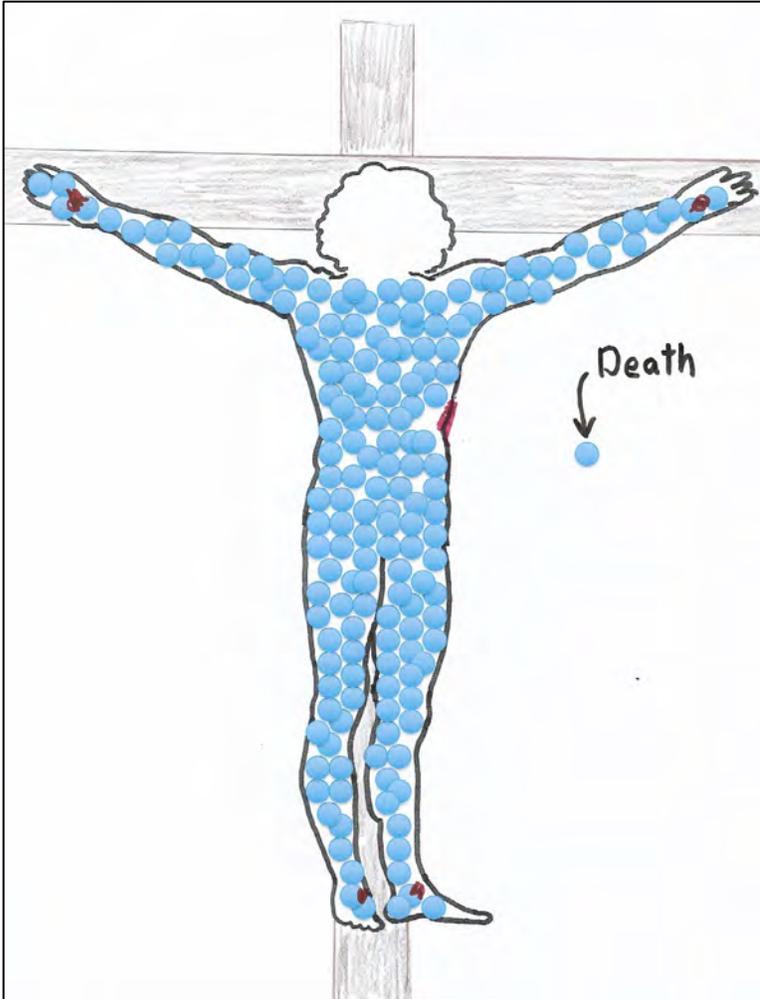


Figure 7 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Our souls are separated from God for we each take our life and claim it as our own life... and yet Jesus is the Life. Taking "the Life" is the definition of sin and the day we do, we die.

Every sin is saying, to God I take the life but I won't surrender my life.

- It's like breathing in and refusing to breathe out.
- It's like a body part that receives blood but won't bleed blood... and so it can't receive more blood... it dies.
- It's like being totally self-centered and never learning to love. It's death.

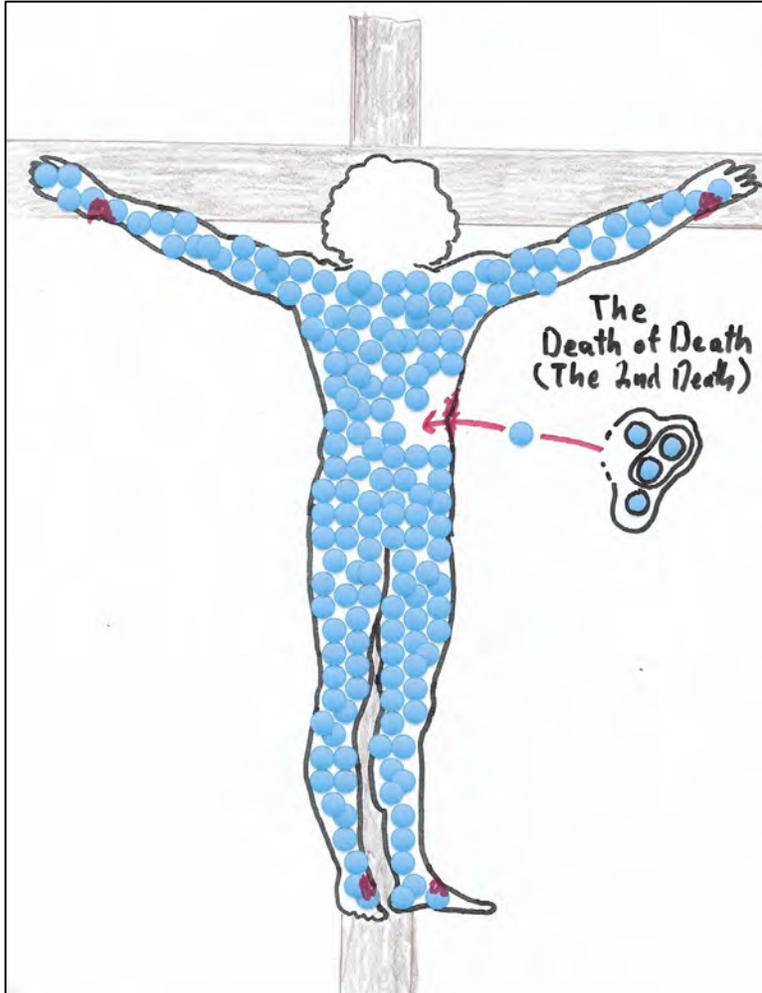


Figure 8 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

The cross works the death of death, which is the resurrection and life.

- At the cross, God turns vessels of wrath into vessels of Mercy.
- At the cross, He turns blood clots into blood vessels.
- At the cross, God gives us the will to love, which is the will to give life to others. Jesus is the very Will of God bleeding into us.
- At the cross God takes our sin and turns it into His Wine—it's called Grace. It's His river of life that flows through all the members of His Body.

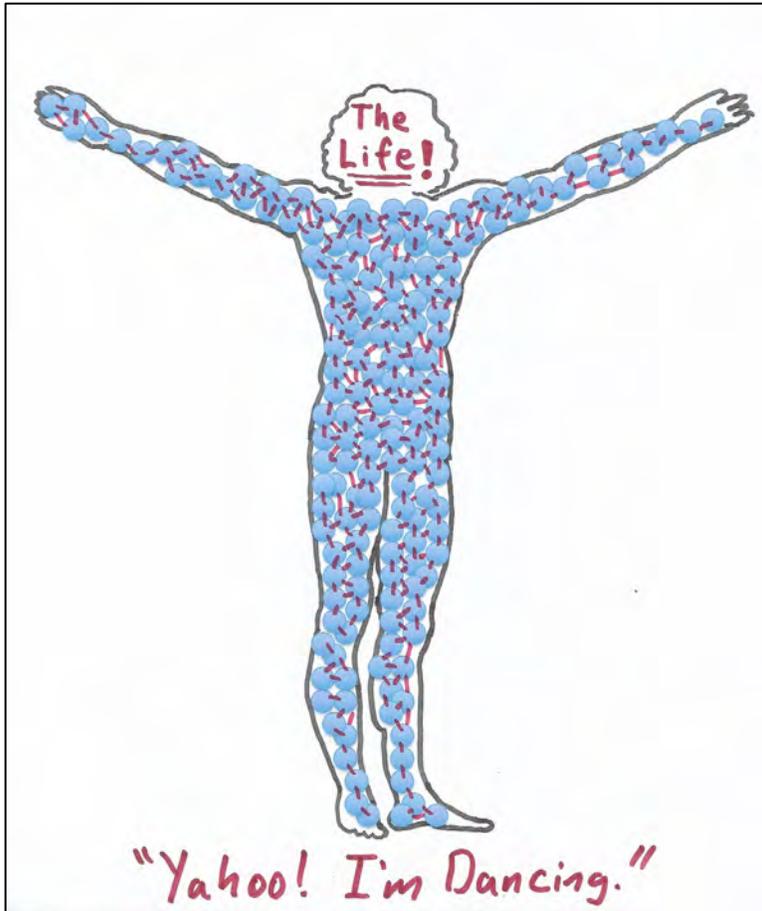


Figure 9 Image credit: Peter Hiett

At the cross, we die with Christ and rise with Christ.
Your life is not your own; you are His Body.

Well, John sees the winepress...

And then he sees the angels that come out of the Sanctuary.

And this is a wild thought, but according to John, Paul, and Jesus, we are
Christ's temple, which is His Body, which is His Sanctuary.

The seven angels are like the seven angels in the seven churches.

They're either the spirit of Christ or messengers of Christ.

They're dressed just like Christ was dressed at the start of John's vision...

And they're dressed and just like the priests who served in the temple.

They come out of the temple with *pleges*, wounds, or stripes.

"He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... with his stripes we are healed," wrote Isaiah.

The wounds are poured out on the earth, and yet they originate in heaven.

As if it was God's plan to bear our wounds and sorrows all along.
As if He was crucified from the foundation of the earth.
As if He subjected creation to futility and all men to disobedience just so that we would see and believe the wonder of His Mercy...
As if He wanted to show us—this is how much I love you: “See my hands. See my feet. Place your fingers in my wounds. Your wounds are my wounds. My wounds are your wounds.”

And now I hope you see why God's wrath is not indiscriminate:

Whatever you do to the least of these, you do to Him...

You take their life and you take His life.

And check this out: Whenever someone tries to take your life (in big ways or small ways) because they've judged you the last and the least... they aren't just taking your life, they're taking Christ's life . . . because your life *is* Christ's life.

Jesus weeps your every tear.

Jesus knows your every sorrow.

Jesus feels your every wound, even more intensely than you do, because He literally is the blood you bleed.

His wrath is not indiscriminate. It's perfect and it accomplishes its purpose.

John sees the wine press; John sees the wounds; John sees the temple, and John sees the sea of glass mingled with fire.

In the temple, God instructed Solomon to build a “molten sea” (1 Kings 7:23). It was a huge basin in which the priests were to wash before they approached the throne of God, so the glory of God wouldn't kill them. (Ex. 30:18)

John sees people that appear to have passed through the sea...ⁱ

The Sea is fire. And God is Fire and God is Love.

He's not part fire and part love; He's all Love and Love is Fire.

The Sea is Fire and water like glass. It burns and comforts.

We'll talk more about that in the next sermon in this series.

But John sees the winepress; he sees the wounds; he sees the temple and he sees the baptism of fire with which we must all be baptized...

And He sees the bowls... the seven *phialas*... in Greek.

- It's a special word in Greek used to refer to broad flat bowls in which pagan priests would offer wine to the gods.
- It's also used to refer to broad flat bowls in which priests in the temple in Jerusalem would take the blood of sacrifice and then sprinkle it on the altar and even the people, and once a year it was sprinkled behind the curtain on the very throne of God—the Mercy Seat of God.

So what's in these bowls?

- It's something that's poured . . . a liquid.

- In the next chapter an angel cries, “You have given them blood to drink.”
- In the last chapter, sinners are made to drink the wine of God’s wrath.
- In the Old Testament over and over, God’s wrath is pictured as wine in a cup that God makes us drink.
- We just read how God makes wine that is blood and blood that is wine.
- This whole vision is about a slaughtered Lamb standing on a throne called the Mercy Seat on which the blood of sacrifice is sprinkled and from which flows a river of life and the life is in the blood.

So what’s in the bowls of wrath?

Well, it’s the blood of the Lamb.

And why do you come to worship each week?

Isn’t it to drink the blood of the Lamb, which is the Grace of God?

And what is John seeing?

Well, it must be something like this:

[A clip from the movie *The Passion* is shown in which Jesus is covered in stripes, wounds, and blood and is lifted up on the cross before John’s eyes. The scene shifts to wine being poured out into a cup and Jesus drinking it while John looks on. Jesus says, “Take this and drink. The scene changes again to Jesus hanging on the cross. Blood drips down the cross into the ground. As He breathes His last breaths, He says, “It is accomplished.”]

When we come to the cross what do we see?

We see that we’ve taken the Life of God.

And we see that God has always given the Life of God.

The Life is in the blood, and all the Life, in all the blood, in all the world is *Him*.

He is the Life! God is Love and He constantly bleeds Mercy.

God’s Wrath *is* His Mercy...

John sees God’s eternal Mercy and it’s poured out over all the days of time...

God’s Wrath is His eternal Mercy applied to our sin in all the days of *our* time...

When people take blood, we take blood in return—that’s human vengeance.

And when we take blood, what does God do?

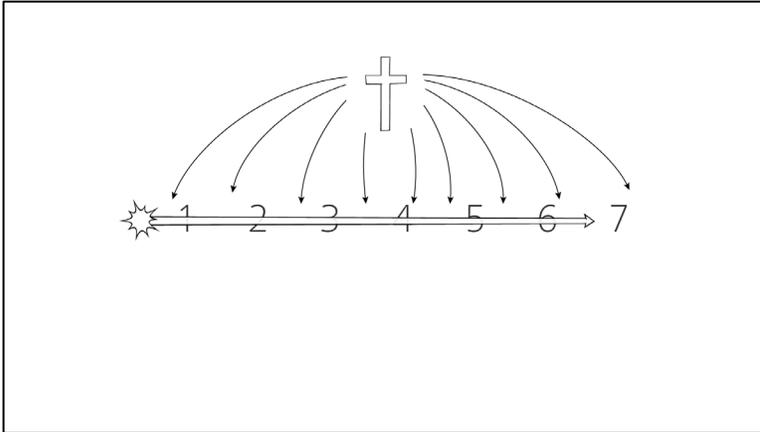


Figure 10 Image credit: Peter Hiett

God gives blood—His Vengeance is Absolute Mercy. It is the fluid Love bleeds.

And now, if you think it's only sweet—and nothing could be sweeter.
If you think it's only sweet and does not burn, you've probably never taken a very deep drink from the cup of the Lord.

You've never consciously experienced the terrifying Grace of God.

About twenty years ago, I had an encounter with God that most of you know about...

I was at a conference in a hotel in Canada.

I was holding hands with a little old Roman Catholic lady on one side...
and a huge fat Native American Pentecostal man on the other.

As we began to pray, for the first time, and only time, I heard God audibly.
I heard him say, "Peter, you don't love my bride very much do you?"

Immediately, I knew he wasn't talking about Susan, He was talking about the Church.
Immediately, I knew that I had gone into the ministry because I hated the Church, and I was going to fix the Church; I would teach it a lesson. I knew that I had decided to be a pastor because of that day about fifteen years before when I saw my Dad tried on the floor of the Denver Presbytery and I just didn't know what to do with all my anger... all my wrath.

In an instant, I saw that all my good deeds were laced with evil.

I saw I didn't love the Church; I wanted to use the Church to create my life, heal all my wounds and get vengeance on those who had hurt me. I lay on the floor of this ballroom and wept uncontrollably for about an hour.

See? It burns the ego to be exposed to absolute Love and realize that all your good deeds are the very worst deeds. But here's the weird thing... It was unbelievably sweet. I mean there was no condemnation in God's voice, only compassion: (whispering) "I'm sorry for you." It didn't imprison me in shame, but set me free and filled me with

gratitude. And it felt like the tears I wept weren't mine but His... Christ in me.

Later that night, God literally pinned me to the floor and showed me that He was everywhere, and everywhen, loving me, and He wanted me to stop doubting His Love.

His Wrath is His Mercy encountering our sin.

You see? It utterly annihilates the human ego and sets us free to live in Love.

That was an absolutely earth-shattering experience, and yet, I soon realized it was just the beginning of the lesson. Ten years later, my dad had died, and my church had grown like crazy, and it appeared that I had "fixed" the Church.

And yet, I had been getting in some trouble, for I'd been preaching what I'd learned: God's wrath is God's mercy... and He's fixin' to make all things new. Some people were taking advantage of the opportunity and trying to take my life and take my church because, at that time, my church (not that you aren't) was really sexy . . .

I was about to be tried on the floor of my Presbytery. It was a Sunday and I had just come down from the stage while people were coming forward for communion. Susan was goofing around and I was thinking, "*Act serious woman, I'm in hot water and we need to impress the troops.*" Just about then she grabbed my arm and I knew something big had just happened.

She said,

"Peter I just saw your dad, and he was so young and he was so alive and his eyes... they like burned with fire. He was standing right in front of us... He leaned forward, holding this like bowl in his hands... (I remember that she was fascinated by this weird bowl). He was holding out this like bowl in his hands and he said, '*Susan and Peter, do not be afraid to drink from the cup that the Lord has for you.*' And then... he vanished."

I immediately thought, "*How cool,*" and then, "*Oh Shit.*" And within just a few weeks I saw everything that happened to my dad happen to me... only worse. And I wondered about that cup that was also a bowl that was in the hands of my father.

At first, I thought that it meant that I was sharing in Christ's sufferings...

And I'm sure it *does* mean something like that... but not *simply* that.

I think it means that where I once took Christ's life, He had given His life.

And when people took life from me, He wanted me to freely give it to them.

I think it meant that He wanted me to learn to love His Bride the way He loved Bride...

The way He loves each of us.

I think it meant that He wanted me to learn to forgive.

Within a few weeks of getting defrocked and losing what I thought was my life, Frances and I were walking through downtown Denver looking for a place to rent for our new little church that would be meeting on Sunday nights. We found a big old Presbyterian

Church that would let us do just that. I called my mom and said, “Hey we’re gonna meet at Central Presbyterian on Sunday nights..”

My mom was quiet for a moment and then she said, “Peter don’t you know what that place is? Why that’s the place you watched your dad get tried on the floor of the Denver Presbytery.” And suddenly I remembered every little detail of the room...

And so God had me stand in the very spot I saw my dad get tried, the very spot I watched the Church attempt to take the life of my Father.

-He had me stand there for a year and give the life of my Father.

-He had me stand there and preach the Gospel.

-He had me stand there and learn to forgive and, you see, I’m just beginning...

When one person forgives it looks like a man crucified on a tree.

When two people forgive it looks like a good marriage.

When all people forgive, it is a great party called the Kingdom of God.

And it’s rather impossible to sin, for the moment you take someone’s life, they’ve already given their life; before you could even take blood it’s already been given. When everyone forgives, everyone bleeds—they bleed life one into the other like members in a Body because it is a body, it’s the Body of Christ.

God is Love and His Judgment is Mercy.

When His Mercy encounters our sin, we experience it as wrath.

It destroys our ego—that’s our pride and our shame.

It destroys our ego and it frees us to live in Love; it kills the old man and gives birth to the New Man.

The wrath of God is finished at the cross.

It’s how God makes us in His Image and saves Himself from the pain of our sin.

The wrath of God is Perfect.

In Romans 12 Paul wrote this:

“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’...”

We don’t leave it to the wrath of God, because we don’t trust the wrath of God.

And so we refuse to forgive others and we refuse to forgive ourselves.

We make others pay and we make ourselves pay... and we can’t pay.

We refuse to forgive because we think it means that evil goes unpunished and people will stay just as they are, and Hitler will get into heaven with his wicked old evil heart... But forgiveness does not mean, that we will stay just as we are and that people are not repaid for their sin.

God repays our sin with His Mercy, but that Mercy utterly destroys our sin and creates us in His Image... with the wrath of God we are finished.

Mercy is the fluid Love bleeds, and when you forgive you bleed fire.

You bleed the vengeance of God and are used by Him to make all things new.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Therefore, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

—Romans 12:19-21

This is the Good.

[Peter points to the communion table.]

Communion

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body for you." And 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 Good and this is the Judgment of God. If you run from it, the only place to hide is "outer darkness" where men weep and gnash their teeth. And even that will come to an End in a sea of burning hot Mercy.

This is the Judgment of God:

You have been forgiven.

That means that you are not worse than anybody else.

It also means that you are not better than anybody else.

You may be a little further along in your journey...

But you are not better than anybody else—not even your worst enemy.

That burns . . .

In the words of Karl Barth, it burns you right down to faith.

It burns you right down to a little child playing in His Father's Garden.

But now you know something you did not know before.

What is it that you know?

You know the Good, which is manifest in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

He is the Judgment of God.

For the last few minutes, you may have been thinking of the name of someone God is asking you to forgive. Sometimes people don't forgive someone because they think that means God will just let that person off the hook...No... Believe me! You can trust the wrath of God to do its work. So, forgiving someone is entrusting them to the wrath of God. The wrath of God is Good; it works. It's just that we can't administer it well.

So, maybe you have someone you need to forgive. In your mind, let them go and hand them over to God; forgive them.

Let's pray. In your heart say:

"Father I forgive [insert their name]".

(Forgiving them means you will no longer try to make them pay.)

And maybe there's another name that some of you have in mind, and that's your own. And maybe this is the hardest of all to forgive. You need to forgive yourself and stop trying to make yourself and everyone else pay. That's what leads to all the bloodshed in this world, when God has already provided more than enough blood from His winepress.

So, just say, "Father, in the name of Jesus, I forgive myself. And Father, I forgive you. Not that you've done anything wrong, but I've been angry at you. Father, I will entrust myself to you, to your Judgment because wow...it's good! Thank you that you make yourself pay for what you require. When you demand blood, you bleed the blood, you are Life and you are Love."

So, come to the table, tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup, and ingest the Judgment of God, the Mercy of God, the wrath of God, for with it you are made complete.

[Several worship songs are sung.]

Prayer

Lord God, I confess to you that I have been a slave to fear and anger in ways I couldn't understand. In being a slave to anger, that anger sometimes takes the form of despair, shame, drivenness, resentment, rage... Lord, sometimes it takes the form of registering to go to seminary. Lord, I thank you that you forgive us and you shower us with your Mercy. I thank you that I am no longer a slave to fear. I thank you for forgiving me when I doubt that. Thank you that even for that faith—your Gospel, which is a gift of Grace. You're giving it to me all the days of my life. We thank you that you are Good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

Believe the Gospel! It means Good News! In Jesus' name, live!

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.

¹ John sees people that appear to have passed through the sea...
like the priests passed through the sea to approach the altar...
like the Israelites passed through the red sea to get to the Promised Land...
and like you pass through the sea on the day you're baptized...
Baptism symbolizes dying to your self and rising with Christ.

30

At Home in Who You Are

At Home in Who You Are

Revelation 15 and 16

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

August 19, 2018

Peter Hiett

Prayer

Lord God, we praise you...may we see you. Preaching about you is a little terrifying for me because I always feel such a temptation and desire that comes from this world to turn you into a little platitude that we could take and apply to our life so we can feel better about ourselves. But you are so much more! You are everything. You are so simple and yet we've made this world so complex, and this world is complex. So, Lord, I ask that you would help us to see you. I know that you are one, but we are many; we are divided even within ourselves. Lord God, help us to see you, and help us to be one as you are One. In Jesus' name help us to preach. Thank you Lord God, for what you showed us last week. That the blood of the Lamb is in those cups of wrath in Revelation 15. I pray that you would show us more now, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Message

One morning about twenty years ago, my wife Susan woke me up early and said, “Peter, I just had a vision!” (It was a new thing for her, at that time. I've never had one, but I've learned to trust my wife and what God shows her.)

She said:

When I woke, I looked in the corner of the room, and I saw dark clouds. Then, they parted and the sun came out... in our room.

But just before I woke, I had a dream, an incredibly clear dream—it was so real (maybe it was more real than this world)! I saw thousands of people descending down a spiral staircase in a line. The people were like zombies... the walking dead. All along this descending line of the walking dead, there were demons that were harassing them, poking them, and trying to hurt them.

And yet, these people didn't even move—they hardly even flinched—because they were used to it. It was normal for them. Then all at once, I saw this woman and her eyes weren't cloudy like everyone else's; they were wide open and she was awake. She was alive! She kept protesting, “Something's wrong here. I'm not supposed to be here. I'm not meant for here. Something's not right.”

The demons kept harassing her, trying to horrify her and mock her, but she kept protesting. And the line kept moving. At the bottom of the staircase there was one huge demon, a beast with eight arms. It would take these zombies and throw them in the Lake of Fire, and they'd be consumed.

Then the beast threw that woman in the Lake of Fire. But she wasn't consumed! In fact, she kept protesting, “Something's not right, I'm not supposed to be here.”

It absolutely infuriated the beast! He went into a rage and was trying to push her into the fire, but each time she would just float back up protesting. He kept pushing her down and she kept rising up, and as I watched this, she gradually began to float out of the reach of the arms of this beast.

Then she said, "It was like the whole lake shifted and she floated into this area of cool, clear water (the water was at peace... like glass)."

She continued:

On the shores I began to see vegetation lush with life. Then I saw Him. I saw Jesus. He reached in and pulled the woman out of the water and stood her right next to Him. And she was gorgeous! She was like made of gold, refined by the fire—spun gold—I don't even know what spun gold is, but that's what she was! She was radiant.

Then, Jesus looked at her and said, "Sweetheart, you were meant for here."

Then Susan said, "Peter, what was that? I said, "Have you ever read Revelation 15?" And she said something like, "You know me... What's Revelation 15? ...and Peter, who was that woman? ...and who were all those zombies?"

Well this is Revelation 15; we began preaching on it last week. In Revelation 14, we saw the winepress of fury of the wrath of God and from it, a river—a river that filled the land to the depths of a horse's bridle—a river that filled the land, forming a sea—a sea of blood that's wine and wine that's blood, a sea of the "knowledge of the glory of the Lord" that covered the whole land(Hab. 2:14).

Revelation 15:1-16:1

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues [pleges: wounds, stripes], which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished [teleo]. And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps [kithara: where we get our word "guitar." They were seven stringed instruments with a sounding box; that's a guitar!] of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

*Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!
Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come and worship you,
for your righteous acts [judgments] have been revealed.*

After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues [wounds], clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. And

one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath [thumos: passion, anger] of God who lives forever and ever, and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues [wounds] of the seven angels were finished [teleo].

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath [passion] of God."⁴

In verse 8 John wrote, "No one could enter the Sanctuary until the seven wounds of the seven messengers (that look like Jesus) were finished." And yet, as we'll see in the next chapter, when the seven wounds are finished, it would appear that everyone is dead.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Paul writes something really weird:

For the love of Christ compels us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

"One has died for all, therefore all have died..." (That would make everyone a zombie, and yet we'd think it's normal.) But what if death died? Perhaps the death of death is eternal life?

Verse 8: "None could enter the Sanctuary until the seven wounds were finished (teleo)."

On a tree in the Garden on Mt. Calvary, at the end of the sixth day of the week, on the sixth day of creation at the sixth hour of the day Jesus is crucified.

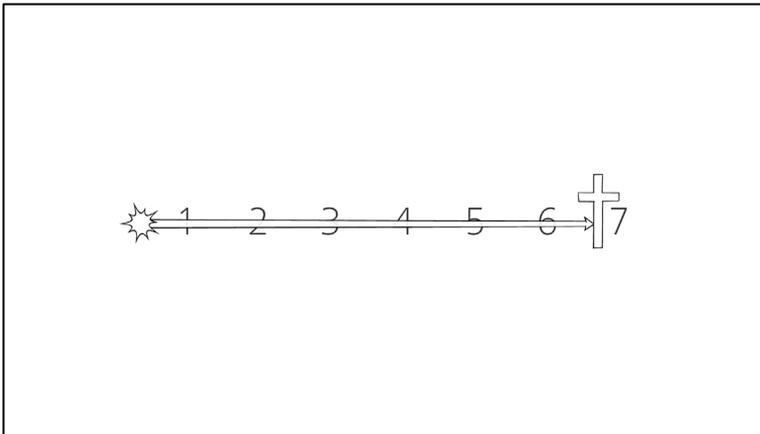


Figure 1 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

- The sky grows black, the earth shakes, he lifts his head and cries, "It is finished" (same word, *teleo*)."
- The curtain in the temple separating the people from the abode of God rips from the top to the bottom...

Verse 8: *“None could enter the sanctuary until the seven wounds were finished.”*

What is the Sanctuary, and what would it mean to enter?

- *Naous*, the Greek word translated “sanctuary,” and sometimes “temple,” comes from a verb that means to dwell; it was where the presence of God would dwell.
- As we’ve seen it would literally rest on top of the Mercy Seat covering the Ark containing the law, behind the curtain.

According to Jewish tradition, the sanctuary was built on the very spot that God breathed His breath into dust making the human soul, in the Garden of Eden. As you know humanity was exiled from that garden when we took the knowledge of the Good from the tree in the middle of that garden.

God placed two cherubim to guard the entrance. In the Sanctuary on top of the Ark, Moses was instructed to place two golden cherubim as if guarding the way to the presence of God in His Garden.

In the Gospel of John Jesus says, “Destroy this temple [*naous*] and I will raise it in three days,” and John tells us that Jesus was speaking of His Body. In John 15 Jesus says, *“Abide in me and I in you.”* You abide in an abode. He is your sanctuary and you are His.

In a few chapters we’ll witness the New Jerusalem descending on Mt. Zion.

It comes down on the spot where God made Adam (that is, humanity).

It looks like Eden and contains the Tree of Life.

It’s shaped like the stone Sanctuary only massively bigger and alive.

God dwells there with His people, of which it is constructed.

We read that there is no Sanctuary in the City, for God Almighty and the Lamb are the City’s Sanctuary . . . And the City is God’s Sanctuary. We are the heavenly Sanctuary—God’s Temple, Body, and Bride. We are the Sanctuary.

Verse.8 *“No one could enter the Sanctuary until the seven wounds were finished.”*

And check this out, the Sanctuary, that inner room in which God dwells...

It’s not of this age—this *aión*, in Greek.

It’s *aiónios*—meaning “of God’s Age,” and God created the ages.

In Hebrew 9 we learn that the outer room in front of the inner sanctuary is symbolic of the present *aión* (age) (9:9). But that Jesus goes behind the curtain obtaining an *aiónios* redemption (9:12). For *“He has appeared once for all at the end of the aions to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”* (9:26).

What I’m trying to say is that the Sanctuary was not only a special place, it was a special time—or the absence of time, or maybe the presence of all time, it was a chunk of eternity in our space and time.

In Hebrews 4 we read that to believe is to enter that rest, God's rest. And then, that rest is described as the Seventh Day, when God rested from all His labor, for everything is finished, for everything is good.

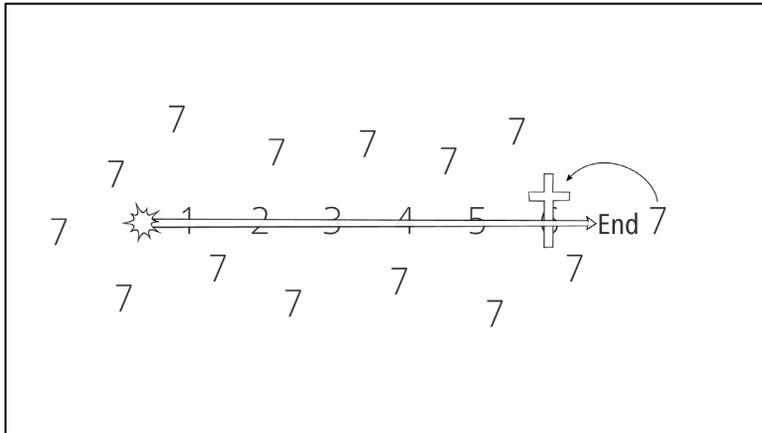


Figure 2 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

SO... what would it be like to abide in the Sanctuary?

Well... You *are* the Sanctuary... Do you feel at home in yourself?

Verse 8 *"No one could enter the Sanctuary until the seven wounds were finished."*
 "No one!"

And yet, in verse 2 we read about some folks that seem to be in the Sanctuary, now. They're singing and playing the *kithara*, the guitars of God, and singing the song of the Lamb.

They look just like the 144,000 (that we saw in the last chapter) with the name of the Father and Lamb written on their heads, that we saw in the last chapter...

- The 144,000 that play guitars and sing the new song
- The 144,000 that are the Israel of God, the Church

And these 144,000 stand before the throne (Rev. 4:5)—the throne that is in the Sanctuary on the other side of "the sea of glass," and before which are seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth (seven *angelos*, messengers)

They sing the song of eternity that we encountered in Revelation 5 when John hears "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them" praising The Father and the Lamb.

They sing that eternal song but now they sing it in time, and so it is always new where eternity touches time. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes, as members of one Body—one dancing Body. We noted that all the members of a dancing body are

perfectly ordered and yet entirely free... for every member freely submits to the rhythm of the Song.

In chapter eleven, the seventh trumpet was blown and the Ark was seen within the temple. The Ark is a representation of the free will of God and the temple is us. We noted that if we had free will . . .

- We would be entirely unrestrained by any law exterior to ourselves; we wouldn't "should" on ourselves.
- We'd never deliberate between choices—"should I step here or step there."
- We'd constantly do what we want and want what we do.
- We would be the Uncaused Cause; we would be God . . . or we would be like the Body of God, the dancing Body of God.

If we think we are God and so take the Life that is God... everything dies. (Zombies everywhere) But if we surrender to God and receive the Life that *is* God... we all start dancing. Jesus is the Free Will of God and we are His Body...

A dance is perfect order and perfect freedom. It is also an incredible amount of work, and yet we experience it as rest and so we call it "play."

Have you noticed that we never say, "Can you *work* the guitar?" Instead we ask, "Do you *play* the guitar?"

When my children were little, they spent most of their time playing in the yard. One day it hit me: All their play was what I called "work..." I mean they freely did what I forced myself to do, but they didn't call it work; they called it play.

They played house. They even played church. In the sandbox they made roads, and houses, and cities. They had a play lawnmower and a play vacuum. But they didn't just mow and vacuum they dance-mowed and dance-vacuumed. They seemed to constantly sing, and dance and they expended a lot of energy . . . Technically, that's work . . . but we called it "play." They did everything we did, but they had fun.

They didn't work to live; they lived, and so, they worked; they played. And...they seemed to be very at home in themselves.

You know when God put Adam and Eve in the Garden, they didn't do *nothing*: They were to "*be fruitful and multiply*" and they were to "*till the ground and keep it.*"

- And it was paradise. It was fun.
- They were like little children at play in their Father's Garden.
- Jesus said that we must become like little children to enter our Father's Kingdom.

It was paradise until Adam and Eve believed a lie. You know children of a loving father really have it so good, but they don't *know* that they have it so good. The problem is that, at a certain point, they begin to want to grow up.

It was the father of lies in the body of a snake that said,

“Hey Eve, wouldn’t you like to be like God?”

“Take from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil and you can make yourself in the image of God.”

Now God had already said that He would make Man (male and female) in His own image. But Eve, and that first Adam, didn’t know that the Word of God is Good.

Well, at one point, my kids were children at play in their father’s garden. At times we’d have to hire a babysitter for a day or a weekend.

Imagine if the babysitter said something like this to my kids:

“Hey Jon, nice road you made there in the sand...

But Elizabeth’s is better... Actually hers is good, yours is bad.”

“I have knowledge of good and bad roads. So, from now on I’m going to judge your roads, and houses, and your dance-mowing, and dance-vacuuming...and give you a grade. When your parents come home they’ll reward the one that gets the best grade and punish the one that gets the worst grade. Actually the one with the best grade will live, and the other will die and endless death.”

What would happen?

Well, if my children believed the lie, my children might make roads and mow the lawn, but they would become beasts . . .

- They would begin to bite and devour one another.
- They would compete with each other.
- They wouldn’t love me; they would despise me and they would begin to hate each other.
- They would believe that Life is the survival of the fittest.
- They wouldn’t be made in the image of a loving father, but the image of a beast.
- They would die... the light would go out of their eyes; the dance would go out of their step and they would become the walking dead.

You may say, “That would never happen!” But don’t you see: It has happened and it’s happening all the time. This entire world is like a river of lies that is all one lie:

“You are your own creator, savior, and redeemer so you must take knowledge and make yourself in the image of God. And God grades on a curve. Some of His kids will pass the test and some will fail.”

You know? Sometimes we even say, “Life is the survival of the fittest. Life is competition.”

And yet any honest biologist will tell you that life is not competition; life is cooperation. Life is not the survival of the fittest; life is the mutual sacrifice of the fittest. Competition explains the limits of life—why one life will bite and devour another life, but it can’t explain life itself: one molecule cooperating with another molecule, one cell sacrificing for another cell, one body part freely bleeding into another body part in one happy dancing body.

1Corinthians 12:13 says, “...*In one Spirit, you were baptized into one body.*” Well, competition explains beasts—why one life will consume another life. But competition can’t explain Jesus, who is the Man in the image of God.

I see no theological, philosophical or biblical problem with the idea that my body evolved from the beasts over millions of years as we measure time.

It’s not a body of flesh that makes me a man.

It’s the Spirit of God breathed into my flesh, and in which I’m baptized at the end of the sixth day, that makes me into the image of God.

Satan doesn’t want me to be a man made in the image of God. At the end of chapter 12, we saw him go to war with the little brothers and sisters of Jesus; He battles with a river of lies. And then you may remember when that didn’t go totally well, he called up the beast to help him lie. He wants to shape you in his own image; he wants to name you; he wants to write his number on your head “666,” the number of the beast... the number of humanity on the sixth day, not yet finished in the image of God.

Well imagine if the babysitter said, “ John and Elizabeth, you will receive a grade on all your play. Some of you will pass and some will fail. Some will earn their life and some will not.” I think it would turn my kids into little beasts . . . restless beasts, for the moment you take life, the life dies and then you desperately try to take more life. You take life and everything dies including you—restless zombie beasts.

And imagine if the babysitter continued, saying something like this: “And if you pass the test, your father will love you.” That would turn my children into little harlots—that’s *porne* in Greek.

- They would compete for my love. They would try to buy my love with deeds
- They would try to earn my love, and so be unable to receive my love and love in return.

The lie would turn my kids into restless little harlots . . . For if you must pay for love, love is no longer free, and so, no longer love; you crucify Love and Love is Life...

Sometimes I think men are particularly tempted to be beasts . . . and women are particularly tempted to be whores . . . but we’re all tempted to each. And it appears that we can become what we think we are . . . at least for a time. And yet, we’ll be endlessly restless, ’cause that’s not who we truly are in eternity.

I don’t know about you, but sometimes I just don’t feel at home in “me”... I can’t stand “me”! Sometimes especially around two or three in the morning, I’ll wake up and I just can’t seem to endure my own skin.

I’ll think I don’t know how to make life work: I don’t know how to make the sermon work, and church work, and that’s how I make my life... I work for Life. And I’ll think I don’t know how to get this person to love that person and it looks like they both will end up hating me... I don’t know how to earn Love.

See maybe I'm believing a lie at that moment: that I have to *take life* and *earn love*.
God is Love and Jesus is the Life.

Maybe I can't stand me, 'cause that's not the real me.
If I can't stand "me," that probably indicates that "me" is not who I am.
Maybe I can't stand the beast that I'm trying to be.

Listen to what we read in the last chapter:

"...the smoke of their torment goes up for (ages) and (ages), and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

Maybe I can't rest 'cause I've let the beast name me and so make me in its image.
Maybe I trust, "*Me is salvation*" rather than "*God is Salvation*"—*yehoshuah*.
Maybe I think I'm my own creator, savior, and redeemer . . . the antichrist, that means, imitation Christ.
Maybe it's the Mercy of God, which is the Wrath of God, that won't let me rest in my own wicked illusions . . . that won't let me remain as I think I am: a beast on the sixth day of creation—not the Man on the Seventh Day.

Well, the folks standing beside the sea, playing guitars, dancing, and singing are no longer living in the sixth day of creation. They've entered the Sanctuary and all their work is rest and all their obedience is free.

They're not beasts; they're men.
They're not harlots; they're the Bride.
They're not the walking dead; they have eternal life.
They've conquered the number of the beast's name and have God's name: I AM.
They sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.
The song is entirely about God and not at all about them.
It's like they've forgotten themselves . . . and so found themselves singing . . . and outrageously happy . . . They are entirely compelled by Love.

At staff this week, my friend Mark said, "I can't figure out if I'm one of the people standing on the side of the sea or one of the walking dead marked with the number of the beast." Me too.

In chapter 13:7-8 we read:

And authority was given [to the beast] over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it...

Well, who doesn't dwell on earth? Can you abide somewhere else?

and all who dwell on earth will worship it, ["everyone" is supplied by the translator] whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

Does that mean that all who dwell on earth will worship it, *except* those that have their name written in the Lamb's book of life? It doesn't say "except."

Or does it mean all who abide on earth worship the beast and do not have their name written in the Lamb's book of life?

I wonder if part of you could abide on earth... like dust.
And part of you could abide in heaven... like spirit?

In 13:16 we read: "...it [the beast from the land] *causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead...*[all, no exceptions are mentioned] v. 16 ...*it is the number of [a] man* [In the Greek it's not a man, but man], *and [man's] his number is 666.*"

It would be so cool if that was just a funky tattoo offered by some Romanian dictator in 2027... you could just say, "No." But what if the mark is the fact that you've simply let things like governments, religions, and the institutions of this world name you?

...That you've let them convince you, that you must take life or earn love?

...That you've let them convince you, that you are a self-made man, so you put your trust in "me-sus" instead of Jesus.

That's called sin and the soul that sins will surely die [literally: "*Dying you will die*"]. And God said, "The day you eat it you will die . . . That day is the sixth day.

In chapter 19, The Living Word will cut "the flesh" from all men, not some, "all." I literally make my flesh by consuming life, like a beast. My body eats life and excretes death, that's how it grows; that's how it exalts itself.

Solomon wrote that God is testing us that we might see that we are but beasts. If I'm honest, I seem fairly beastly and whorish . . . fairly restless and wanton.

But now listen to the singers on the side of the sea:

"Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!

[We just read that the beast was given authority over the nations.]

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?

For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you,

[All nations were under the authority of the beast and marked by the beast.]

All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts [judgments] have been revealed."

We already heard every creature, from everywhere, and everywhen worshipping the Father and the Lamb in Revelation 5. We'll soon hear the voice from the throne say

“Look I make all things new”(21:5). And we’ll read that “the nations” will walk in the light of the Lord (21:24). And “the kings of the earth” (who had been horns on the beast) will bring “their glory” into the Sanctuary...; it’s utterly shocking.

And so,

It seems that I’m a beast *and* I’m the very body of the Man, Jesus.

It seems that I’m something of a harlot, and I’m the spotless Bride.

It seems that I’m both . . .

Or at least I was a beast, and I am becoming a man, in the image of God.

Or I was a harlot that discovers she’s really the Bride.

Maybe I was a false man and I’m becoming real.

Maybe I am a sinner, but gettin’ filled with Grace.

Maybe I’m the woman in Susan’s vision... The Church.

Verse 8: *“No one could enter the Sanctuary until the seven [wounds] of the seven angels [that look just like Jesus] were finished (teleo).*

No one could enter the Sanctuary, *but* the dancing singing guitar players are in the Sanctuary, or *are* the Sanctuary—*How did they get there?*

Well they must’ve passed through that sea of glass and fire like that restless woman in Susan’s vision, who finally stood beside Him as spun gold. Scripture says that our faith is tested as gold is tested and refined... by fire. So, who we are must somehow be like this fabric of spun gold out of the warp and woof of this world that turns in to the new self . . . or something . . .

So what is this sea of glass mingled with fire?

In chapter 4 we saw a sea of glass around the throne of God & the seven torches of fire... **-It must refer to that.**

Once, God judged the earth with a flood of fire, and Scripture claims that there will also be a flood of fire...**-It must refer to that.**

Israel passed through the Red Sea following a pillar of fire. In this way, God’s judgment saved Israel from the Egyptians and they stood on the side of the sea and sang the song of Moses... **- It must refer to that.**

In the temple there was a molten sea, which was a huge metal basin placed between the Sanctuary and the fiery altar. The priests would wash themselves before approaching the Sanctuary lest they die. (It must’ve contained water and blood that burns like fire.) In the temple God’s judgment showed Israel that He not only saved them from Egyptians but saved them from their sin... **- It must refer to that.**

In baptism, God reveals that He not only saves us from Egyptians and He not only saves us from sin, He saves us from ourselves...the “me” that I have made. **- It must definitely refer to that.**

In all four Gospels, we find that Jesus came to baptize, but not just with water, fire.
-Baptism symbolizes dying with Christ and rising with Christ.
-It symbolizes the fact that your sins are washed away and you invite the fire to fill the Sanctuary that is your soul.
-It is a public statement that you agree with *The Judgment of God*.

The Judgment of God is Jesus, and His name—*yeshua* means “God is Salvation”

- God’s Judgment is a knife that cuts to division of soul and spirit.
- It cuts to the division of the beast you have made yourself to be and the child of God that you truly are.
- It cuts to the division of the beast and the man, and the harlot and the bride.
- It cuts to the division of “me-sus,” and Jesus.

If you believe “*God is salvation*” you can no longer believe that *you* are salvation...
That’s a clean cut. At one moment and one time you cannot believe both.

- It cuts to the division of the old man and the New Man.
- It cleanses you of the old self and purifies the New.

Last Sunday at communion downtown, I said, “The Judgment of God will burn you right down to a child at play in your Father’s Garden.”

The Judgment of God is absolute Mercy that burns our sin like fire... until we believe God’s Judgment: “You *have been* forgiven,” and then, that burning blood tastes like the sweetest of all wine.

Last week, I told you how in a moment, one day in Canada, God revealed to me that I’d gone into the ministry because I hated the Church... I wanted vengeance, I wanted blood for blood, I wanted to take life to make my life; I was a beast and deeply restless.

And yet, God’s Wrath was absolute Mercy; He didn’t condemn me; He wept for me, through me, in me; He literally liberated me from myself. He literally pinned me to the floor. Then, later that evening, He showed me that He was everywhere and everywhen loving me—***I think He baptized me in Holy Fire.***

I thought I was going to die, and I was truly thrilled it might happen.

I literally could not stop worshipping.

I no longer asked, “What’s wrong with me?”

And I could only think of “what’s right with Him”...

And you know what’s so right with Him? ...The way that He always loves me!

One day you will not be able to stop singing about the way He always love you.

And all of our songs will come together and we will join the eternal symphony of praise that is the eternal Song that sounds around all creation, and undergirds it, and makes all things new.

It was the most amazing experience of my life.

And here’s the most amazing part of all:

When it was over—I was totally at home in me.

- I was not sick of me. I thoroughly loved me. I even had compassion on me.
- I was absolutely unable to worry about me or anyone else.
- And every night as soon as my head hit the pillow, I fell sound asleep.
- I had entered His rest... and yet that didn't mean that I would do nothing. Actually, I did everything—everything I did before: mow the lawn, work in the garden, write sermons, and go to meetings, but now it was like dancing.
- I was a child at play in my Father's Garden.
- I knew I couldn't *make* myself good; I could only *be* Good.
- I knew I couldn't *make* myself in the image of God; I could only *be* the image of God.
- I knew that I had nothing to defend, and everything for which to be grateful.
- I knew the Good: it was my Father's absolutely sovereign and merciful Judgment and it was at home in the sanctuary of my soul.

That experience lasted about three or four weeks and then it wore off. I knew it in my head, but not in all of my being.

You know the Israelites sang the song of Moses after they were baptized in the Red Sea... But then in a few weeks, they stopped singing and dancing.

- They believed God is Salvation, but they also didn't believe God is Salvation.
- They trusted their Heavenly Father and His Word, and yet, they didn't.

When my kids would have a hard time trusting me, nothing seemed to help quite as much as taking them on a journey... even better, an adventure... even better, we'd go camping. In the wilderness they'd stop trusting them selves and their knowledge and once again they'd start to trust me... they'd snuggle up next to me in the tent and remember that I loved them.

After Israel passed through the Red Sea, God took them camping in the wilderness, in tents. He travelled with them in a tent, called a tabernacle that became the temple. God's wrath is against anything that would separate you from Him. And His sanctuary is a tent in which you snuggle up next to each other. You rest in Him and He rests in you.

The book of Hebrews says, "*Strive to enter His rest.*" And then it says that Israel was unable to enter that rest because of unbelief, and so they died in the wilderness and did not enter the Promised Land.

I've wondered if they were like all those zombies in Susan's dream. Those Israelites didn't enter, and yet, they hadn't yet seen the seventh bowl of wrath. They didn't enter, and yet, they do enter in the end. Through Ezekiel God says that he will raise all Israel from their graves and bring them into the land... God does remarkable things with dust and ashes!

Moses was one of those that died in the wilderness because of unbelief, and yet He shows up brand new on the mount of transfiguration in the heart of the Promised Land with Jesus. (Dust and ashes is not the end; Jesus is the End.)

Well, my point is that you can enter His rest now.
And you can live from His rest every day.

I'm really bummed that we don't have time to read this, but the next thing that happens is that the seven angels with the seven wounds pour the seven bowls of the passion of God upon the earth.

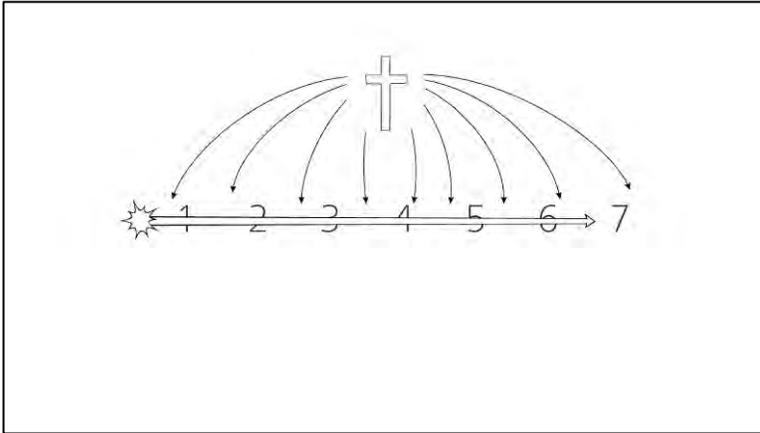


Figure 3 Image credit: Peter Hiett

Remember seven is the number of the days of time, and it's the number of your days on your journey through time.

You see, God is taking you camping in tents: tabernacles of flesh (2 Cor. 5:1-4). Hopefully, you were baptized and if not, you can get baptized. You were baptized, and now, you're on a journey, but every seventh day you come here and drink from a bowl of wine that's blood, and blood that's wine; it's also the Judgment of God.

Well, in chapter 16, the angels pour out the bowls of blood that's wine and wine that's blood on the days of time:

At the 1st bowl everyone gets sores—have you ever had a sore? They wound your flesh and they wound Christ's flesh. Your wounds match His wounds and reveal Mercy.

At the 2nd bowl, every soul dies in the sea.
But if you're a believer, you already died in the sea at baptism.ⁱⁱ

At the 3rd bowl the river and springs become blood.
An angel cries, *"You have given them blood to drink. It's what they deserve."*
Every time you come to this table God gives you blood to drink.
I guess it's what you deserve: You took His blood and He gives His blood.
It burns the beast and sets you free.

At the 4th bowl people are judged by the Light.

At the 5th bowl people weep and gnash their teeth in darkness.

At the 6th bowl all the kings in all the earth gather their armies at a place called “Armageddon”...but the word means something like “mountain of the crowd or assembly.” I think that place is Jerusalem where we all go to war with the Lamb, where the beast and the harlot—together—nail Him to a tree in a garden on a mountain. John always pictures Jesus as enthroned upon the cross.

At the 7th bowl a voice cries from the throne, “*It is done.*”
It is finished in eternity, and it is done, it is accomplished in time.

It is the Judgment of God that burns you right down to a child at play in your Father’s Garden, and yet you know something you didn’t know before. You know the Good: God is Good and His Word is Life given to you. You can enter His rest and live from His rest right now. It’s Eternal Life now.

People always say, “But Pastor what do I do now? What are you telling me to do.”
I don’t know if this is a great answer but it’s the best I got right now.

- ✓ If you want to be Good, try to be Good, try to act Good.
- ✓ Then, every seventh day come to the Sanctuary and sit before the Judgment of God.
- ✓ Drink the cup and it will expose, and burn, the beast... just let him burn.
- ✓ It will destroy the beast and reveal a man or woman of solid gold.
- ✓ You’ll know it’s gold for when you see it you will only be grateful.
- ✓ So grateful, you’ll loose yourself, and find yourself singing *The Song of the Lamb*.
- ✓ Actually you never have to stop singing that song; you can live your whole life as a dance danced to the rhythm of the song.

What do I do?

1. Be baptized in the sea of glass and fire.
2. Live a life of communion with God (“go camping”) until you are at home in who you are—the temple, with Him. He’s already in your tent.

It reminds me of how my son learned to play guitar. One Christmas, he got an electric guitar and he tried and tried to play. It’s hard telling your left hand to form chords on the neck of the guitar, while telling your right hand to strum in rhythm, as you sing. It doesn’t do any good to yell, “*Try harder; work harder; what’s wrong with you?*” That only makes a person more self-conscious.

Well, I got the chords for an old Elvis Presley song. I showed Coleman where to put his fingers, and I described the strum. But it all sounded really bad . . . until Coleman discovered a secret. He said, “Dad, you sing, and I’ll play along.”

You know they’re constantly singing in Heaven.

They're singing about the glory of the Judgment of God.
They're singing and we can play along.

I don't sing well, but when I sang, Coleman's fingers began to dance: His right hand would strum in rhythm; his left hand would change chords at *just* the right time . . .

All because he gladly surrendered to the word of his father as I sang,
Your kisses lift me higher, like the sweet song of a choir.
You light my morning sky with burning love...
I'm just a hunk, a hunk of burning love. I'm just a hunk, a hunk of burning love."
That is the Word of the Father...

Communion

On the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying,
"This is my body given to you. Do this in remembrance of me."
And in the same way He took the cup saying,
"This is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you."

[Pointing to the communion table]

This is Burning Love.

This is The Judgment of God.

This is the Rhythm of the Song that creates all things, including you.

This is the constant reminder of your baptism:

You are in this world, but not of this world.

You are not meant for here.

You are being *made* here, for a place on the other side of the sea.

You are *not* a beast, and you are *not* a whore; you *are* a child of the Living God.

Believe the Gospel and play along.

Come to the table. The bread and wine are like a little hunk of burnin' Love.

[Several worship songs are sung including "Hunk of Burnin' Love".]

It's coming closer

The flames are reaching my body

Please won't you help me

I feel like I'm slipping away

It's hard to breath

And my chest is heaving

Lord Almighty,

I'm burning a hole where I lay

Cause your kisses lift me higher

Like the sweet song of a choir

You light my morning sky
With burning love
With burning love
Ah, ah, burning love
I'm just a hunk, a hunk of burning love
Just a hunk, a hunk of burning love

So, do you want to be baptized? In all four of the gospels Jesus said, "I came not only to baptize with water but fire. And that water represents washing away your sin. And then, on Pentacost the Church is gathered, all sorts of people gathered from all different places and the Spirit descends like fire. The people are baptized with fire and they begin speaking in a common language; they begin worshipping in all these different language and they are baptized into one Body.

Paul said, "There's one Lord, one faith, one baptism." So, we baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So, if you've been baptized, you're baptized. And in all your life you're remembering your baptism, and at times the Holy Spirit might show up and just knock your socks off; you don't know. But being baptized means you agree with the Judgment of God. You don't *determine* the Judgment of God, you *agree* with the Judgment of God. And that means, for the rest of your life you know that your Father is taking you camping. Who knows what might happen on this adventure? But one day, if your tent is destroyed, which it will be . . . one day, you don't need to fear because you'll be home on the other side of the sea. And right now, guess who's in your tent with you? The Fire. Zachariah said, on that day, they'll be no wall around the city, but I will be a wall of fire around her and the glory in her midst.

You see? *You* are a hunk a burnin' love. God sings it to you, and that's what He's making you, in His image. Believe the gospel and play along! In Jesus' name, 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.

ⁱ If you read the Revelation quickly, assuming that you already know what it means, you'll think it's saying, "Get your crap together or else." But if you read the Revelation seriously, assuming that it might actually be the truth, and you have something to learn, it will make you ask some very interesting questions... and might even provide a spectacular answer.

ⁱⁱ In Greek, it doesn't read, "Every living soul in the sea died," but "every living soul died in the sea."

31

Seven Wounds and One Blessing

Seven Wounds and One Blessing

Revelation 16

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

August 26, 2018

Peter Hiett

“I’m just a hunk a hunk a burning love.” That’s to remind you of where we left off last week. My son learned to play guitar, by playing along as I sang that song over him. He didn’t make the song by playing guitar... it’s more like the song made him as he played along on his guitar.

Scripture says that “*God is Love,*” and “*God is a consuming Fire.*” He’s not *part* love and *part* fire; He’s all love and all fire; God is One.

Last week in Revelation 15, we saw that to enter God’s Rest, and be One, as He is One, we must be baptized in the sea of glass and fire. Paul writes that we are “baptized into one body.” The judgment of God burns away what separates us and it is what unites us.

We talked about baptism and we talked about communion. A body is a communion of Life. Over and over, Scripture teaches “*the life is in the blood.*” The willingness to bleed Life . . . is Love, and sometimes it burns.ⁱ

Let’s pray!

Prayer

Lord God, we pray that you would cause us to preach—to preach your Word. Your Word cuts into that which would divide us one from another; it cuts away our flesh. We pray that you would baptize us in your Spirit and that we would commune with you. The Life is in the blood, and in each of our bodies, oxygen in that blood—the Life, the Spirit is metabolized, even as fire; it’s why we live. So, cause us to preach; cause us to love as you love; cause us to be the Body you have created us to be.

Message

God is Love and He commands us to love. “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength,*” And the second command is like it, or even, how to do it: “*Love your neighbor as yourself.*” Your neighbor is whoever happens to be next to you.

So do it:

1. Turn to your neighbor and say, “I love you.”
So how was that? Did you feel it? Did you feel passionate, burning love?
. . . Not so much?
2. Maybe we need a song... Coleman learned to play guitar to a song...
Maybe you need to say, “I love you” to the Rhythm of the song that constantly surrounds us and envelops us . . . And good news: “I got the song!”
The song “I Will Always Love You” by Whitney Houston is played.

Ok, now look deep into your neighbor's eyes and sing along. Go!
[Some of the congregation begins to sing awkwardly along with Peter as he prods them.]
Are you feelin' it? It doesn't look that way . . . We need something more.

- ✓ I preach the Word: "God is Love and His commandment is Love."
- ✓ We get together every week and sing worship songs about Love.
- ✓ But we need something more. What is the something more?

Maybe we need threats, that is, motivators . . . threats of punishment if we don't comply and promises of reward if we do. I mean that's common sense, right?

Is the Gospel common sense? Or is common sense more like a river of lies in which we live. Common sense is to motivate with threats. But how do you motivate someone to love, when Love is to be the motivation for everything else?

- Do you motivate love with "not love."
- Do you preach the Word saying, "*God is Love and will always love you, but if you don't love him, He won't love you?*"
- Do you command "*Love God, or else He won't love but will burn you with fire?*"
And yet, Love is Fire.
- Do you say to the children at play in the Garden, "*You better take knowledge of the Good, so you can make yourself Good, for if you don't make yourself Good, you will be bad, and your Father will endlessly torment with His wrath...*"

Last week, we saw how that lie turns the children of God into beasts who bite and devour one another, who take life and make death. It turns the children of God into beasts and great little harlots who try to earn the Father's love and so crucify Love in the sanctuary of their own souls.

The lie turns all of us into beasts and harlots that pretend to love, but secretly hate Love... The word for that in Greek is *hypocrites*; it's where we get our word hypocrite, but it literally means "actor." Self-centered actors acting as if they love, teaching other self-centered actors to act as if they love is called religion.

Ironically, it was the religious leaders of Israel that became most beastly and whorish and so crucified Goodness and Life on a tree in a garden.

Well you see? We pastors feel this pressure to make y'all in the image of God. And when we don't see that happen, it's common sense that tells us we need to use some threats. And so we read Scripture, with common sense, looking for threats, and the Revelation looks like a pretty good place to find them.

In the late 19th and early 20th century some religious leaders read the Revelation and, for the first time, came up with this concept that they called "The pre-tribulation rapture." It's what the *Left Behind* books are all about.

It's the idea that the Revelation is a timeline, and if you're smart enough to figure it out you'll head the warnings, and say the "sinner's prayer" so that you can be raptured out of this world, and leave the rest of humanity behind to suffer the tribulation.ⁱⁱ

If anyone ever tells you to read the Bible with "common sense," in your heart say, "Get behind me Satan." It was common sense that crucified Christ; it was not common sense that chose to be crucified; that was the logic of God—to *be* crucified. Jesus, the King of the first and last, taught that the First, chooses to be last of all and servant of all (Mark 9:35).

The Gospel is not "common sense;" it is the Word of God, who is Love.

Well, most people in our society see Revelation 16 as the penultimate threat:

"You better love, like God loves, or God will pour out His bowls of wrath on you."

And they see Revelation 20 as the ultimate threat:

"You better love, like God loves, or He'll endlessly torment you in the lake of Fire."

Most people see The Revelation as a threat, but it's a weird sort of threat.

In the last chapter we'll read the following command from Jesus: *"Let the evil doer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."*ⁱⁱⁱ You never see that engraved on a plaque at your location Christian bookstore. "Let them." That's not a threat! And we'll soon see that the ultimate threat upon a soul that doesn't love is *NOT* that he can never love, but that He will be thrown into a lake of burning Love, until he *does* love.

And we've already seen that the liquid in the bowls of wrath must be the blood of the Lamb... and that's only the beginning of the *NOT* so common sense. So, let's try to read it *NOT* with common sense, but instead read it with the mind of Christ, who is the logos, or logic, of the Creator—the Logic of Love.

Revelation 15:5-8,16

After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues [pleges: wounds, stripes.]

The Hebrew word translated plague means the same thing, a wound or a stripe. The plagues on Egypt were wounds inflicted by God upon Egypt.^{iv}

... out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven [wounds], clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests.

The seven angels are dressed just like Jesus and may very well be the seven Spirits of Jesus sent out into all the earth and, in specific, to the seven churches in Asia Minor.

And one of the four living creatures^v gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath [thumos: passion, anger] of God who lives forever and ever, and the sanctuary [naos] was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and

no one could enter the sanctuary [naos] until the seven plagues [pleges] of the seven angels were finished [teleo: ended, perfected, accomplished] Then I heard a loud voice from the temple [naos] telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath [thumos] of God.”

If this is a threat, it’s a really weird threat, for not only is the substance in the bowls of wrath the Mercy of God, which is the blood of the Lamb, but the wounds on earth come from wounds in the Sanctuary in Heaven.

As we saw last time, even in the stone temple on earth, that inner sanctuary was like a piece of eternity in time. The wounds come from the Sanctuary, which is the Seventh Day and the end of the ages, when and where everything is good and “it is finished—*teleo*.”

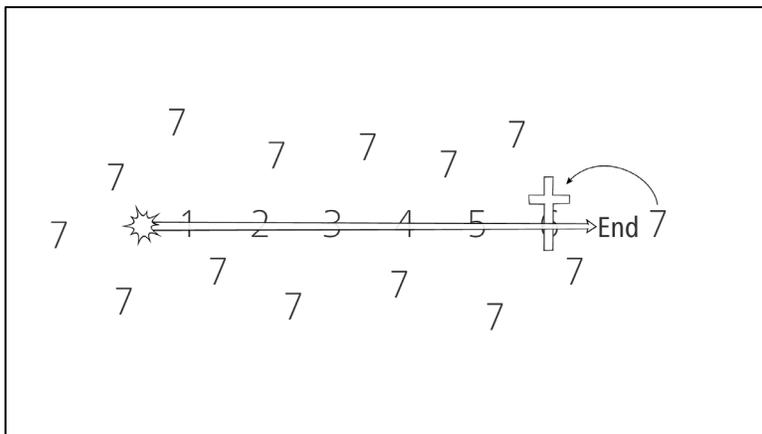


Figure 1 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Jesus claimed that the Sanctuary is His Body, and we will read that He is the First and Last, the Beginning and End—the *telos*.

So do you see the incredible picture that John is attempting to describe?

- Wounds in the eternal Sanctuary, that is the Body of Christ, appear to create the temporal wounds on the body that is you...
- Eternity is responsible for time; it’s not time that is the creator of eternity.
- Common sense would tell us that we’re responsible for Christ’s wounds, but this vision seems to reveal that Christ’s wounds are responsible for us.
- Common sense would tell us that the crucifixion of Christ is the result of our choices, but the vision would seem to reveal that our choices are somehow the result of the crucifixion... both good and bad choices.

Our bad choices cause His wounds in time, but His wounds are eternal and cause our wounds in time^{vi}. So, don’t misunderstand, Jesus was crucified for our sin and because of our sin, but you and I sinned, so that we might see the crucifixion of Jesus. That’s what Scripture tells us, “*God consigned all to disobedience...*” It’s your disobedience

that crucified Christ. *“God consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.”*
That He may bleed mercy on *all*... throughout all space & time.

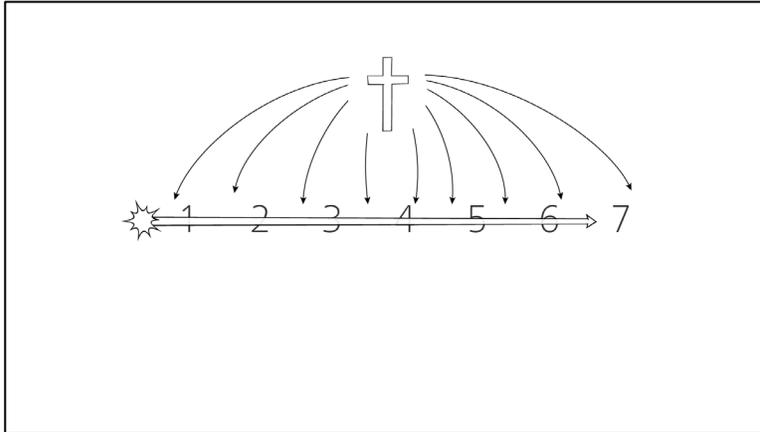


Figure 2 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

So, who bled first?

He bled two thousand years before you were born and had a chance to disobey.
And according to John, the Lamb was crucified from the foundation of the world.

According to Paul, you were predestined to live to the praise of His Glory.
His Glory is Mercy, which pours from His wounds.

In Revelation chapter four, John was like out-carnated into the eternal throne room.
Then and there he saw, *every creature, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is within them, praising the lamb standing on the throne, with wounds . . . as if he'd just been slain.*

See?

- It's not like His wounds are dependent on us, but we are dependent on His wounds.
- It's not like God is saying *“Get your act together or I'll afflict you with wounds.”*
(That's how you make actors, *hypocritos*, hypocrites.)
- It's not, *“Love or I'll afflict you with wounds,”* but
“I will afflict you with wounds, that you might love . . . as I love.”
- It's not like the Seven Wounds are a threat.
It's more like the Seven Wounds are the revelation of Glory and how God makes us
in His own image... His perfect image is Jesus.

He is the Beginning and End.

Rev. 15:1 *“With these seven wounds the wrath of God is finished—teleo—perfected.”*

It's as if the wrath of God in time perfectly reveals His wounds in eternity—even as His wounds in eternity explain every wound in time.

Do you remember what Jesus showed the disciples on Easter evening when He appeared to them in His resurrected and eternal Glory? His wounds!

I had a friend who was brutally abused as a little girl who told me that Jesus used to appear to her in her room... and you know what He showed her? His wounds—He asked her to put her fingers in the holes in His feet.

I have another friend who was horribly abused as a young woman and was terribly ashamed of her scars. One night as we prayed He appeared to her and showed her His scars... and lo and behold every scar on her body was also on His.

Well who was wounded first, my friend in 1965 or Jesus at the foundation of the world? And are His wounds shameful, or the revelation of His glory?

"In my deepest wound I see your glory and it dazzles me," wrote Augustine of Hippo.

Recently, I've been praying with another friend, who was abused, and in whom the evil one would manifest during prayer. Jesus revealed that we could crucify satan in the body of my friend by placing communion wine on her hands and her feet as he manifested in her body. Once we were all crucified together. ^{vii}

It's a story, too long for here and for now, and I know it's weird, but I can tell you that when it was over and satan was gone, my friend kept looking at her hands, and my hands, in which she saw Christ's hands, for the wounds in each were all the same. The nail that went through Christ's hand, her hand, and my hand, defeating the evil one and setting us free—was the same nail. And now, she, me, and Jesus were all joined at the wound.

Once my wife had a vision of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit facing each other and holding hands forming a triangle. She said, *"Peter, I looked close and saw that the hands were joined with a nail driven through each pair of hands."* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were joined at the wound.

Some of the deepest wounds I ever felt came the night I was tried and defrocked by my fellow pastors on the floor of my presbytery. I didn't know where all the wounds came from. Some came as a result of my choosing the Good—the fact that I wouldn't deny that Jesus died for all... And some came as a result of choosing the bad: as I told you two weeks ago, I chose to go into the ministry out of a desire for vengeance.

When they read the verdict "guilty," my friend Andrew grabbed my head and just buried it in his chest...he held me tight, and we were joined at the wound.

It has always reminded me of how God arranged all things, such that John would bury his head in the chest of Jesus at the last supper... how they were joined at the wound. When I pray in the mornings, I usually picture myself sitting next to Jesus with my head held tightly to His chest, We are joined at the wound, me, Andrew, and Jesus.

In a counseling session with David Hensen years ago, he asked me to picture Jesus walking up to me where I stood naked on a beach. As Jesus walked up to me, I saw His wounds, and then He pointed to mine. They were the same wounds—whether the result of choosing the good or choosing the bad—the wounds on me matched the wounds on Him and he was wounded first. My wounds are not a curse, but the deepest of all blessings.

Where would I be without my wounds... what would I be without my wounds?

- I would be nothing but a self-centered, self-absorbed, lonely actor.
- I would be nothing but a beast, consuming life and excreting death.
- I would be nothing but a tired harlot, continually trying to purchase love and having no clue as to what it truly is.

Well, the Seven Angels pour the Seven Wounds upon the earth.

-Some say the events that we read will occur in the future, and I'm sure they will.

-Some say that they occurred in the past, and I'm sure they did.

We'll read about one-hundred-pound hailstones falling on the city. For instance, the ancient Jewish historian Josephus records how the Romans launched one-hundred-pound stones painted white from their catapults and they fell on Jerusalem in 70 AD; it happened.

The plagues in Revelation 16 remind us of the plagues upon Egypt because in some amazing way they are. They also remind us of the seven trumpets and seven seals, for in some amazing way, they are. They should remind you of your wounds, for I think . . . they are.

They are the wounds on the body of Christ manifesting on all flesh in all of space and time. *"With his stripes we are healed [wounds]... for He has born our griefs, and carried our sorrows and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*

Revelation 16:1-2

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath (thumos) of God." So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

We've seen that our ego is shaped in the image of the beast by trusting the lie. So, to worship the image, is to worship ourselves, which is to be marked by the beast... and all who dwell on the surface of the earth seem to get marked by the beast, even if a part of them can dwell in heaven. (We talked about that in the last sermon.)

You have a beastly old man that is the result of your deeds—the man of dust. And you have a New Man that is the gift of God, for His name has been written in the Lamb's book of life. You have a man of flesh . . . and a man of the Spirit. Sores are wounds in your body of flesh . . . And we all have them. "Human flesh cannot inherit the Kingdom of

God,” wrote Paul. That’s what circumcision is all about in the Old Testament. And that’s what baptism is all about in the New Testament.

Revelation 16:3 says,

“The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living soul [psyche] died [that was] in the sea.” That “was” is supplied by the translator. The Greek reads, *“Every living psyche (that’s soul) died in the sea.”* Jesus said, *“You must lose your psyche... to find it.”* You don’t need to fear dying in the sea, if you’ve already been baptized in the sea of glass and fire. That’s what we just studied in the last chapter.

In circumcision, flesh is cut away for the sake of an intimate communion producing life. Likewise in baptism, you remember that your sins have been washed away, your old self was crucified, you’re *psyche* was destroyed . . . all for the sake of intimate communion with God and your neighbor.

What is it that keeps you from loving God and loving your neighbor?
It’s your beastly and whorish ego—the illusion of your own sovereignty.

You are baptized into one body and that’s the Body of Christ.
Remember?

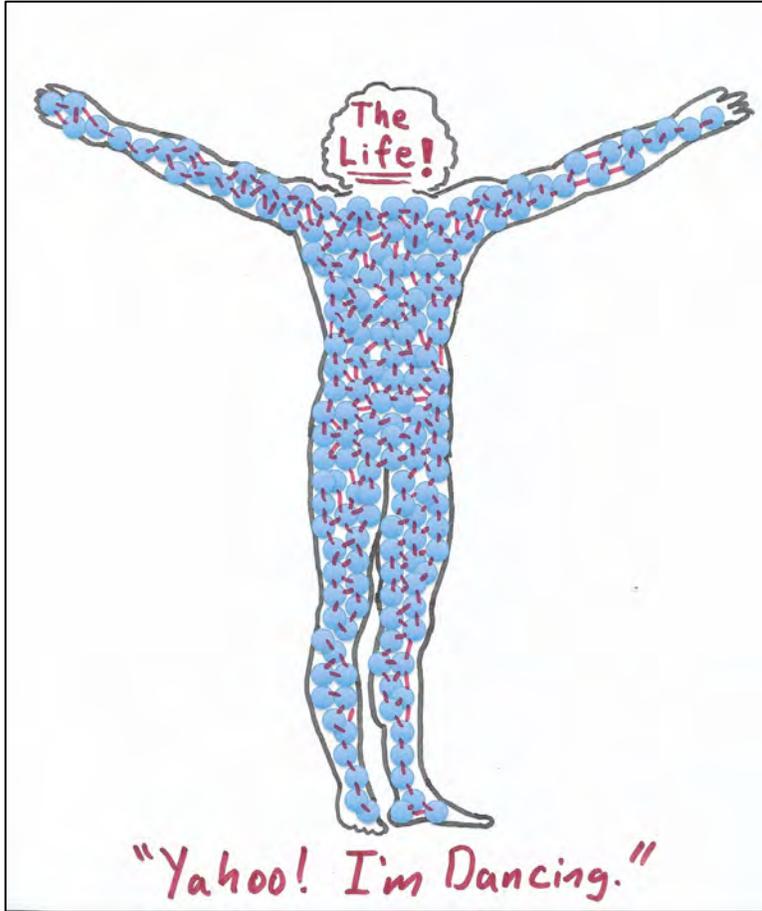


Figure 3 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Life is a communion within one Body.

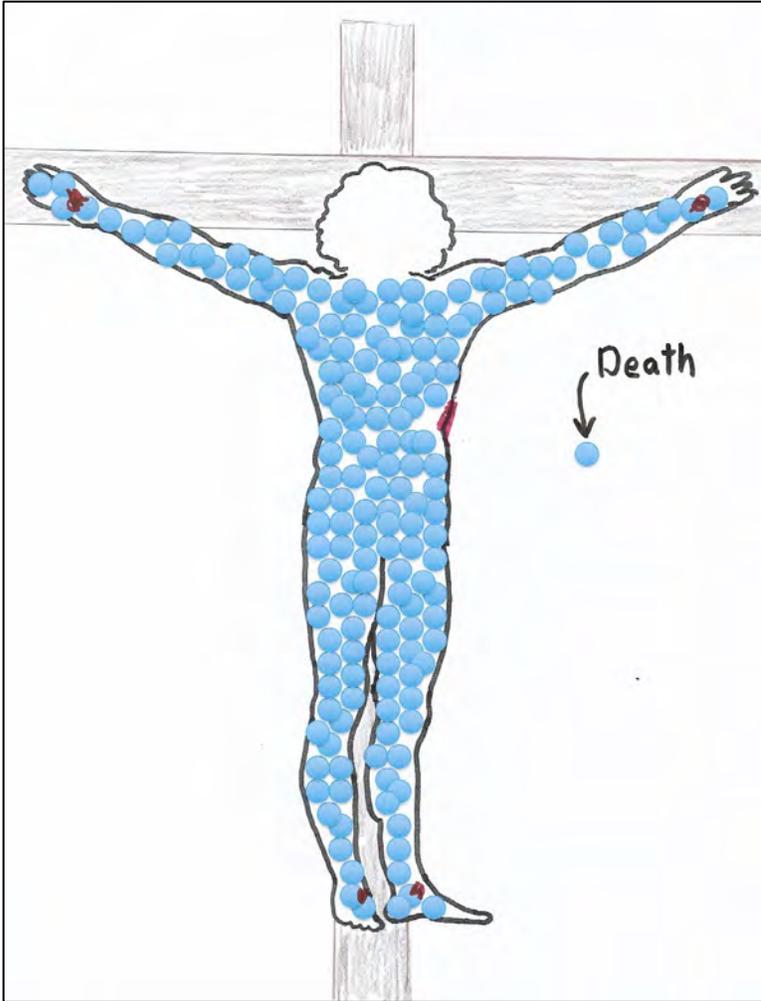


Figure 4 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Death is separation from that body.

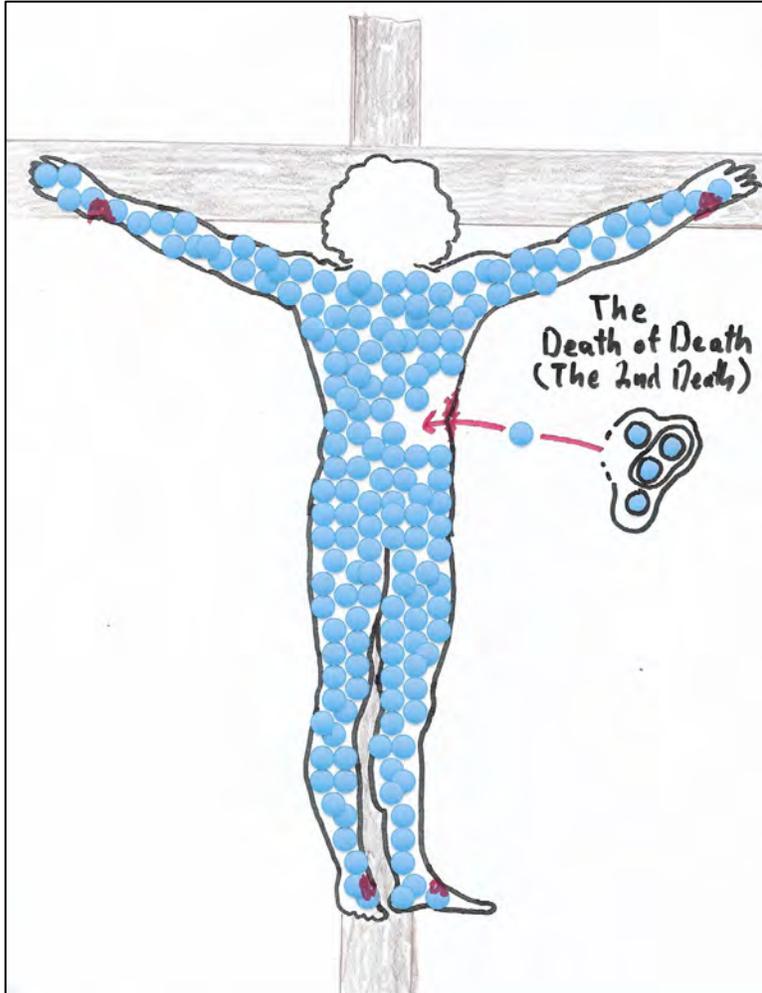
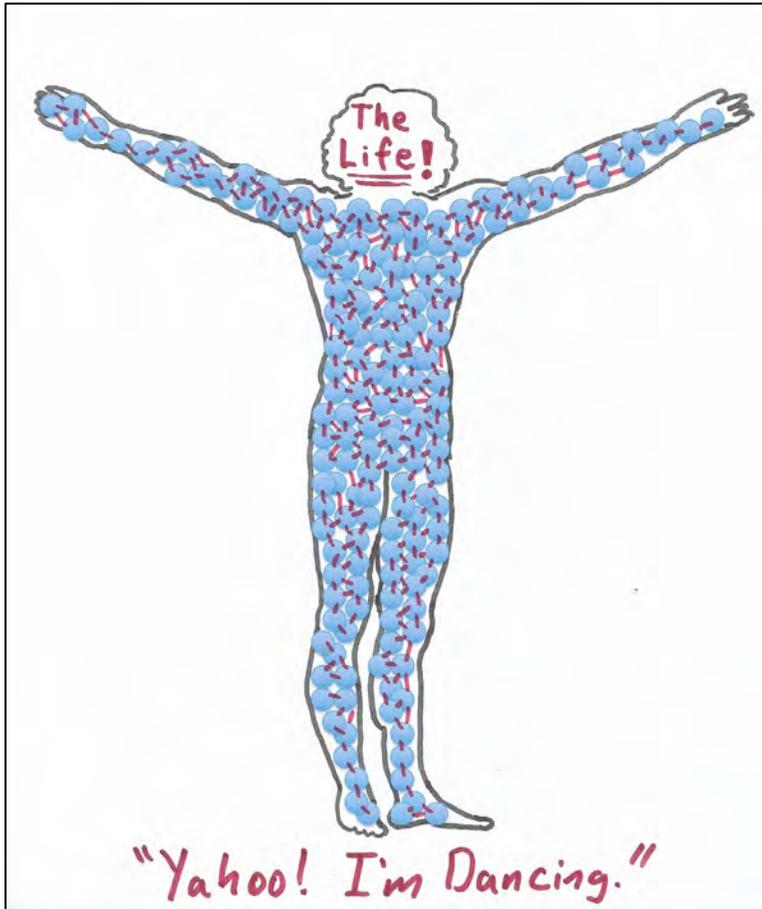


Figure 5 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

Salvation is the death of death—the death of that ego that traps you in fig leaves, shame and a body of death.



Life is a communion of Love in which every member chooses to bleed one for the other. We have said that each of those dots is like a human psyche.

In this world bleeding is painful, for one member is not connected to the next; it's sacrificial love. But in a body where all parts are connected, and so bleed one into another, bleeding is no longer painful; it's an ecstatic communion of Love called Life.

The wound in each and every member is connected to the wound in the next member, and through the wounds flows the river of life: *"The life is in the blood."*
Revelation 16:4-15

The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!" And I heard the altar [Check it out: a talking altar!] saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!"

"You have given them blood to drink."

Why do you come to worship? ...Because God has given you blood to drink.
It's what you deserve... but not because you earned it; *God* earned it. ^{viii}

God repays our evil with Good. (Romans 12:21) We took His life and discovered that He has always given His life from the foundation of the world... It is His Judgment. And any time you choose to love, which is choosing to bleed for your neighbor, it is because the Judgment of God has taken His place on the throne in the sanctuary of your soul.

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

Jesus appeared as the sun at the start of this vision.
And Jesus is the light of the world.

"This is the judgment," writes John, "The light has come into the world and people (not some people, just people) loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil." Then John writes, "Everyone who does foul things, hates the light and doesn't come to the Light lest his deeds be exposed. But everyone doing truth comes to the light, so it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been done by God."

That's John 3:18, right after John 3:16. Why don't people quote it?

It means: everything good in you is the work of God in you.

And that leaves no place for your ego and only space for worship. ^{ix}

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

They did not repent (change their minds), for they perceived the light as a threat, and so ran into the darkness, crying "*Hide me from the wrath of the lamb,*" just as they did back in chapter six at the opening of the sixth seal.

They perceive the Judgment as a threat and maybe it is a threat; it's a threat to the darkness; it's a threat to our sinful flesh; it's a threat to the illusion in which we've all trapped our selves; it's a threat to the prison in which each of us hides.

It's a threat to hell because the judgment of God is the promise of life.

John 12:50 "*I know the Father's commandment is eternal Life,*" says Jesus.

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. (Israel always lived with the threat of the kings from the east.) And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world,

- That would be not only the kings from the east, but from every direction...
and if we take it literally, not only the kings from 70 AD or 2057 AD.
- It would be the kings of the earth from all of space an time.
- And if you worship yourself, you are your own king, and there can only be one king, so of course you would hate the King of kings.

The demonic spirits go abroad over the surface of the earth...

to assemble the kings for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!")

That doesn't mean you have to take a shower in your swimsuit. It's not talking about physical nakedness, but psychic nakedness and the righteousness that we've been preaching about all along: *"Blessed are those who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb... that they may have the right to the tree of life"* (Revelation 7:14 and 22:14). Jesus is the *Eschatos* Adam who covers us, His Bride, with His own righteousness, which is Himself; He completes us.

When Eve and that first Adam sinned, they immediately covered the place where they were to come together in a covenant of life. They covered the wound, left from the surgery performed by God before the fall to teach them of His love after the fall. They covered the wound, but not with each other; they covered it with fig leaf bikinis of their own construction.

"Behold I am coming like a thief," says Christ.
He's coming *like* a thief, but He's *not* a thief. He's your husband.

Are you worried about His coming? If so, you must not trust your husband.
"Behold I am coming like a thief at an hour you don't expect."

If the "Left Behind" series was right, and the Revelation were a map, these folks would know exactly when He's coming: seven years after millions of people instantaneously vanished into thin air, that would tip you off.

"So when and where is Armageddon?" you ask.
"When and where is the Day of the Lord?"

Well, in Hebrew *Armageddon* literally means something like "Mountain of Megiddo (or Megiddon)." I've been to Megiddo, and there aren't any mountains, just small hills. So, some think it means "mountain of assembly" or "mountain of the crowd," due to the way Hebrew words can be transliterated in to Greek. ^x

In Zechariah 12-14 there an this utterly amazing prophecy about the day of the Lord. I wish we had time to read it all, but listen to this much:

“On that day,” says God through Zechariah,
 “I will make Jerusalem like a cup of staggering to all people...” (like a cup of wrath)
 “I will pour out on Jerusalem pleas for mercy, when they look on him whom they have
 pierced.^{xi}” (John tells us Zechariah returns to Jesus.)
 “On that day,” continues God through Zechariah, “the morning in Jerusalem will be as
 great as the mourning ... on the plains of Megiddo.”^{xii}
 “On that day, a fountain will be opened... to cleanse from sin.”

It goes on to describe an earthquake, an Eternal Day that invades our days, and a Day when God’s name will be One, and God will be King of ALL.

Get the picture?

- The “day of the Lord” is the day that all the children of Adam nailed Jesus the Christ to a tree in a garden just outside Jerusalem.
- And the “day of the Lord” is any moment in which you see, and believe, the Judgment of God—the Word of God—Jesus: it means “God is Salvation.”

And this is how He conquers the beasts, harlots, nations, and kings: they look on Him whom they have pierced as He cries, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do...” And “Father into your hands I commit my spirit [breath].” And as the sky grows black and the earth trembles they realize: “This was the son of God...” who suffered and died for me. God breaks our stone hearts, with the Revelation of His Relentless Love. It pours from His Wounds, as He hangs on the tree; it is the River of Life.

Revelation 16:16-17:

And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple [Where is the temple? What’s the temple?], from the throne [Where is Christ enthroned?], saying, “It is done!” And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. And every island fled away, [Remember John was exiled on an island alone] and no mountains were to be found [That means the whole land is a plain—“every valley is exalted and every mountain and hill laid low;” the “exalted are humbled and the humbled are exalted.”] And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague [wound] of the hail, because the plague [wound] was so severe. Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot...”

And as we’ll see, the beast and harlot are destroyed, the Fflesh of all men is circumcised—cut off and destroyed by the King of Kings, and the voice from the throne cries, “Look I make **all** things new.”

It still takes some time...

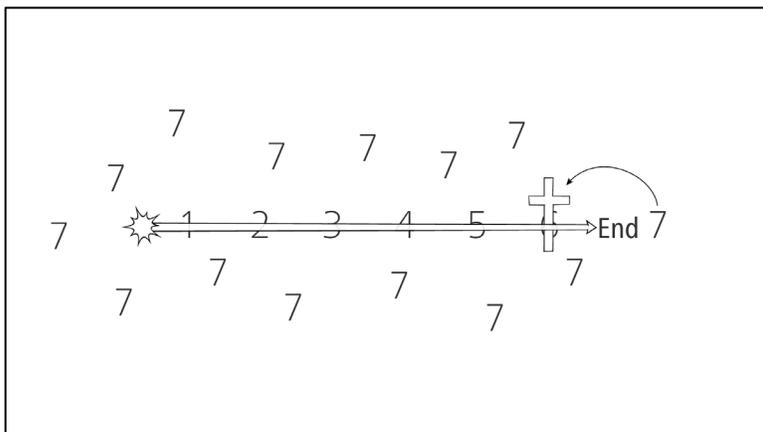


Figure 6 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

But humanity repents.

Even “the kings of the earth” (Rev. 21:21) bring their glory into the City, that is the Sanctuary and Body of our living Lord.

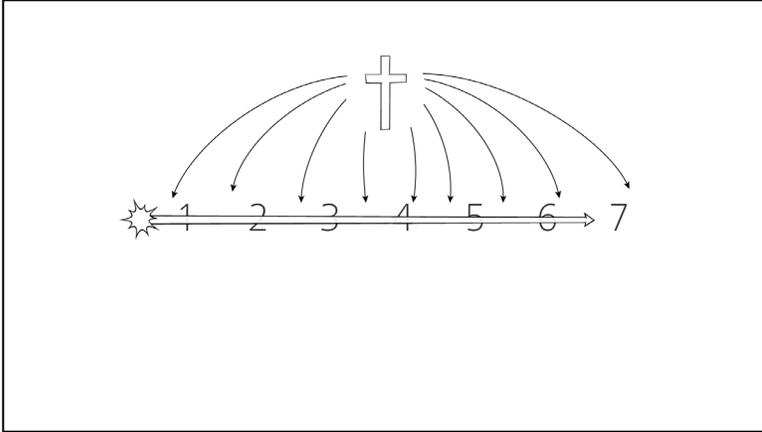
We repent when we finally come to know the contents of those bowls and the meaning of our wounds. It’s the blood of the Lamb, that we have repeatedly slain, that’s in every bowl. It’s the blood of the Lamb that flows from the wounds and reveals the meaning of all our wounds. We enter God’s Rest through the torn curtain in the Sanctuary.^{xiii} We enter God’s Rest and become who we are through the wounds in the Body of our Lord.

God is Relentless, Furious, Unending and Absolute Love.

So how do we learn to Love? Well, you see you can’t just read a book describing love, and then decide to love. God is Love. And you can’t *just* sing a song on Sunday morning and be made in His image. As I said at the start, we’re missing something . . . I think that something is . . . wounds.

Wounds violate our illusion of sovereignty and cause us to bleed . . . They crack our earthen vessel, they eat away at our flesh, they violate our sense of control—our ego.

The wounds from the throne are poured over the days of our lives.



We don't come to love simply by reading a book or singing a song, but maybe we do learn to love by going on a journey on which we're wounded. God doesn't will evil, but He wills for us to encounter evil and be wounded by evil and even do some wounding . . . God is sovereign over all. (How else could you get yourself crucified?)

Perhaps every wound is a bowl of wrath. The wrath burns away the illusion of our own control, which turns us into beasts, harlots, and self-absorbed hypocrites who cannot love and be loved.

And maybe every wound is also a trumpet that's sounding. Remember the trumpets proclaim atonement, which means at-one-ment; God is breaking down the walls that divide and behind which we hide.

And maybe every wound is also a seal being opened . . . a seal that reveals the Mystery of God: We are One Body. Christ in us and us in Christ: Each member giving life and receiving life, a river of Life that flows from the throne as mercy for all and returns as praise for Jesus, our Lord and Head of the Body—Jesus.

You know a body is joined at the wounds.
If it was ever broken it is rejoined at the wounds...

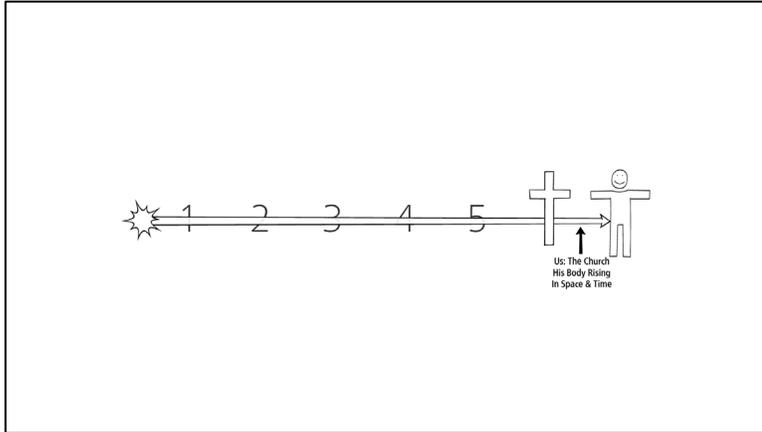


Figure 7 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

So anyway, what are we missing?

Perhaps our wounds... Actually, we already have them, but we usually don't share them; we cover them with egos, defense mechanisms, and ridiculous fig leaf bikinis.

1. But it's your wounds that teach you about Christ's wounds, especially on the day you realize that they all belong to Him.
2. And it's your surrendered wounds that invite others to Love.

Never manipulate with wounds, for that doesn't allow for Love. It's harlotry. Don't attempt to manipulate Love with wounds, but expose your wounds to Love. And where will you find Him? Love is in His temple that looks just like your neighbor.

You don't need a professional counselor or pastor. There's nothing special about my friend Andrew, except that he contains the life of the Living God... and He bleeds and lets me see.

Your neighbor is a uniquely shaped container of the life of God, and so are you . . . but not only a container, a conduit of Mercy... if you're willing to bleed.

Perhaps the best gift you can give your church, life group, or Christian friends is your wounds... and your deepest wounds are your own sins... They cause wounds, and they are wounds in your own will, that need to be healed with God's will, and God's will is Grace.

I'm saying, confess your sins one to another and bleed Grace. That's the thing that heals, not you but the Life of Jesus. Bleed Grace.

3. And when you are wounded by the neighbor you love, well, that's when the magic really begins to happen. Every sin is an invitation from God to bleed fire upon the one that wounded you. That's the weapon that slays the dragon, turns beasts into men, and harlots into brides—that's forgiveness; that's the Will of God in you—the Will of God.

See? I think it's already in you. If you haven't come to understand it yet, maybe it's still behind a curtain in the deepest part of your sanctuary, but I believe it's in you. But what's the problem? It's just that your ego won't let it out. But when your ego has been sufficiently wounded, you will begin to see Mercy and you will begin to love Mercy, and you will begin to bleed Mercy and when you have come to bleed nothing *but* Mercy, you will be perfected in the image of God.

So, I hope you all have a group of Christian friends with whom you share your wounds and bleed Life, one into the other. We can help you form one if you don't have one; we've called them life groups.

And what should they look like?

Well, several years ago I saw a movie about a group of privileged, self-centered, beastly and whorish Hollywood actors who were miserable inside—even though they were constantly partying on the outside. While they were partying, the end of the world, like, happened.

After a little while, they learned that if you loved people it wasn't too late, and you could still get raptured, but they couldn't just act like they loved; they really had to love. They said the words, and sang the songs, but they needed something more...

Ironically most religious end-times movies don't seem to have a clue as to what the Revelation is about: Jesus.

I definitely wouldn't recommend this movie for families, but I think that, in the end, they got it right.

The bowls of wrath are not a threat as to what might happen if we don't love. The bowls of wrath are the wounds that liberate us from ourselves and free us to Love... like Jesus.

Clip from the movie *This is the End*

Explosions and destruction are everywhere. Jay Baruchel pours out apologies and confessions as fast as his mouth can pour them out. His friend stands next to him trying to defend him. He begins pouring out his heart about how he didn't like what he had become, how he should've changed with his friend and not been self-righteous. After his confession, his friend responds: "It's fine man; it's fine. I love you!" The two friends embrace; Jay says, "We die together."

Suddenly, a giant, fiery creature approaches them and is about to engulf them when a ray of light swoops down and picks Jay up. The hideous creature that was approaching them falls back from the power of the beam of light. Jay is in the beam of light and is about to be sucked up into Heaven, but his friend is not. He tells his friend to hold onto his hand and tries to bring him along. Then, his friend is too heavy and is holding Jay back, but Jay won't let his friend go. He tells him to keep holding on and he won't leave him behind.

The song "And I Will Always Love you" by Whitney Houston begins to play in the background and the friend confesses that he does not deserve to go to Heaven. He says, "You let go Jay!" Jay responds, "But you'll die!" The friend says, "I know but you won't. I don't deserve to go to Heaven but you do...! I'm not gonna hold you back anymore..." He then lets go of Jay's hand and falls towards the ground and straight towards the belly of the beast.

Jay is looking down and suddenly his friend is not far behind him also being propelled towards Heaven in a ray of light. They both cheer in exstatic joy and soar towards Heaven holding hands while the beast is in distress and made impotent! "I Will Always Love You" continues to play as the two friends continue to soar towards Heaven.

The scene then changes and the two friends are skipping on the clouds of Heaven.

Communion

On the night that the *Protos*—Jesus was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, "*This is my body.*" (This is the torn curtain in the Sanctuary.)

And in the same way He took the cup saying, "*This is the covenant in my blood.*" (This is the river of Life) *Drink of it, all of you.*

That movie was titled *This is the End*.

But *this* (communion) really is the End... and the Beginning.

This is hard to talk about because when you're wounded, all you can talk about is the pain of your wound. You see? You live in space and time and you don't yet entirely trust the *Logos*—the Plot to your story. But as I was preaching, I imagine you thought of one or two wounds. Would you give them to Jesus? You don't have to understand them. You don't have to know if it happened because of your choice or someone else's choice. You don't have to understand. Just think of your wound and now say in your heart, "Lord Jesus, I give you my wounds."

Now, let me ask you a question: whose wounds are they? Well, they're His. And here's a shock. They've always been His.

Now, I want you to pray a prayer that I think the Apostle Paul prayed. And believe me, he had a lot of wounds. Say: "Thank you Lord, for letting me share in the fellowship of your sufferings—your temporal sufferings. Thank you Lord, for letting me share in the fellowship that is your Life—your eternal Life."

You wounds are not *only* a curse; they've been absolutely filled, baptized, and consumed with blessing.

Come to the table.

Worship

"Beautiful Scars"

To whom has your truth been revealed?
What good is your beauty concealed?

We will look to you
We will look to you

Like a root coming out of dry ground
There's no majesty here to be found

We will look to you
We will look to you

Love is on your wounded side
We can feel it
All creation brought to life

With your hands, show the glory
With your feet, tell the story
Let us come just as we are
Beautiful scars

Man of sorrows, of grief and disgrace
You're the one from whom all hide their face

We will look to you
We will look to you

You're the brilliance that's lost on our eyes
Once rejected by all and despised

We will look to you
We will look to you

Love is on your wounded side

We can feel it
All creation brought to life

With your hands, show the glory
With your feet, tell the story
Let us come just as we are
Beautiful scars

You were pierced that the thirsty might drink
You were crushed that the hungry might eat
You took the stripes on your back to reveal
We are healed

“Beautiful Scars” by Nate Bullis & Vincent Colbert

Benediction

So, we talked about wounds. And if you're like me, you look down and you think, “*Oh my God! My whole left side is bloody and wounded.*” And maybe I look at my brother, Andrew and think, “*God, he doesn't have a wound on his left side. Maybe you love him more than me. Maybe I did something wrong and he did something right.*” I can look at others' wounds and it can intimidate me—when I compare them to another. But I think God says, “No. Andrew has different wounds, Peter. Look closely. He has wounds. Everyone here has wounds. Don't those wounds intimidate you.”

Think about this thought: what if they're all Body parts. Maybe we're all Body parts. If we're all Body parts then that's kind of interesting because maybe that's how we all come together.

Andrew has been in my small group for twenty-five years, and we get together during the week and just have coffee or whatever. We can't fix each other's wounds. We can't sew the Body together; if we try we, get Frankenstein's monster. But when we get together, maybe God can fix the wounds.

And so, if He took all of us, all of our wounds and joined us into one Body . . . well, what would we be? We'd be glorious! We'd be the Body of Christ and all of our wounds would be a blessing. Well, that's not just “might be,” that is! So, in Jesus' name, may you believe the Gospel and share your wounds.

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.

ⁱ Scripture says “The Spirit, the *pneuma*, the breath is Life.”

It's the blood that carries the breath, the life, the oxygen to every member and every cell in the body. In every cell that oxygen is oxidized, that is burned—your body literally runs on fire... It's a communion of fire. I don't know exactly how much to make of that, but I find it fascinating. Whatever the case, God is burning Love and He is making you in His image.

ii This idea, that some are left behind to suffer the wrath of God, while others escape it because they said the sinner's prayer, ties in well with a corrupt version of penal substitutionary atonement theory.

It's the idea that our sin made God so angry that He just had to destroy something... really big. And so, the idea goes, that if God takes His anger out on Jesus, and we say "thank you," then He'll beat the shit out of Jesus, but not out of us; He'll wound Jesus, instead of wounding us because we were smart enough to agree to this special offer.

There's a degree of truth in all of that, but a whole lot of lie. Love doesn't just leave people behind... particularly for time without end. God is Love and God is One. God the Father is not mean, while Jesus the son, is nice. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them. God is One. And God is Love. But Love is a Fire.

iii Revelation 22:11. It's a verse you don't find in cross-stitch down at the Christian bookstore or engraved on a plaque hanging behind the pastor's desk in the church office.

iv *pleges*: wounds, stripes from *plesso*, the verb to wound or strike, as with a whip. A *plege* is the wound, mark, or stripe left by that wounding.

In the Old Testament in Hebrew, Plague is the Hebrew noun *nega* from the verb *naga*... and it's the same idea, a *nega* is the result of a *naga*—it's the wound from a wounding. The ten plagues on Egypt were ten wounds inflicted by God. Likewise, *makkah*: plague, wound, or stripe comes *nakah*: to wound or smite.

The ten plagues were wounds inflicted by God on Egypt, "His people."

Isaiah 19:24-25, *In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵ whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."*

v Remember, these are the four living creatures that constantly worship before the throne of God, whom John saw when he was out-carnated into eternity in chapter 4...this is that.

vi Jesus said, "*Father forgive, they know not what they do.*" That means they don't know the Good and the evil. You can't freely choose the Good if you don't know what it is, and neither can you choose the evil. We don't know Good and evil until we've seen Christ crucified.

vii One night as we were praying, through the mouth of my friend, after I revealed that we would nail him to the cross, satan said to me, "Why don't you crucify yourself?" And I said, "Great idea!" So I put the blood of the lamb on her hands and my hands and I held her hands as we all got crucified. When it was over, and satan was gone, my friend kept looking at her hands and my hands in which she saw Christ's hands, for the wounds were the same in each.

viii In Romans 11 Paul writes, "Who has given a gift to him, (...or who has prevented him, or betrayed him. The word, *prodidomai*, can mean both give and betray or prevent. And see Job 41:11 as well) "Who has given to him, or taken from him, such that he can be repaid?"

You cannot take from God unless He's first given to you.
You cannot take His life unless He first gives His Life to be taken by you.

61:1 *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God...*

*7 Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion;
instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot;
therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;
they shall have everlasting joy. -Isaiah 61:1-2, 7*

^{ix} And check out Isaiah 30:23-26 ²⁶ "In that day... the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow [*makkah*: wound, plague, stripe]

^x [*har-magedon* may be *har-mo-ed*, See [Anchor Bible Dictionary](#), "Armageddon."]

^{xi} In John 19:37, John tells us that this "one," that they have pierced, is Jesus.

^{xii} This may refer to the death of good king Jehoshaphat, or an old Canaanite practice of crying to the pagan deity until that deity grants rain. The point being that the crying in Jerusalem over the one we have pierced will be far greater than any other weeping. And this, by the way, is how "The King of Kings" conquers us "kings of the earth;" He breaks our hearts with the Revelation of Love.

^{xiii} Hebrews 10:19 "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

We enter God's rest; we enter the Sanctuary and come home to ourselves through the wounds of Christ (the torn curtain). It is the "new and living way." The Greek word translated "new" (*prospatos*) only appears this once in all of Scripture. It literally means, "freshly sacrificed" or "newly slain." Eternity touches time at the wounds on the Body of Christ.

32

**The Beast Is Not;
So What Am I?**

The Beast Is Not; So What Am I?

Revelation 17

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

September 9, 2018

Peter Hiett

Prayer

Father, we confess that we’ve been looking in the mirror and kind of observing that we’re getting dusty—we’re getting old. Maybe we’ve been looking at the local news or sports stations. Father, I pray that as we preach, you—through the power of your Spirit—would reach down and turn our faces towards you so that we would see you on your throne, revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. I’m just asking that you would help us to preach, Father. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Message

We started preaching through the Revelation exactly one year ago today. Today we arrive at chapter 17 of the Revelation, which is an explanation of what John has seen since the Lamb opened the seventh seal on the seventh sealed scroll.



Figure 1 Image credit: Peter Hiett

It’s absolutely critical to remember that John is no longer “dwelling on earth.”

The book *starts* on earth, with John worshipping in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, when and where Jesus appears to him like a man on fire, shining like the sun.ⁱ

Jesus then dictates seven letters to the seven angels of the seven churches in Asia Minor. Each letter is a call to conquer and creates the question, “How do I conquer?”

Then Jesus says to John, “Come up here!” And suddenly John finds himself before the throne of God. He’s no longer in space and time as we experience them. And yet, he’s looking at space and time as we do experience them.



In the strong right hand of God, there is a scroll sealed with seven seals.
Twenty-four elders and all of heaven worship God for, by His will, He created *all* things.

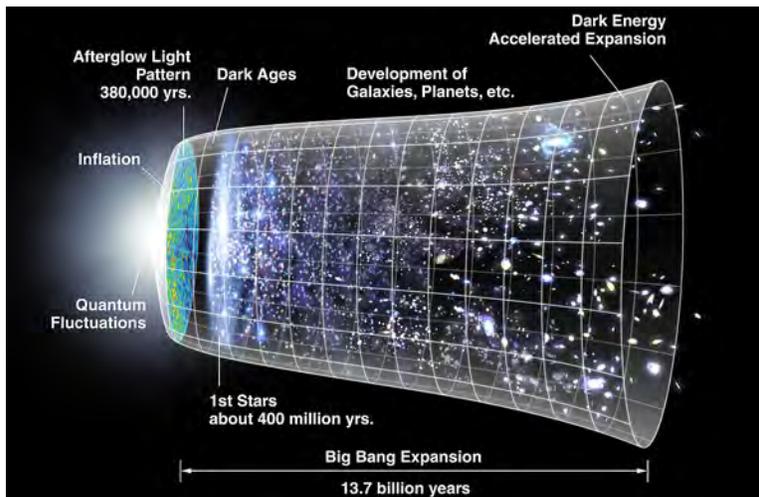


Figure 2 Image credit: NASA / WMAP science team

We saw that the scroll, appears to be all of creation.
In Scripture, the seven days are far more than seven days as we measure time, in fact, they represent all of *chronos*—chronological time.ⁱⁱ So this picture reminds us of this timeline.ⁱⁱⁱ

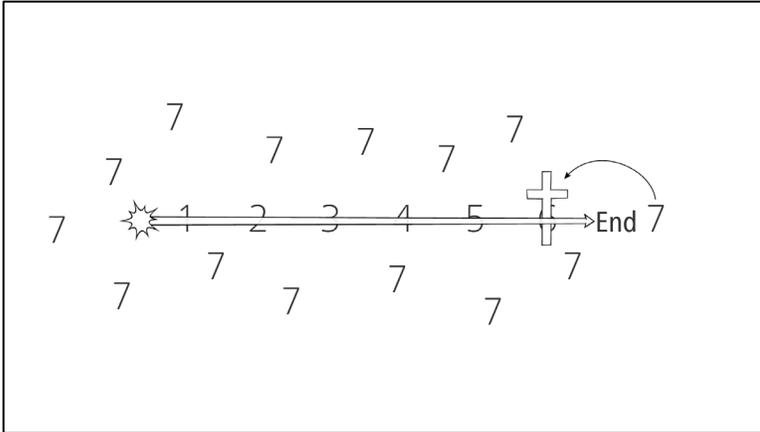


Figure 3 Image credit: Peter Hiett

In the words of Karl Barth, *“To say that God is eternal means that God is “the One who is and rules before time, in time, and again after time, the One who is not conditioned by time, but conditions it absolutely in his freedom”^{iv}*

In the words of the famous hymn: *“He’s got the whole world in his hands, he’s got the whole world in his hands, he’s got the whole world in his hands... He’s got space-time in his hands.”^v*



We’ve spoken about all of this. So, I’m just reminding you that John is outside of space-time, looking at space-time, in the strong right hand of God . . . who is Jesus, who is the Word, who is the Judgment, who is the slaughtered Lamb, who is opening the scroll and revealing its meaning.^{vi}

And all of this reveals something utterly fascinating about John, and about you, and about Jesus. There are at least two Johns: there is a John outside the scroll and one inside the scroll.

- It appears that John is one of the twenty-four elders around the throne in eternity constantly worshipping.
- And John is also a hotheaded fisherman, in 30 AD, in Galilee who wants to call down fire on a whole Samaritan village. He is also a John in that scroll.

Even more, John is an observer. You know? Physicists talk a lot these days about the mystery of an observer but is an observer observing both the old John and the new John.

It appears that Paul also had an experience like this. He tells the Corinthians that he was caught up to the third heaven. He saw things that he just didn't know quite what to do with. He must've seen an old Paul and a forever new/eternal Paul.

And not only that, there is an old you and a new and eternal you. John hears, *"Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them praising God and the lamb for redeeming people for God."* In other words, He hears you, the new and eternal you, constantly singing in eternity... But, there's also an old you, grumbling and complaining, in Denver in 2018.

That new and eternal you must be a little like the you that is awake, thinking about the you that is dreaming...You are you when you're dreaming, and yet you're not you... you're not your true self; you're a false self that you have created with your dream.

St. Paul wrote, *"Therefore it says, 'Awake oh sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you... He will give you light'"* (Eph. 5:14).

You'll remember when Christ appeared to John, he fell as if dead, until Jesus touched him and said, "Don't be afraid." It was as if John was waking from a dream of his own sovereignty (his own control) to the reality of the sovereignty of God (and *His* control).

You'll also remember that once upon a time, John was in a boat with Jesus on the sea, a storm was raging and Jesus was asleep and appeared to be dreaming. The disciples woke Jesus to the "reality" of the storm. Jesus seemed a bit perturbed and told the storm to stop. It does, and then the disciples wake to the reality that the storm was not reality, but more like their own bad dream . . . interfering with God's dreams.

Well, creation is God's dream, created entirely by His Will, or Word. But this is where it gets really weird: God has dreamed up some dreamers that don't always dream what God dreams.

The John outside the scroll is God's perfect dream: Man in the image of God. But the John inside the scroll is still dreaming his own dreams . . . and yet, even these must somehow be part of God's dream.

God's dreams are called reality. When John dreams God's dreams, He walks in the Way, the Truth and the Life—the Light. "All that is exposed to light becomes light," writes Paul. But whenever and wherever John simply dreams his own dreams, he sins.

Well, John hears all creatures, in eternity worshipping. But in eternity there is no sin, no beast, no Harlot, no dragon, no evil, no one interested in crucifying God, but only interested in worshipping God. You see? Sin and evil are not God's dream, but our dream, our nightmare.

I can't say this precisely, but John must realize that he exists in the scroll the way you exist in your dreams . . . You exist, and some of the things you dream exist, but that dream world really *doesn't* exist... and yet, sometimes we get trapped in our dreams.

And now, this is where the Revelation that should really blow your mind. John looks to the throne and realizes that God has entered, not only His own dreams (the creation) but also John's dreams . . . of sin and evil. He looks to the throne and sees wounds on the body of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The King of Kings received those wounds in our wicked dreams . . . And yet, those wicked dreams exist in God's good dream, which is eternal. Those wounds, purchased in time, are also an eternal fountain of eternal Life, from which pours a river of Life.

Well, I just wanted to remind you of what we preached a year ago... And that is that the Revelation is something like God entering our dreams and waking us from our illusion of control. See? That would be apocalyptic—the earth would shake, the mountains would vanish, and our reality would dissolve like a dream.

Movie Clip from *Inception*

Cobb: Dreams . . . they feel real while we're in them, right? It's only when we wake up that we realize something was actually strange. Let me ask you a question: You never really remember the beginning of a dream do you? You always end up right in the middle of what's going on.

Ariadne: I guess . . . Yeah.

Cobb: So how did we end up here?

Ariadne: Well, we just cam from the . . . uh . . . (confused)

Cobb: Think about it Ariadne, how did you get here? Where are you right now?

Ariadne: (Looking around bewildered) We're dreaming?

Cobb: You're actually in the middle of the workshop, right now. This is your first lesson in shared dreaming. [The table that Ariadne and Cobb are sitting at begins to shake. A newsstand explodes and then the reality around them begins to crumble to pieces as Ariadne realizes she is in a dream. Ariadne watches in wonder as "reality" crumbles around her.]

Ariadne: If it's just a dream then why are you with...? [Ariadne suddenly awakens to find herself in the workshop with Cobb talking to her.]

Cobb: It's never really "just" a dream is it? A face full of glass hurts like hell when you're in it. It feels real.

[Ariadne gasps for air as she recovers from her dream and tries to make sense of what she has just experienced.]

“Think about it . . . how did you get here?” I mean that’s what we all wonder, right? Do you see? Maybe in some sense, we’re dreaming. Do you remember that clip from the movie *Inception*, about new technology that allows people to enter other people’s dreams? “When you’re in it, it feels real...”

Well, the wounds on Christ’s hands and feet *are* real: maybe they’re the price God pays to enter our nightmares and wake us up. We cannot understand all of that, but we should be pondering all of that, as we read Revelation 17.

Last time in Revelation 16, at the revelation of the seventh wound, poured from the seventh bowl of the passion of God, we saw all the kings of the earth and all their armies gathered on a mountain to do battle with the Lamb of God.

He conquers them as He cries, “*It is finished; it is done,*” from a tree in a garden just outside the walls of the great city of Jerusalem. The earth shakes, the mountains move, and our old reality dissolves like a dream.

Revelation 17:1-18

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute [porne: harlot, whore] who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality [porneou: to buy or sell intimate communion], and with the wine of whose sexual immorality [porneia] the dwellers on earth have become drunk.”^{vii} And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness [outside the city], and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast [It’s scarlet just as the seven-headed dragon was scarlet.] ...scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names...

Most think that this beast with the blasphemous names is the Antichrist, and that makes sense to me. Antichrist means imitation Christ.

...and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls,

In three chapters, we’ll meet the Bride. She isn’t adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls; she’s *made of* gold, jewels and pearls.

This woman was adorned in gold, jewels and pearls, writes John, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and (or “that is”) the impurities of her sexual immorality (porneia). And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations (bdelygma) And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs (the witnesses) of Jesus.”^{viii}

When I saw her, I marveled greatly. But the angel said to me, “Why do you marvel (thaumazo)?^{ix} I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is

*about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth [Do you dwell on the earth?] whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, **one is**, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while. As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth, but it belongs to the seven...*

The beast is a king, like a “king of kings...” Jesus rose on the eighth day, which in the Hebrew mind is an endless seventh day. The beast is like an imitation Christ... “The kings are, but the beast is not...”

As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth, but it belongs to the seven, [As if the seven give it power] and it goes to destruction. And the ten horns that you saw [and we have ten fingers, that’s sort of how we count in this world] are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”

And the angel said to me, “The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour (eat) her flesh^x and burn her up with fire^x [The dragon’s kingdom consumes itself.] ...burn her with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled (finished). And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.”

There you go! [The congregation laughs.]

Now, we’ll preach more about this, and we’ve been preaching about this for months, but we still wonder, “Who is this woman, this city?” She’s Babylon, that’s obvious, for that’s her name and it reminds us of the tower of Babel, when men tried to purchase heaven with their deeds.

She’s Babylon, and she must be Rome. For thousands of years now, Rome has been known as the city on seven hills. In Rome, they were slaughtering Christians for sport in the Coliseum.

She’s Babylon, and Rome, and Jerusalem.

- Jerusalem has already been called “The Great City,” in chapter 11. She’s “the city where our Lord was crucified” (Rev. 11:8).
- We’ll soon read: “*In her is found the blood of the saints and the prophets and all*

who have been slain on earth (18:24).” That has to be a reference to Jerusalem, and the blood of Jesus who bleeds for *all*.

- Throughout the Old Testament, Jerusalem is called a harlot.
- In the next chapter we read, “*Her wound comes in one day (18:8).*” That must be the day that Jesus is crucified.
- Jerusalem is destroyed, and we’ll soon see a New Jerusalem coming down in her place... no longer a *harlot* but a *bride*.

Well, the Harlot sits on the peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages.
She is an economy of *porneia* . . . wherever she goes.

The kings of the earth use her, and she is dependent on the kings of the earth. Politicians depend on the economy, and the economy depends on politicians. They use each other and hate each other . . . like beastly men and depraved harlots.

She’s female and the beast is male.

She rides the beast. If there’s no beast, there’s no harlot.

Kinda like, if there’s no Adam, there’s no Eve.

Kinda like, if there’s no Jesus, there’s no us... His Bride.

If the beast is the Antichrist, she’s the antibride, the imitation bride.

She is an evil entity that tempts humanity to purchase our Lord, who is Love.

So who or what is the beast?

- Preterists argue that the beast is obviously the Roman Empire. And they usually argue that the seven kings are seven emperors. It’s got to be hugely significant that 666 adds up to the name “Nero” in two different ways. Nero was the fifth emperor of Rome, if you count Julius Caesar. We just read that four kings had fallen and one is. Preterists often argue that the ten horns were ten provincial governors that would turn on the city of Rome or that did, in fact, destroy Jerusalem.
- The predominant view for the last six hundred years, primarily among Protestants, has been that the Roman Papacy was the beast and the popes were kings. And some argued that the ten horns were kings of Gothic tribes that would sack Rome.
- The predominant view in Hollywood today, and in America, is that the beast has yet to appear, but will appear as the leader of a revived Roman Empire comprised of a ten-nation European Confederacy.^{xii} A challenge for that view is that John clearly states that the fifth head on the beast “is.” That means that this fifth head, or king, was alive and kicking in John’s day.

I think they may all be right . . . to an extent. Seven is the number of our days in time. These are the kings of time.

- The beast is an evil entity that tempts humanity to take the Life of our Lord.

- The whore is about manipulating the Life and Love, and the beast is about taking Life and Love.
- The beast is political power that is especially lethal when combined with religious power.

[Image of Obama pictured as the devil with a pitchfork]

Some have recently argued that Obama is the Antichrist^{xiii}

Well, if you think he needs to save you, you just made him an antichrist.

According to NBC, last week in a closed-door meeting with a group of leading evangelical Christians Donald Trump said, *“This Nov. 6 election is a referendum on not only me, it’s a referendum on your religion...”*

If your faith is dependent on Donald Trump, you don’t have faith in Jesus. You have faith in the antichrist—the imitation Christ.

[Image of an angry Donald Trump parallel to an image of the “Antichrist”]

I’m not saying that Donald Trump is the antichrist, but his statement sounds like the spirit of the antichrist. You don’t need Donald Trump to save Jesus or your religion. Religion that is pure and undefiled is visiting orphans and widows in their affliction. And you don’t need **you** to save Jesus . . . or yourself. If you think you save yourself, you’re an imitation Christ, an antichrist.

And I think that’s what’s most frightening about the antichrist... Maybe you’re the antichrist.

Clip from *Damien: Omen II*:

A man cuts a boy’s hair while he sleeps. Scary music plays in the background. The man continues to cut until he sees the numbers “666” on the boy’s scalp. The music intensifies as the camera zooms in on a man’s concerned face.

Do

you remember that clip?

And now I’m not just messing around: The antichrist is the beast...

- And in chapter 13, verse 3 we read that *“the whole earth... followed the beast.”*
- In 13:8, *“All who dwell on the earth will worship it, those whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life”*
- In 13:14, through the false prophet, the beast convinces “all” (that doesn’t have any exceptions) to be *“marked by the beast (v.16)”* and *“make an image of the beast to the beast” (v.14).*

Sometimes, I think I make myself in the image of the beast, even though I'm trying to make myself in the image of God. "*Beware when fighting the beast lest you become the beast.*" Solomon wrote that God is testing us so that we would see that we ourselves are "*but beasts.*"

Well, it's pretty easy to get stressed about the harlot, and the beast, and so we fight the beast and become beastly. But right here, in the middle of the chapter, the angel says something that we always seem to miss. Three times the angel says, "The beast... *is not.*" "*The beast was, and is not, and is about to rise... and go to destruction.*"

Some argue that this refers to a myth regarding Nero... that Nero would die and rise from the dead. And yet, it can't refer to King Nero if Nero is the fifth king, for that king "is": "*Four have fallen and one is.*" The king "*is,*" but the beast "*was, is NOT, and is to come.*" John wrote that to everyone—including you.

It's like the beast exists in your past, but your past only exists in your own mind; it's the meaning that you have ascribed to events that you have experienced, but you know it's not truly real.

The beast exists in your past, and in your future, but your future isn't truly real. Your future is entirely a fiction that you have constructed in longing and fear . . . a fiction derived from your interpretation of the past.

The past is gone, the future is your fiction, but now is another matter.

"Now is the day of salvation," say's Scripture.

"Now is the judgment of this world," says Jesus in John 12

"Now is the ruler of this world cast out."

Tony Campolo writes, "Now is the non-existent point that separates past from the future. I can't describe now, because by the time I say 'now' it is already past. Nevertheless, I know that now exists because it is where 'I am.'"

Philosophers, theologians and now physicists all argue that now is the point at which eternity touches time, and time touches eternity. "All real life is encounter," writes Martin Buber. We can only know and be known *now*.

You can only live now, love now, and be free now.

You can only commune with another person now. Eternal life is *now*.^{xiv}

Well, Nero, the king, IS, but the beast is NOT.

In chapter 24, we'll read that the "kings of the earth" bring their glory into the New Jerusalem, the eternal city... But we don't read anything like that about the dragon, the beast, and the whore... in fact, no one "doing abomination (*bdelygma*) may enter" (Rev. 21:27)

Well, three times John hears the “beast was, is not, and is to come.”
And three times John has already heard, that the Lord is the One who, “Is, was and is to come.” Or “Was, is, and is to come.” You see: God is “I AM.”

You know in Scripture, there is this fundamental dualism that I think we entirely misunderstand.

<u>Duality in Scripture</u>	
Good	evil
Life	death
Light	dark
Truth	lies
Logos	chaos
Christ	antichrist
Creator	desecrator
Creation	the void
I Am	I am not

We tend to think the things in the second column are equal opposites of the things in the first column, but they’re absolutely not . . . I mean that quite literally: they are . . . NOT.

They are not equal opposites of the things in the first column . . . but descriptions of the absence of the things in the first column.

Karl Barth wrote:

Sin and evil have... a kind of being, which can only be described in purely negative terms. As, for example, I should say, 'Sin and evil, and the devil himself, are impossible possibilities.' or, if you prefer, unreal realities. It can't be helped; that's their nature because sin means living a lie...^{xv}

Sin is the impossible possibility in Scripture; it's a mystery.

- Paul wrote, “*God accomplishes all things according to the council of his will*” (Eph. 1:11).
- So God speaks His Word and creation happens, until . . . on the sixth day, someone else speaks and God’s will doesn’t seem to happen.
- In fact, God’s Word and Will is crucified on a tree... in the sixth hour of the day, the sixth day of the week, on the sixth day of creation.

It's like God dreams a dream that is you, and then you dream that there is no dreamer but you. In other words, you dream that you are NOT. (Have you been dreaming that you are not? And what would that look like?)

In John15, Jesus says, "*Abide in me* [that is to be with Him] *and I in you... for apart from me you can do nothing.*" And that's weird . . . for apart from him, we think we've done a whole lot of something . . . like sin . . . But, according to Jesus that's *not* a thing, it's a *no*-thing... a terrifying *nothing*, like a nightmare, and yet, *still, nothing*. Jesus said, "*Apart from me you can do nothing.*"

<u>Duality in Scripture</u>	
Good	evil
Life	death
Light	dark
Truth	lies
Logos	chaos
Christ	antichrist
Creator	desecrator
Creation	the void
I Am	I am not

To choose the things in the first column is the Judgment of God. The Judgment of God is Love and it's revealed to us as Grace. To choose the things in the second column is our judgment apart from God's Judgment; it's sin.

So we can add two words to our columns: Grace and sin.

Duality in Scripture

Good	evil
Life	death
Light	dark
Truth	lies
Logos	chaos
Christ	antichrist
Creator	desecrator
Creation	the void
I Am	I am not
Grace	sin

- There's a fundamental dualism in our world that isn't really a dualism because one side "IS" and the other side "is not."
- There's a fundamental dualism in Scripture and a fundamental dualism in us, in Scripture.

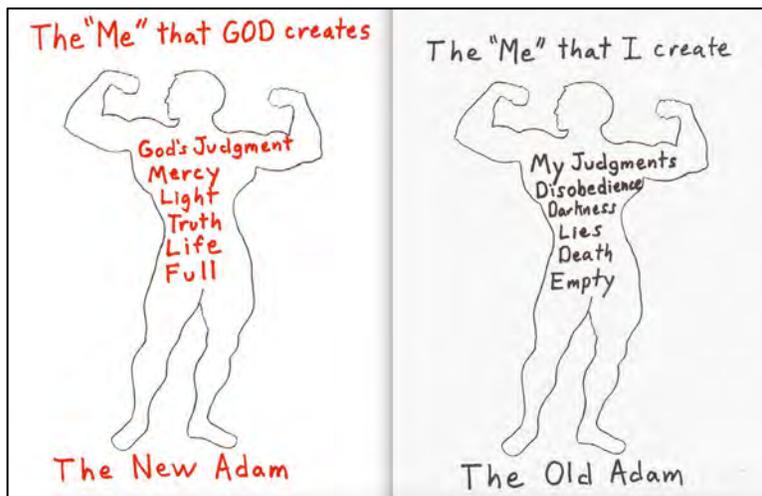


Figure 4 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

There is the "me" that God creates with His Judgment.
And the "me" that I *think* I create with my judgment.

There is the "me" that is God's dream. His name is written in the Lamb's book of life—
from the foundation of the world. And there is also a "me" that is my own dream. He
dwells on earth. I'm proud of his name, but he *is not*.

There is a “me” made in God’s image... and I don’t know how to comprehend this . . . but that me is eternal.

And there is a “me” that I think I made... and I don’t know how to comprehend this . . . but that me is NOT.

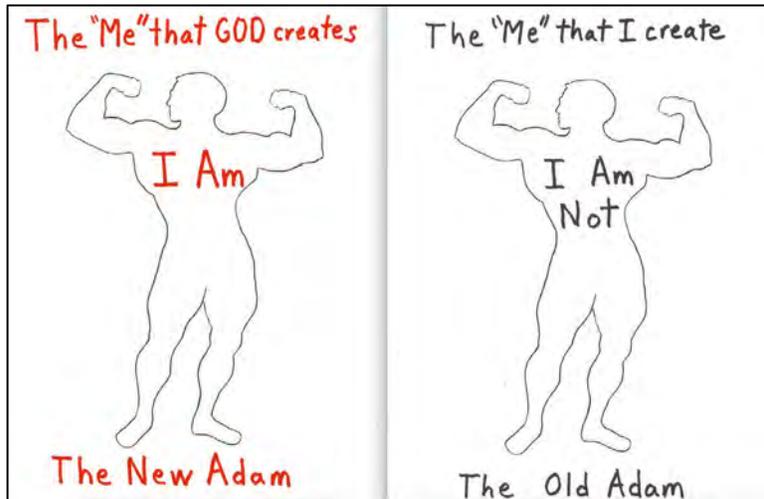


Figure 5 Image credit: Peter Hiett

The me that God creates is who “I am” And the me that I think I create is what “I am not.” The man of sin *is not*. And the man of grace is indestructible. He may appear to be no larger than a mustard seed, but He is indestructible and you will watch Him grow . . . observer . . . He’s indestructible.

I *am* the image of God
I am *not* the image of the beast.
I *am* Light and *not* a shadow.

Now, these are old pictures that you’ve seen many times before...like when we preached through Genesis, through Ecclesiastes, the Gospels and Ephesians.

I didn’t redraw them cause I’m lazy, but also because I want you to see that I’m not making this up to make sense of Revelation 17.

- In Ephesians, Colossians, and Romans Paul refers to them as the New Man and the old man, or the True Self and the false self, the Vessels of Mercy and vessels of wrath.
- In the Synoptic Gospels, they are the Wheat and tares, or Grain and chaff.
- In the Gospel of John, they are the children of God and the spawn of the devil.
 - In John 12, Jesus says that He will “*draw all people to himself.*”
 - In John 8, he tells the Pharisees that they are “*of their father the devil.*” John knows that the devil can’t make people. The devil is the father of lies

and when we, the Bride of Christ, believe the devil's lies we receive his seed and produce an abomination.

In v. 5 we read that the Harlot is the mother of "earth's abominations, *bdelygma*."

- It's a fascinating word that only appears 6 times in Scripture.
- It's used here and in Rev. 20, where it says, "*no one doing abomination will enter the New Jerusalem... that is the eternal temple of God.*"
- Jesus uses it twice to refer to the abomination of desecration that's spoken of in Daniel and set up in the temple at the destruction of Jerusalem by the antichrist.

In Luke 16:15, Jesus tells us what it is: To the Pharisees, He says, "*You are those who justify [that means you "judge"] yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*"

Understand? Your ego, "what is exalted among men," is an abomination. And when it sits on the throne in the Sanctuary of your soul, it is the abomination of desolation, for you think you are a beast or a harlot, and not a man or woman created in the image of God. You think you must take life and earn love. You think you are a self-made man or self-made woman. And yet, with every choice you crucify the Will of God, desecrate your self, and trap yourself in outer darkness.

But now, listen to the Gospel: "The Beast *is not*." On the cross, Jesus, the will of God descended into your nightmare, disarmed the principalities and powers and revealed that "the beast is not" and He is "I AM," and death is *not* the End.

The dragon is constantly lying to you, trying to convince you that you are a beast or a harlot... but, when he accuses you . . .

You can say, "*I know you are, but what am I?*"

Better yet, say, "*The beast is not, but what am I?*"

Better yet, don't ask him, tell him: "*The beast is not, but I am... I am called, and chosen, and faithful.*"

Check out v. 14: "*They (The kings, beast, and harlot) will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*"

The Lamb will conquer them because He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

That's a biblical title for God, and it means the Lamb is God.

And God is I AM that I AM.

The very manifestation of His presence utterly annihilates I am not. Just as Light annihilates the dark, and Truth destroys lies, so *the Christ* destroys *the antichrist* (2 Thess. 2:8).

"The Lamb will conquer... and those with him."^{xvi}

You can only be “with” someone . . . now. The Lord is always with you, but you are not always with Him, for you’re trapped in your past through shame, or lost in your anxieties about the future... because you have believed the lie that you must justify yourself—the lie that you must *call* yourself, *choose* yourself, and *create faith* in yourself.

But you are called, chosen, and so, faithful. I think John wrote both the gospel of John and the book of Revelation. Listen from the gospel of John:

John 3:35 *“The Father loves the son and has given all things into his hands,”* said Jesus.
John 6:37 *“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”*
John 6:44 *“No one can come to me unless the Father sent me draws him.”*
John 15:16 *“You did not chose me, but I chose you...”*

Everyone that’s anyone will be called and drawn. You’re here because you’ve already been called and drawn. You couldn’t even seek God unless He chose you and called you to do so.

The whole point of election is that you didn’t choose God, God chose you. He chose to make you in His own image, the image of Love. He chose to impart faith through Grace; Your Father is Love. You are called, chosen and faithful... or... you are nothing.

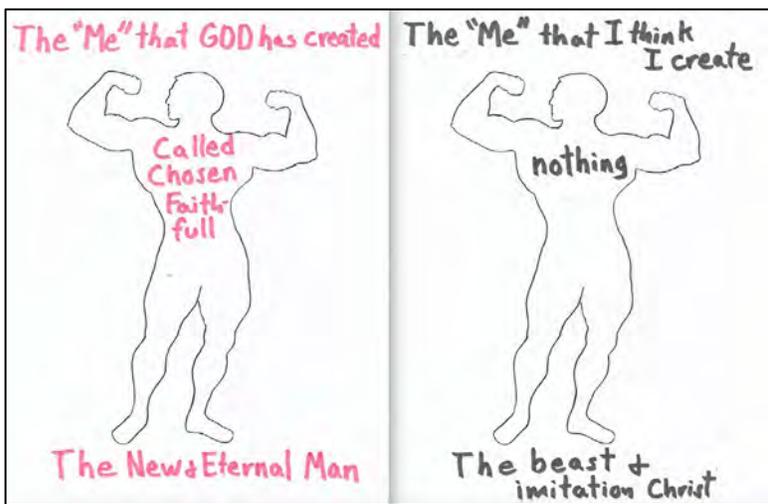


Figure 6 Image credit: Peter Hiatt

And you're not just nothing or you wouldn't be concerned about something... The truth is that in some mysterious way, in space and time, you are both: *something* and *nothing*.

- But you can't make your nothing into something, with fear that you're nothing or by striving to be something, which is only choosing more nothing.

In other words . . .

- You cannot save yourself; you can only wake from the dream that "you are salvation" and believe the reality and Truth that "God is salvation."
- You cannot create yourself; you can only wake to the reality that you have been created.
- You cannot create yourself; you can only accept yourself, your True Self, by looking into the eyes of your Father and trusting His Judgment: "The beast is not and you are called, chosen and faithful. You are my creation. My child. My beloved."

Twenty years ago, on our family vacation to Disneyworld, my two oldest children asked me to take them on a ride called "Alien Encounter." There were warning signs all over, so Jon (who was nine years old) kept asking me, "Daddy, will I be ok?" And Elizabeth (who was eight years old) kept lecturing Jon on courage saying, "Look at me Jon, I'm not afraid. I'm not worried. I'm ok!" Jon wanted my judgment. Elizabeth trusted her own judgment, for she had exalted herself.

"Alien Encounter" was one of those animatronic rides where they feed you a story and lock you in a chair. A man on a video screen explained that he was the Chairman of XS Industries, and that currently, he was on another planet on the other side of the galaxy. But now through this amazing new XS teleportation technology, he himself would be beamed through space, and materialize in the giant tube in the center of the room. That's pretty cool! And Jon and Elizabeth were doing just fine, when all at once; one of the technicians yelled, "I've locked onto another planet in our transmission path!" Then, "What if it's not him? It's an alien! It's carnivorous!" Then, "The teleportation tube is starting to break!"

Through the smoke and flashing lights, you suddenly see a huge dragon-like creature in the XS Industries teleportation module.

- I looked at Jon – he looked at me. I smiled – he was ok.
- I looked at Elizabeth – she was not looking at me. She was looking at this alien beast, and then I realized: "*Oh no! She's bought the lie.*"

The technician yelled, "People of earth: Do not worry as long as the force field beams are on, the alien cannot fly out." Just then, the power failed, and the guy yelled, "It's out! Get the alien back in the tube before it eats somebody!"

- All at once, you could feel alien breath on the back of your neck.
- You could hear the sound of this beast eating someone just above you.
- You could feel liquid drip on your arms and head.
- The chair shook, and you couldn't get out.

Then Elizabeth started screaming, “We have to get out of here... Right now!” I looked over; I had never seen such a look of absolute terror ever before. I remember thinking, “She actually believes that this beast is the end of her.” And terrified of the beast, she was turning into a beast, clawing at the restraints to flee from her chair. My heart just broke for her.

If I could’ve, I would’ve, taken my heart out of my chest and given it to her—my heart “from the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18) given to her. But I couldn’t; I was locked in my chair, and so couldn’t get to her chair. So, I looked at Elizabeth and started screaming: “Elizabeth! Elizabeth!” I called to her screaming: “Look at me! Look at me! Look at me! It’s not real! It’s not real! It’s not real! The beast is not real.”

Now . . . the puffs of air coming out of the tubes in the back of her seat were real, but the breath of the beast was a lie. The water dripping on her head was real, but the idea that it was blood was a lie. The plastic in the tube that looked like a dragon was real, but the beast was an illusion, a bad dream, and an absolute lie.

I screamed, “It’s not real.” And I wanted her to believe, “I am real. I am the truth. I am love. And I will always love you.”

You know, the wounds in your hands and feet are real, and the wounds in Jesus’ are real; they are the price He gladly pays to let you know His Love is Real and He will always love you.

The wounds are real and the pain that you experience in this world is real, but the news that this is the end and you are nothing but a beast and a whore that belongs to the dragon—that’s an absolute lie.

Perhaps your entire journey through this fallen world is just like the fifteen minutes we spent on The Alien Encounter ride at Disneyworld.

Now you may wonder why a good father would take his eight-year-old daughter on the Alien Encounter ride... well, maybe a good father wouldn’t. But God is a Good Father and he put us in a garden with a talking snake and a tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, Life and death, Light and dark, I am and I am not.

To let Elizabeth think that she might be “not”—that she might be swallowed by evil was not my intention, but the way she freely chose to be with me after that ride was over was just delightful. She sat on my lap on a bench at the exit to the ride for a full half hour hanging on to my neck and she wouldn’t let go... she just wanted to be with me.

A year later she wrote this poem for me!

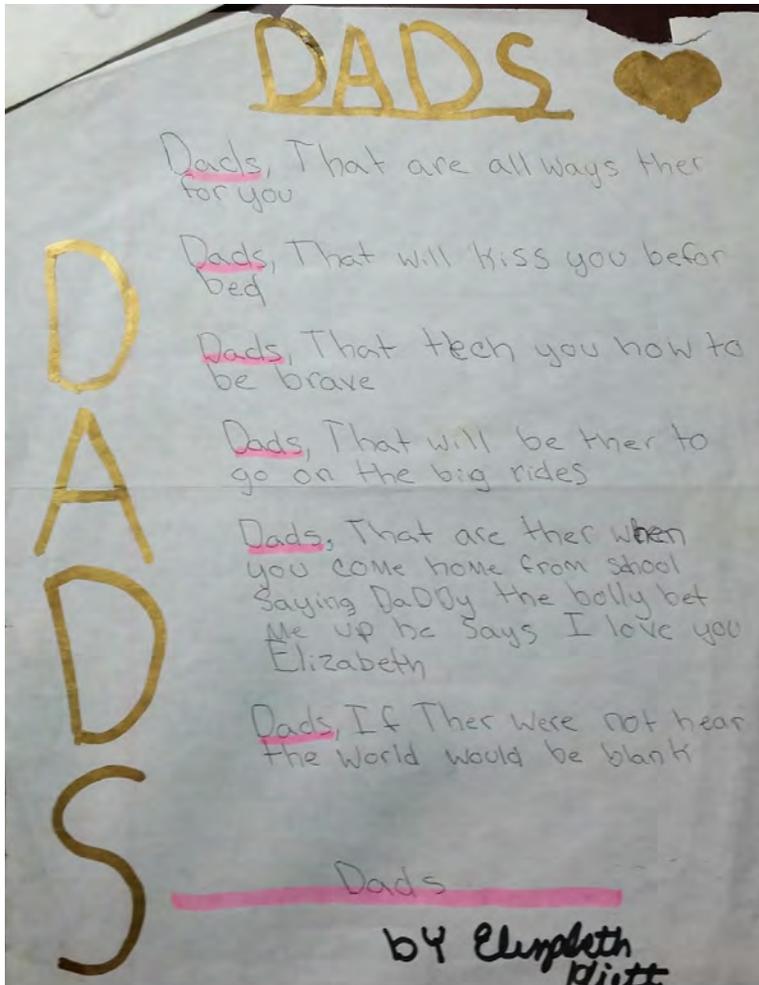


Figure 7 Image credit: Elizabeth Hiatt

You may have had a bad dad, but your Father is Good... He is *the* Good.

Communion

On the night that we *all* betrayed Him, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Take, eat, and 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."

Now, look at me: the beast *is not*, but you are called, and chosen, and faithful.

[Several worship songs are sung including "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"]

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.

Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, Holy, Holy! All the saints adore Thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
which wert and art and evermore shalt be.

Holy, Holy, Holy! though the darkness hide Thee,
though the eye made blind by sin Thy glory may not see,
only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

—by Reginald Heber

Benediction

You just sang, “All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.” You may have been singing that all your life and didn’t even realize what you were singing. It’s kind of everything I’ve gotten in trouble for, but it’s right out of the Revelation: “all thy works shall praise thy name...”

Sometimes, poorly informed people, and I think people with rather hard hearts will say, “Well, if God ultimately will save everyone, what’s the point of faith of trusting Him (dad) now?”

They shut down “Alien Encounter” in 2003; I think it’s because it was really freaking people out, but on YouTube, I found a home video of some folks on the ride experiencing just what we experienced.

Watch and listen: [A recording of the ride “Alien Encounter” is shown. As one watches and listens, the voices of people in absolute terror, especially children, and the voices of people laughing and enjoying the ride are heard.]

Did you hear it?

- Some people believed the lie—you could hear them screaming and weeping in fear.

(Sometimes, I think the devil says to us something like: “The Father loves you less than He loves someone else.” But I love Elizabeth and John the same. But when one believes the lie, my love burns even brighter towards that one than it does towards the other. And the weird thing is, God puts us all in different circumstances, with different experiences and so we can’t really judge the experience of others...)

- But some people didn’t buy the lie—you could hear them laughing.

You see? It can actually make a difference if you believe: The beast is *not*, and you *are* called and chosen and faithful.

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.

ⁱ We noted that Jesus is not less real than John and the island of Patmos, but immeasurably more real than John and the island of Patmos.

ⁱⁱ God creates all things in seven days and in case you hadn't noticed, He's still creating—On the seventh day, "It is finished" and everything is good.

ⁱⁱⁱ Time (That is *chronos*, in Greek), or these ages or age (*aion*), exist in God's age, eternity (that which is *aionios*, meaning of the age to come, God's age—that which is not subject to chronological space and time.)

^{iv} Time does not exist, Barth concludes, apart from eternity's embrace. Eternity embraces time on all sides, preceding, accompanying, and fulfilling it. To say that God is eternal means that God is "the One who is and rules before time, in time, and again after time, the One who is not conditioned by time, but conditions it absolutely in his freedom" (II/1, p. 619). . . . God's eternity is so to speak the companion of time, or rather it is itself accompanied by time in such a way that in this occurrence time acquires its hidden center, and therefore both backwards and forwards its significance, its content, its source and its goal, but also continually its significant present. Because, in this occurrence, eternity assumes the form of a temporal present, all time, without ceasing to be time, is no more empty time, or without eternity. It has become new. This means that in and with this present, eternity creates in time real past and real future, distinguishes between them, and is itself the bridge and way from the one to the other. Jesus Christ is the way." (II/1, p. 627)

The real future that eternity creates in time is the future of eternal life in communion with God. The real past, in turn, is the past of sin and death as abolished in the cross of Christ. This old reality of sin and death is "continually opposed" by the new reality of eternal life, even as the new reality "comes breaking in triumphantly" again and again (II/1, p. 628). Jesus Christ stands between the old reality and the new. "In him the equilibrium between them has been upset and ended. He is the way from the one to the other and the way is irreversible. He is the turning" (II/1, p. 628).

- George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, p. 205, 207

^v Since most of us are children of the modern age, we've been taught that this is impossible and so the song is just a metaphor... cause obviously there is nothing other than matter, space and time. Yet modern physics has revealed, matter, space and time had a beginning. And even more, matter doesn't really matter, but you do. To use very imprecise words, there's something or someone outside of the Big Bang. And there's something or someone inside of you that's more real than matter itself. Philosophers and theologians have always said this and referred to that thing as consciousness, spirit, or the breath of God. But now, even scientists refer to this "thing" and call it the "observer." The observer, in some very real sense, is more real than "reality," and, in some sense, creates reality. An observer appears to collapse the quantum state of the subatomic particles that make up all matter.

Perhaps, "I" am an observer, observing my own creation. I cannot create "me"—only a "false me"—but perhaps I can observe the creation of the "true me." Perhaps I can observe my own creation.

^{vi} Jesus is the "strong arm of God" (See Is. 51:9, 52:10, 53:1).

^{vii} This must be blood that's wine and wine that's blood. The Harlot teaches the dwellers on the earth to worship the beast, to abuse communion. When you abuse anyone, you abuse Jesus, and His blood is wine and wine that's blood.

viii That's quite a picture: the blood of the saints is blood that's wine and wine that's blood—It's Lamb's blood. When she abuses the saints, she abuses the Lamb and loses her mind. When the saints forgive the blood, it must burn her like fire.

ix John marvels, just as "all the earth marveled" at the beast in Chapter 13.
13:3 "all the earth marveled as they followed."
But the angel stops John and asks, "Why do you marvel?"

x This is something to ponder: "They eat her flesh." We've also noticed that all the blood is wine—intoxicating wine. The harlot is somehow related to the Bride. And the blood in all of us belongs to Jesus. When we abuse anyone, we break the Body and shed the Blood. "Whatever you do to the least of these you do to me," says the king of kings on Judgment day.

xi Like beasts, men consume prostitutes and then hate those prostitutes.
Just as prostitutes use men like beasts and then hate those men.
In doing so we call down fire—the Judgment of God.

xii Many modern evangelicals have argued that there will be a ten-nation European (think Roman) confederacy like the ten horns here, and the ten toes and horns in Daniel's visions in the Old Testament. This crowd was understandably excited at the formation of the European Union, but disappointed when more than ten nations were included. Recently, on the internet, I discovered that some are now pointing to a new super group of ten, said to be forming under the leadership of Macron in France . . . It just figures huh? The French!

xiii Some have recently argued that Obama is the antichrist, because he has a scary name and didn't seem to support the city of Jerusalem, which ironically, according to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, is a great harlot.

xiv The riddle of the present is the deepest of all the riddles of time. Again, there is no answer except from that which comprises all time and lies beyond it—the eternal. Whenever we say "now" or "today," we stop the flux of time for us. We accept the present and do not care that it is gone in the moment that we accept it. We live in it and it is renewed for us in every new "present." This is possible because every moment of time reaches into the eternal. It is the eternal that stops the flux of time for us. It is the eternal "now" which provides for us a temporal "now." We live so long as "it is still today"-in the words of the letter to the Hebrews. Not everybody, and nobody all the time, is aware of this "eternal now" in the temporal "now." But sometimes it breaks powerfully into our consciousness and gives us the certainty of the eternal, of a dimension of time which cuts into time and gives us our time.

-Paul Tillich, *The Eternal NOW*

"The humans live in time, but our Enemy [God] destines them to eternity. He therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself and to that point of time, which they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity. Of the present moment, and of it only, humans have an experience analogous to the experience which our Enemy [God] has of reality as a whole; in it alone freedom and actuality are offered them. He would therefore have them continually concerned either with eternity (which means being concerned with Him) or with the Present—either meditating on their eternal union with, or separation from, Himself, or else obeying the present voice of conscience, bearing the present cross, receiving the present grace, giving thanks for the present pleasure.

Our business is to get them away from the eternal and from the present. . . . We want a whole race perpetually in pursuit of the rainbow's end, never honest, nor kind, nor happy now, but always using as mere fuel wherewith to heap the altar of the Future every real gift which is offered them in the Present.

- C. S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters* (The advice of a senior devil coaching a junior devil)

xv On this shadow side the creature is contiguous to nothingness, for this "not" is at once the expression and frontier of the positive will, election and activity of God. When the creature crosses the frontier from the one side, and it is invaded from the other, nothingness achieves actuality in the creaturely world. . . .

Nothingness is that which God does not will. . . .

This being which is alien and adverse to grace and therefore without it, is that of nothingness. . . . And this is evil in the Christian sense, namely, what is alien and adverse to grace, and therefore with it. . . . The grace of God is the basis and norm of all being, the source and criterion of all good. Measured by this standard, as the negation of God's grace, nothingness is intrinsically evil. . . .

He knows nothingness. He knows that which He did not elect or will as the Creator. He knows chaos and its terror. He knows its advantage over His creature. He know how inevitably it imperils His creature. Yet He is Lord over that which imperils His creature. Against Him, nothingness has no power of its own. And He has sworn fidelity to His threatened creature. In creating it He has covenanted and identified Himself with it. . . .

And therefore it is He as the first and true and indeed the only man, as the Helper who really takes the creature's place, lifting from it all its need and labour and problem and placing them upon Himself, as the Warrior who assumes the full responsibility of a substitute and suffers and does everything on its behalf. In the light of this merciful action of God, the arrogant delusion of the creature that it is called and qualified to help and save and maintain itself in its infinite peril is shown to be evil as well as foolish and unnecessary. . . .

As God takes action on its behalf, the creature itself is summoned and empowered. It has no arrogant illusion as to its own authority or competence. It really trusts in God, perseveres in His covenant and chooses His help as the only effective good. . . .

If our thought is conditioned by the obedience of Christian faith, we have only one freedom, namely, to regard nothingness as finally destroyed and to make a new beginning in remembrance of the One who has destroyed it.

-Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, p. 137-138, 140-141, 143, 145-146

And I thought that if sin had never existed, we should all have been pure and like himself, as God made us; and so I had often wondered before now in my folly why, in his great foreseeing wisdom, God had not prevented sin; for then, I thought, all would have been well. . . . He answered with this assurance: 'Sin is befitting.' With this word 'sin' our Lord brought to my mind the whole extent of all that is not good: the shameful scorn and the utter humiliation that he bore for us in this life and in his dying, and all the pains and sufferings of all his creatures, both in body and spirit -- for we are all to some extent brought to nothing and should be brought to nothing as our master Jesus was, until we are fully purged: that is to say until our own mortal flesh is brought completely to nothing, and all those of our inward feelings which are not good. He gave me insight into these things, along with all pains that ever were and ever shall be; all this was shown in a flash, and quickly changed into comfort; for our good Lord did not want the soul to be afraid of this ugly sight.

But I did not see sin; for I believe it has no sort of substance nor portion of being, nor could it be recognized were it not for the suffering which it causes. And this suffering seems to me to be something transient, for it purges us and makes us know ourselves and pray for mercy; for the Passion of our Lord supports us against all this, and that is his blessed will for all who shall be saved. He supports us willingly and sweetly, by his words, and says, 'But all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.' . . .

And I wondered greatly at this revelation, and considered our faith, wondering as follows: our faith is grounded in God's word, and it is part of our faith that we should believe that God's word will be kept in all things; and one point of our faith is that many shall be damned--like the angels who fell out of heaven from pride, who are now fiends, and men on earth who die outside the faith of Holy Church, that is, those who are heathens, and also any man who has received Christianity and lives an unchristian life and so dies excluded from the love of God. Holy Church teaches me to believe that all these shall be condemned everlastingly to hell. And given all this, I thought it impossible that all manner of things should be well, as our Lord revealed at this time. And I received no other answer in showing from our Lord God but this: 'What is impossible to you is not impossible to me. I shall keep my word in all things and I shall make all things well.'

- Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, pp. 21-22, p. 86

"That which is of the devil is nothing, and can have no perpetuity and substance."..."How shall the sinner exist in the future, seeing the place of sin cannot be of long continuance?" -St Ambrose, 4th century AD

xvi About four years ago, we had a staff planning retreat. Several people had asked for it—the idea being that we would spend some time developing plans and strategy for ministry, that is, how we would conquer whatever it is that God would have us conquer. I always dread these things a bit, for no matter the strategy that we develop it always seems inadequate and, of course, we who work that strategy are inadequate. As Paul wrote, "Who is sufficient for these things." A strategy is a plan that we develop for the future based on our understanding of the past. Jesus' strategy, which doesn't seem to be much of a strategy was something like this, "I only do what I see my Father doing." His strategy was to be with His Father. You can only be "with" somebody in the present moment. In other words "The Way" is now. But a strategy is an imagined future based on an individual's interpretation of the past.

Well at the start of the retreat I had everyone spend some time in prayer asking the Lord, "What is it that you have to tell us." Right away, my wife, who really doesn't know her Bible, said, "I just heard the Lord say, 'Read Mark 3:13-15'".

"And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons."

See it? Our Job description is to "be with Him." How do we conquer? The Lamb conquers and "those with him..."

33

How to Judge a Harlot (Double Vengeance?)

How to Judge a Harlot (Double Vengeance?)

Rev. 18-19:9

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

September 16, 2018

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

Through the power of your Spirit, would you help us see you? Especially those who haven't heard our others messages on The Revelation. I pray that you would help them have faith that it actually does reveal you. Everything is the revelation of you, Lord Jesus. So, Father, I'm asking you to help us preach. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Message

Revelation 17:1-2

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute [harlot, whore] [literally porne] who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality [porneou], and with the wine of whose sexual immorality [porneia] the dwellers on earth have become drunk.”

We read that last week... and then we read the middle of the chapter about the beast... Then we read verse 18 and 18:1-2

And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.” After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!”

Now before we read any further, we probably ought to stop and ask, **“What’s God’s problem with harlots—whores—pornes?”**

Some folks think it’s sexuality, but God’s very first commandment is to have sex: *“Be fruitful and multiply.”*

Porneia is the noun translated “sexual immorality” or “prostitution.” *Porneou* is the verb translated “commit sexual immorality” or “to prostitute.” They all come from the verb *pernemi*, which means to sell, and in particular, sell slaves... that is human souls.ⁱ A human soul is a temple of dust that contains the breath or spirit of God.

We started speaking about this when we preached on the letter to Thyatira at the start of the Revelation.ⁱⁱ We said God’s problem with whoredom must be that it attempts to buy and sell love, which is life, and everything good.

Harlotry is an attempt to pay for the intimate communion called Love or it is an attempt to pay *with* the intimate communion called Love as when a woman sells herself to a man. Either way, it turns Love into a commodity. God is Love.

In Scripture, any sexual intercourse outside the covenant of marriage can be referred to as *porneou*, for you don't have to use money to buy and sell yourself . . . only in marriage is all the sex free. Well anyway, I think that's the big problem that Jesus has with prostitutes, which raises another question: **"Why does Jesus seem to be so attracted to prostitutes, harlots, whores—lose women . . . particularly in the Gospel of John?"**

In John 8, a mob of Pharisees and Bible teachers throw a woman caught in the act of adultery at Jesus' feet. She's stripped of all her dignity, all her pride, all her fig leaves and probably all her clothes. They say, *"The law requires that we take her life."* And Jesus says, *"Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."*

At that, the Pharisees drop their stones...

Over and over, Jesus exposed the pastors as the worst of prostitutes.

Then Jesus says to the woman, *"I don't condemn you, go and sin no more."* (Being God and all, you might wonder why Jesus didn't stop her before she was exposed in such a humiliating way... but He didn't.)

In John 4, Jesus talks to a Samaritan woman at a well and basically exposed her: *"Sweetheart, you're on your sixth man and he's not your husband."* Jesus is the seventh Man. Jesus is her Husband. Perhaps she must feel the pain of sin in order to recognize Grace, who is her husband.

In John 2, Jesus turns six stone jars of water into wine at a wedding feast. He is the Bridegroom and on the Seventh Day, He makes wine and gives it to a Bride.

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus even appears to host dinner parties for prostitutes, as if they are His Bride. (Luke 15:1-2)

Jesus cast seven demons out of Mary of Magdalene.

Some have suggested that she was the prostitute that washed Jesus' feet with perfume and tears.

Some have also suggested that she was secretly married to Jesus—a harlot who became His bride.

I highly doubt that, and yet, in another way, I believe exactly that! Jesus did marry a harlot and turn her into a Bride.

Well, who is this great harlot in the Revelation?

I suspect that she's one of those "principalities and powers, world rulers of this present darkness" that Paul talks about in his letter to Ephesus.

Recently, Susan and I prayed for an old friend who had been haunted by a vision of a goddess of death. We took authority and asked, *"What right do you have to be here?"* And Susan heard, *"There is something of me in everyone."* Jesus revealed that this was

“The harlot.” And so we prayed confessing anything and everything in each of us that we thought had anything to do with *porneou*. I confessed some stuff about lust, and then I prayed, “*But more than that, Jesus, I think I always have to pay.*”

Once I asked Susan to pray with me, and confessed, my confusion, shame and remorse about watching a particular racy movie. As I prayed, Susan said, “*Peter I hear Jesus... it’s like he’s weeping, He says to you, ‘Peter why do you feel like you always have to pay?’*”

I’m still not sure exactly how Jesus feels about that movie, but the fact that I felt like I had to pay for mercy, seemed to break His heart. And isn’t that the worst type of *porneia*?

Trying to pay for the mercy, grace, and love of God... that is God?

Well, as we prayed for our friend last week, and confessed our *porneia*, Susan saw a beautiful woman hovering over the face of the earth.ⁱⁱⁱ Last time, we noted that if the beast is the antichrist—the imitation Christ, then the harlot is the anti-bride of Christ—the imitation bride and false Eve: she is *not* the mother of the living, but the mother of earth’s abominations—the human ego.

Well, as we confessed our *porneia*, the woman cursed at us, shriveled into a little old woman, and lost her power. The great harlot must be “*a principality and power, a world ruler of this present darkness,*” and yet she derives her power from us.

She’s that, *and* also a city.

A city is an economy, and an economy is a way of relating.

She’s an economy of *porneia* that reminds us of the tower of Babel.^{iv}

She’s Babylon and, as we mentioned last time, she’s clearly Rome.

She’s an evil demonic entity, and yet she’s a city and cities are an economy of people relating to each other—people that God has made.

She’s Babylon, Rome, and Jerusalem. John has already referred to Jerusalem as “*the Great City... where our Lord was crucified.*”

Jerusalem contains the temple and is built on the spot where supposedly God made Adam... but Jerusalem is a harlot. She’s constructed of God’s chosen people, and yet, over and over, the prophets claim that she’s become the greatest of harlots^v and so the entire nation of Israel has become a harlot.

The prophet Hosea is even commanded to marry a harlot, for God claims that He is married to a harlot. Through Hosea God says, “*Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them*” (Hosea 5:4). And then, in chapter 6, verse. 6, God says, “*I desire hesed—that’s steadfast love, unconditional love,*

covenant love... *but at Adam* (or “like, or as, Adam”) *they transgressed the covenant... and dealt faithlessly with me.*”

God talks as if we’ve all been harlots since Adam.
Or maybe we’ve all become harlots just like Adam.

I’d remind you that Adam means humanity. Every newborn is an Adam and, according to Scripture (Deut. 1:39), none of them have “the knowledge of Good and evil.”

In the beginning, Love, who is God, made Adam.
And then God said, “It’s not good that the Adam is alone.”
And yet, the Adam was in the very presence of Love... who is God.
Adam doesn’t know the Good, who is God, and that it’s evil to be alone.

God shows Adam all the animals, male and female . . . but Adam can’t find his helper.

So God says, “I’ll make a helper—*ayzer*—fit for Adam.”
God divides the Adam in two, making male and female.
But She is just more of He and He is more of She.
Adam means “humanity,” and humanity is not good at being its own helper.
It’s humanity—Adam before he became male and female—that is alone.
Humanity is alone, and that’s not good.

It turns out that male and female is a sacramental representation of God and us.
In fact, in all the rest of the Old Testament that word, *ayzer*, translated “helper,” never refers to a human husband or wife, but only God.

Over and over, David, the man after God’s own heart, refers to the Lord as his “helper.”
Through Hosea (13:9) God says, “*I will destroy you, Oh Israel, for you are against me, against your helper (your ayzer).*”

The female is to be a temple for the male, and the male, a temple for the female. In the same way we are to be a temple for God and God is for us—the New Jerusalem.

In the Gospel of John, at the start, right after Jesus turns water to wine at the wedding banquet, He cleanses the temple in Jerusalem.

We find that the temple is His body, and the temple is us. And do you remember what He cleanses the temple of? Merchants . . . buying and selling the Love that is God. He cleanses this temple of harlotry—but Jerusalem loves her harlotry. And so inspired by the beast from the land, and the beast from the sea, Jerusalem chants, “*crucify, crucify*” and nails her helper to a tree in the middle of a garden, just outside her city walls.

And that was nothing new; it was the revelation of what had been happening since the beginning. As Jesus died he said, “*Father forgive them they know not what they do.*”

In other words, “They don’t know the Good, and they don’t know the evil. They don’t know that I am their helper. I Am salvation. *Yeshua*”

Now pay very close attention:

God made Adam, and Adam couldn’t find his (and her) Helper.
So, God made the Adam, male and female, to teach them about their helper so they would recognize what a helper is, what a helper does, and so, who our Helper is.

And then, God began to fashion the Helper fit for humanity... As the prophets teach, humanity is the Bride of our Lord, who is our Helper... but our Helper wasn’t yet fit for humanity. Our helper is God in flesh—broken body and shed blood.

In the middle of the Garden, God had planted a tree. Genesis 2:7— it’s called the “tree of Life.” In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, “I am the Life.” And so the tree of Life must’ve looked like this:



And in the middle of the Garden, God planted another tree or maybe it was the same tree, for it’s also in the middle of the Garden. Genesis 2:7—it’s called the “tree of the knowledge of Good and evil.”

In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus says, “*No one is Good, except God alone.*”^{vi}

In John 10, Jesus says, “*I am the good shepherd.*”

Jesus is the Good that is God in flesh...

And so the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil must’ve looked like this:



God said, *“You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day you eat of it dying you will die.”*

That was the sixth day of creation, for humanity was not yet perfected in the image of God . . . for humanity did not know the Good . . . her helper.

Jesus was crucified on the sixth day of creation, on the sixth day of the week, at the sixth hour of the day. On the sixth day, a snake lied to the woman. In Revelation 12 you’ll remember that the dragon battles the woman, who is us, with a river of lies. Then he calls up the beast to help him lie—the imitation Christ. And riding the beast is the harlot—the imitation Bride.^{vii}

Well anyway, the snake says to the woman, *“Dying you will not die, but you will be like God, knowing Good and evil.”* The woman saw that *“the tree was good for food and a delight to the eyes”* (Gen 3:6). In other words, she saw the Good, but she didn’t know the good. So, she took the Good as if it were food... just as a commodity. She took the Good as if *He* were food; that’s rather beastly!

What if everything Good really is God or laced with God—the Good?

Is your house good? Is your car good? Is your wife good?

Do you own them and so consume them? Do you consume the Good?

Maybe we’ve all been far more beastly than we know...^{viii}

She saw that *“the tree was good for food, a delight to the eyes and to be desired to make one wise”*—that is knowledgeable of Good and evil.

In other words, she took the Good to make her self, Good.
She wanted to make herself Good, in order to make herself like God . . . or even God.
She used the Good for her own ends—to exalt herself.
. . . That's rather whorish.

God kicked them out of the Garden and barred their way to the tree with a flaming sword and two cherubim. He guarded the way so they would not “take also”, or “take again,” (the word can be translated either way)... so they would not take again of the tree of life and live forever; so they could no longer feed on him like beasts and harlots (because that's not good for anyone).

So, what was on the tree?

“The Life.” There's only one Life. “The Life” was on the tree.
Do you have a life? Is it your life? Where did you get that life?
Did you make your life or take your life?

What was on the tree?

“The Good.” Do you own goods? Is that because you paid for those goods?
God alone is good. Did you pay for God? . . . With what? . . . Your life?

What was on the tree? . . . “The Life” and “the Good in flesh,” who is God. God is Love. Love was on the tree. Everybody wants love. When we sell consumer goods we advertise them as love. We all want to make Love... but we can't make love... Love makes us.

What was on the tree? Our Helper.

No wonder humanity fears the Judgment of God; with our every choice we crucify the Good in flesh and take the Life of Love; we crucify our Helper... like the most ravenous beast and depraved of harlots. I know this is hard to hear, but maybe we're already “*dead in our trespasses and sins*” and even our “*righteous deeds are as filthy menstrual rags.*”

Well, in Chapter 18, John witnesses the Judgment of God upon the harlot.

Revelation 18:1-13

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, [What we now read is written as a song] “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons,

In my experience demons inhabit . . .

That part of a person, that believes they must justify themselves before God,
That part of a person that believes the Mercy of God can be bought, that is . . .

That part or a person that believes we must pay . . . for Love.

She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. For all nations (all people) have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality (porneia), and the kings of the earth have committed immorality (porneou) with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.” Then I heard another voice from heaven saying “Come out of her, my people..

Notice that the voice didn't say “**some** of my people,” just “my people.”

And feel free to picture what the voice is saying....

If you've ever wondered at the passionate fury of your Lord, just look at the picture and listen to the Word of God: “*Come out of her, my people.*”

“...lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues (*pleges*: wounds);

Perhaps these are the wounds that come from the temple in Heaven, which is the Body of Christ... and even the Bride of Christ. It's utterly ironic, but perhaps the wounds of sin, can become the glory of Grace ... as if some harlots can be transformed into the Bride.

*for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.
Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds;*

What a terrifying statement. All throughout the Old Testament, God has stipulated a limit to vengeance: “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” and “no more...” But here the Lord says, “**Repay her . . . double.**” Is that two eyes for one? ...two teeth for one? ...two lives for one? How do you do that? Kill her twice?

*Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds;
mix (prepare) a double portion for her in the cup she mixed (prepared).*

This vengeance comes in a cup.

*As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment
(basinismos).*

In chapter 12 we read that the woman was in torment, *basinizo* to deliver)

... a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen, I am no widow...

She refuses to acknowledge that her Helper is dead. Or, maybe, that she killed Him.

I am no widow and mourning I shall never see.’ For this reason...

(because she glorifies herself and refuses to mourn)

her plagues (pleges, wounds) will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged

her.” And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality [porneou] and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning.^{ix} They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, “Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come.” And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore...

That’s interesting; it appears they still have their cargo... The problem is that they can’t buy or sell “goods” if no one owns any goods. If you call Jesus Lord, you acknowledge that you don’t own anything. You’re a steward of God’s things. God owns everything, and God owns you.

He’s coming like a thief in the night, but He’s not a thief.
Why not? He can’t steal anything, for He already owns everything.

If you’re a Christian you freely confess you don’t own anything.
And if you’re not a Christian, here’s some news: you have stolen everything.
You can’t pay for anything. With what would you pay?
...Your life? You didn’t create your life.
...Could you pay with your works? Well, you made those works with your life.

Everything belongs to God... but check this out: everything these merchants mourn, will be found in the New Jerusalem, and *everyone* will enjoy them . . . But NO ONE will *buy* or *sell* them. You can *only* give or receive them, for everyone shares “*everything in common... with glad and generous hearts...*” Everything is free (Acts 2:44-46).

“They mourn since no one buys their cargo...” cargo of gold, ...
Streets of gold in New Jerusalem. No one is interested in buying gold in the New Jerusalem.

...silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves,...

Jesus freely *chose* to be a slave of *all*. When all choose to be slaves, everyone will be truly free.

...horses and chariots, and slaves,—that is, human souls.

A soul is a temple of dust that contains the breath of *Yahweh*, your Helper. Jesus is the “Helper” and His Spirit is the “helper,” and He makes us His home... And so, of course, He said, “*Whatever you do to the least of these my brothers, you do to me.*” He’s in them . . . and in You.

You are worth the Life of God—the blood of Jesus, just because you were born because God breathed His breath into you.

I have a friend who was horrifically abused by her father and sold as a harlot. Once in prayer, Jesus appeared to her and to my wife as well... Susan said *“Look, Jesus has something for you...”* And she said, *“It’s just a piece of paper.”* I said, *“Read it.”* And then she audibly gasped in wonder. She said, *“It’s a birth certificate, glowing with light, and there is no date... It’s eternal.”*

In these visions, Jesus used to hold a mirror in front of her face. She’d look in the mirror, and see she wasn’t a harlot; in Jesus’ eyes, the true eyes, she is His Bride.

Revelation 18:14 *“The fruit for which your soul longed...”*

The harlot longed to consume the fruit of the tree.
She knew the Good, the way you know an object, a thing, or a commodity.

The Bride knows the Good, because she’s been known by the Good, and becomes pregnant with the Good, and through torment delivers the fruit of Life—her Bridegroom’s Life, which is also her own Life.

There are two ways of knowing, one results in death, and the other results in babies. When Eve, and that first Adam were kicked out of the garden, they knew the Good in the first way, but they could no longer find it; they had killed it. They can’t find the Good, but the Good will come and find them, and know them in the second way. The Good is their Helper... and *your* Helper.

Revelation 18:14-24

The fruit for which your soul longed, has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!”

No harlotry, ever again!

The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, “Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.” And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, “What city was like the great city?” And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, “Alas, alas, for the

great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste.

“In a single hour she has been laid waste” and “all (the buyers and sellers) on earth mourn...”^x “In a single hour.” What could that refer to?

I went through and counted: at least nine times, in the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to His crucifixion as “his hour,” or “the hour,” nine more times John does the same thing.

All eyes will look on the one whom they have pierced^{xi} and when they see Him as He is, the principality of the harlot will be disarmed, the economy of *porneia* destroyed, and the Bride set free from the prison of her own ego.

“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!” Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, [She must have been teaching people her harlotry.] saying, “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence,^{xii} [The destruction of Jerusalem was kind of violent; the death of Jesus on the cross was violent] and will be found no more; and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”

The blood of “*All who have been slain on earth.*” How could that refer to anything other than the blood that is bled, as our Helper is crucified, on the tree in the garden just outside of Old Jerusalem? The Life is in the blood, and He bleeds His river for *all*. Blood that is wine and wine that is blood . . . Understand?

All the blood—all the life in the entire world—is His. Even though we all claim it as our own life, like a blood clot.

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “*Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ² for his judgments are true and just...*”

“True and Just?” And they’re shouting about *salvation* . . . And what we just witnessed was **double vengeance?** **18:6** “*Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds...*”

Taking two eyes for one eye or two teeth for one tooth is strictly forbidden by the law... as unjust... So, what is this justice: this **double vengeance?** “*...Repay her double for*

her deeds; mix (kerannumi: prepare, pour out) a double portion for her in the cup she mixed (prepared)."

Several years ago, I watched a movie that I felt bad about watching, because, at first, it was rather pornographic. But as I watched, it turned into something entirely different. The movie was titled *Original Sin*.

- Antonio Banderas plays a wealthy Cuban plantation owner named Luis who sends away for an American mail order bride named Julia Russell.
- On the passage across the Atlantic, a harlot, in cahoots with a beastly thief, learns of Julia's plans, disposes of Julia, and takes her place.
- The harlot's name is Bonnie Cassel, played by Angelina Jolie.

Well, Luis marries his bride the day she gets off the boat, and he loves her with all his heart. After several months, when her act is about to be exposed by circumstance, Bonnie, posing as Julia, plans to kill Luis and take all of his things.

In the scene, you're about to see, they sit at a table. For her bridegroom, she has prepared a cup of coffee filled with poison. But she has just realized that he now knows, it was all an act and that she plans to take his life with the cup she just prepared. She also realizes that he could kill her.

Clip from *Original Sin*

A cup of coffee is placed on the table. A man and woman sit and converse.]

Luis: *Like a play, all of it, lies, from the moment I met you.*

Bonnie: *Not all of it. No .*

Luis: *Do you laugh at me, the two of you, for how stupid I have been, how blind?*

Bonnie: *No .*

Luis: *Laugh now when I tell you this: I loved you Julia.*

Bonnie: *Julia is not here; Julia is dead.*

Luis: *Laugh...when I tell you I still love you.*

Bonnie: *No, not me. You don't love me.*

Luis: *Oh yes, you, not Julia of Russel. Not Monte Castle.*

You. I love you, as I know you, because I know you . . .

[Bonnie tears up]

As you are good and bad, better, worse. (Laughs) I told you this already.

You didn't believe me. Tonight you will. (Luis pulls out a gun)

To us . . . a short life . . . and exciting life.

Bonnie: *Don't do this.*

Luis: *No other love. To us, no other love but you.*

From first to last, start to finish.

[Bonnie tears up again]

Don't change Julia. Don't ever change.

[Luis quickly sets the gun down and drinks the coffee that was placed in front of him.]

Bonnie: *No, no, no!*

[Luis collapses to the ground and begins to foam at the mouth.]

[The scene switches and Luis is in Bonnie's arms. Shaking and dying.]

Bonnie: *Stay! Stay, stay! [Cries.] I love you.*

Luis: *Say it again,. Say it again.*

Bonnie: *I love you. I love you! I love you!! Don't leave me.*

Luis: *Say it again. Say it again.*

Bonnie: *I love you. I love you! I love you!!*

[Gasps for air.]

Bonnie: *No, no, no!!*

Of course, it's just a silly movie... But, his sacrifice actually does destroy the harlot:

She no longer wants his goods; She sees that he is the Good and wants him.
She sees that although she took his life; He had always given his life.
She begins yelling, *"I love you, I love you, I love you."*
He recovers... and she becomes the bride she is, as they live their lives on the other side of the sea.

I think that's kind of like the double vengeance: *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay,"* says the Lord. "But how does He repay?" Some think the cross means that He won't repay, but He will: *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay,"* says the Lord. "But how does He repay?"

We take His life... and He requires our life. He said, *"The day you eat it of it you will surely die."* People get so offended that God would smite someone, but God smites everyone. We all die... and according to John, we're already dead.

I think that's the first vengeance; God takes our life. Maybe you could call it the ministry of condemnation, the Old Covenant, or the law: *"The soul that sins will surely die."* That's the law. Jesus didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law. In this way we will all gain the knowledge of evil—our sin is evil, and we die.

So what's the double vengeance?

We think we own our life; we think we've created our life; we think we've earned our life, *when in fact* we've stolen God's life and God requires that life... We must surrender the Life so we can watch God *give* the Life, know that we didn't earn the Life, and forever be grateful for the Life. It is the Good.

We must surrender the Life that has already died, so we can receive the Life that is eternal. We must surrender the Life we took so we can know the Life that is given. God is the Good, and His Word is Life. God *gives* His life, *that's* His vengeance—infinite vengeance because He never stops.

He is burning hot, absolute, unstoppable and relentless Love: He is our Helper. And when we see Him in Truth, we'll start screaming, *"I love you, I love you, I love you."*

The 1st vengeance is what we have earned, which is nothing and it reduces us to nothing; it's what humans call justice.

The 2nd vengeance is what God has earned, and that is people in His image... it is righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

In five more verses, we'll read that righteousness is given to the Bride and she puts it on as a garment. It's the New Man. It's Jesus. He is our helper.

The 1st vengeance is the revelation of sin, and the **2nd** is the glory of Grace.

The 1st is the destruction of the old man, and the **2nd** is the Revelation of the New.
The 1st is the death of the beast, and the **2nd** is the glory of God—that is man.
The 1st is the destruction of the harlot, and the **2nd** is the birth of the Bride.
The 1st is the Revelation of I am not, and the **2nd** is who I am.

His vengeance causes us to know the pain of evil . . . and so hate evil. And His vengeance causes us to know the glory of the Good and forever choose the Good in Freedom—choose the Good, who is the Life, who is our Husband. The first and second are not opposite things, but the same thing—the Revelation of one thing: Grace!

The double vengeance is unstoppable Grace, which is God's Judgment, which creates all things and makes us in the image of God—God, who is absolute, unconditional, relentless, and entirely free . . . Love.

I could only find four places in Scripture that prophesy a double vengeance:

Jeremiah 16—God's people will be brought back from Babylon and God says:
"I have repaid a first and a second time."^{xiii}

It's "double destruction." It's the death of death—the second death, which is Life.

Zechariah 9—Zechariah prophesies a king coming to Jerusalem on a donkey and then says, *"Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double"*. (9:12) Then Zechariah prophesies everything we've been reading in the Revelation.

Isaiah 40—*"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, (it has happened) that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins."*

Isaiah 61:1-2—*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God.*

Christ's death and resurrection began the eternal Jubilee—the Sabbath of Sabbaths when all is forgiven and everything is free. And that is God's vengeance on the economy of *pornea*, the whore, the harlot.

Verse 7: *"Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy."*

God's vengeance is Grace, which turns harlots into brides.^{xiv}

We've run out of time, and I had so much more to say, but I'll end with this: In the words of St. Paul, "You have not been given the *ministry of condemnation*, you have been

given the *ministry of reconciliation*—You have been called and chosen to preach the gospel of Grace through Faith.”^{xv}

And what does that look like?

My friend Tony Campolo used to tell a story that is, probably, mostly true. One night he found himself wide awake at 3:30 AM in downtown Honolulu... Not knowing what to do, he stumbled into a dingy little diner. The fat guy behind the counter shoved a doughnut and coffee in his direction.

Just then, eight or nine rather attractive prostitutes walked in. They sat near Tony. Their talk was loud and very crude.

He was just ready to leave when he overheard: *“Tomorrow’s my birthday. I’ll be 39.”*
A second voice said, *“So what? What do you want from me? A birthday cake and a Coke? You want me to sing ‘Happy Birthday?’”*

The first one said, *“Come on, why do you have to be so mean?
I was just telling you, that’s all.
I don’t want anything from you.
I mean, why should you give me a birthday cake? I’ve never had one my whole life.”*

Tony waited until the women left, and he asked the fat guy behind the counter:

“Do they come in every night?”

“Yeah.”

“How about the one right next to me?”

“Yeah, that’s Agnes. Why do you want to know?”

“It’s her birthday tomorrow . . . What do you say we throw a party?”

The fat guy thought a minute, smiled, and said, *“That’s great. I like Agnes.”*
His name was Harry. He said, *“I’ll bring the cake and spread the word.”*

At 2:30 AM the next night, Tony came back with decorations.

He had a big sign that said, *“Happy Birthday, Agnes!”*

At 3:15 it was wall-to-wall hookers, Harry, and Tony.

At 3:30 Agnes arrived. They all shouted, *“Happy Birthday, Agnes!”*

And they sang to Agnes.

When Agnes saw the cake, she broke down weeping.

Harry said, *“Agnes, cut the cake. We want cake!”*

Finally, Agnes composed herself, and said softly, as she looked at the cake,

“Look, Harry, is it okay if I just look at it a little while?”

Harry said, *“Sure. Take it home, if you want.”*

She said, *“Oh, can I?”*

She looked at Tony, *“I live right down the street. I just want to take it home.”*

She picked it up like it was the Holy Grail and walked out.

At that, no one knew quite what to do so they all looked at Tony. Being a pastor, Tony said, "Let's pray." He prayed for Agnes. When he was done, Harry leaned over with a little hostility and said, "*Hey! You never told me you were a preacher! What kind of church do you belong to?*" Tony said, "*A church that throws parties for hookers at 3:30 in the morning.*" Harry said, "*No you don't. There's no church like that.*"

Well, there is a church like that; it's the true Church, not the anti-church, not the imitation church. It's not the great harlot; it's the Bride. It's the New Jerusalem, and she comes to earth on the very spot that the old one was destroyed.

Communion

This is the cake. [Peter points to the communion bread.] Agnes is all around you.

So, the Great Bridegroom took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you." And He took the cup saying, "This is the covenant..." (Like we talked about earlier in the series, it is a marriage proposal) "This is the covenant in my blood [Lamb's blood], poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you and do it in remembrance of me. And I should warn you: This is the Judgment of God. So, if you take it in an unworthy manner, it can kill you. To take it in an unworthy manner is to think you could somehow . . . pay. You cannot pay for this. This is the infinite vengeance of our God; this is absolute mercy.

[Several worship songs are sung.]

Benediction

If you came to the table this morning you just confirmed the covenant. If you didn't come to this table, you need to know this covenant was made from the foundation of the world. That means you kind of can't ultimately break it. But if you just came to this table and confirmed the covenant, it means that at least with a mustard seed of faith, you believe that God loves you from the foundation of the earth. His Love will never change and so you are free to love Him in freedom.

You're not a harlot; you're the Bride. That's hard for us to believe. It's almost impossible to endure the intimate communion that God has planned for us in these old physical bodies. So, I hope that you just sit in His presence every day. When you do, His glory begins to reveal sin in you. When His glory begins to reveal sin in you, you'll be tempted to start to pay. You'll start to say, "Oh! I'll do this. I'll do that." Just stop. You cannot pay. You can only confess. So, just tell Him, God you know my struggles... you know me. Just confess yourself to Him. Don't run. And then notice He has not run. He has not destroyed you. He does not run away. He is still there, and He's always been there throwing a party for you—just because you were born, just because in the beginning He breathed His breath into the dust and you are worth everything to Him.

When you begin to see that He is always throwing a party for you, you will start to want to throw parties for others. And His will in Heaven becomes His will on earth. We'll talk about that in the next message...

In the name of Jesus, 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.

ⁱ In the beginning God made Adam by breathing into *adamah*—that is clay. That breath or spirit in the dust is what makes a soul, *nephesh* in Hebrew, *psyche* in Greek.

According to Scripture, there is a sacramental communion which occurs in sexual intercourse which produces one flesh. And that's what constitutes, or consummates, this thing called marriage. When folks sleep around constantly breaking marriages it's referred to as *porneou* in the New Testament... It's consuming Life itself as a commodity.

ⁱⁱ We put this slide on the screen:

ⁱⁱⁱ There was a male figure in a dark robe that held her hand ever so tightly. He owned her and used her. Perhaps it was the dragon; perhaps it was the beast. Perhaps she saw the anti-christ and the anti-bride.

^{iv} She's called Babylon, but Babylon and the tower of babel fell long before the Revelation. What towers are still to fall in Rev. 18?

When the twin towers in the great city of New York fell, because kings of the earth who had been in bed with the economy of our country, which controls the economy of the world, flew planes into the world trade center which fell in one day and one hour, behind a statue of a the pagan goddess *Libertates* who promises a false freedom... I couldn't help but think of the great harlot.

^v Perhaps the most poignant and passionate chapter in all of the Bible is Ezekiel 16. In it the Lord describes how he found Jerusalem as a baby lying forsaken in a field, how she grew and became a beautiful maiden, how he pledged his troth to her, but how she trusted her beauty and became a whore. The chapter ends with His Judgment upon His harlot bride.

^{vi} Literally, "No one is good, except One—God." Everyday a good Jew was to recite that in prayer. "Hear oh Israel the Lord your God is One..."

^{vii} It's fascinating that the harlot is called "the woman," in Rev. 17 and 19, and we are "the woman" in Revelation 12, as well as "the Bride" in Rev. 19. Perhaps the lie of the dragon, which creates the sin of the beast, turns the woman into a whore . . . and the Revelation of Jesus turns the whore into the Bride, and that's what it is to be a man.

^{viii} We've been beastly, but as we saw last time, "The beast is not." For a long time it's fascinated me that the Lord said to Adam, "You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil." (He didn't say "the tree of life," or "the tree in the middle of the garden.") "You shall not eat." I think this holds true in the Hebrew grammar, but

even in our English translations, it sounds more like a fact than a warning. What God says happens and what He says won't happen, doesn't happen . . . right? Perhaps, we only think we've eaten. Perhaps we only imagine that we're dead. Perhaps sin is really a "nothing." And perhaps, death is ultimately an illusion. Whatever the case, it is the illusion in which we think we live, and from which we must be saved—saved from perceiving ourselves as beasts and whores, when, in fact, we are men and a Bride.

^{ix} They mourn her passing, not because they loved her, but because they used her. They are the ones that desolate her and burn her with fire (17:16).

^x How could this simply refer to the city of Babylon, Rome, or even the physical city of Old Jerusalem? It must refer to the moment eternity touches time, the "end of the ages." We have come to the end of the ages when we come to Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

^{xi} Zech. 12:10, John 19:37, Rev. 1:7

^{xii} The destruction of Jerusalem was violent; the crucifixion was violent.

^{xiii} In 17:18, Jeremiah prophesies a "double destruction." To me, that sounds like the death of death, the second death, which is Life, which is what we'll witness in the next chapter of the Revelation.

^{xiv} In Ezekiel 16 God tells the gut-wrenching story of how He found Jerusalem, loved Jerusalem, pledged His troth to Jerusalem and she turned into a whore. In vv. 35-43, He describes her punishment and His vengeance: He will see her stripped naked and desolated by her "lovers." But then in 53-63, the second portion, the pinnacle of His vengeance: He describes how He will make her watch Him restore Sodom and Samaria in her midst. He will have absolute grace on all and shut the arrogant mouth of His harlot bride, Jerusalem. "...When I atone for you for all that you have done,' declares the Lord God."

As we saw earlier, God's punishment on Israel in the book of Hosea was to take her to the valley of Achor (the valley of trouble), and there He would make Himself a door—Jesus is that door—and she would call Him "my husband." He will betroth her to Him "forever... in mercy". She will "know the Lord" (Hosea 7:14-20).

^{xv} 2nd Corinthians 3:1-5:21, Ephesians 1:11-12, 2:1-10

34

The Romance of God (The Death of Fear and the Birth of Faith)

The Romance of God (The Death of Fear and the Birth of Faith)

Revelation 19:1-10

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

September 23, 2018

Peter Hiatt

[The worship band plays “Set them free” by Sting]

That’s an interesting song choice; I wonder what it means?

“*For freedom Christ has set us free,*” wrote Paul to the Galatians (Gal. 5:1).

Prayer

Lord God, thank you that you are here with us. And now, through the power of your Spirit, and in the name of Jesus, we ask that you would help us to preach the Gospel. Amen.

Message

It’s been a year of preaching through the Revelation and today we arrive at a verse that finally tells us what it is that God wants—second person, singular aorist, imperative: simple command.

This may surprise some, but it’s not: “Store canned goods for the coming apocalypse”; it’s not: “Beware of Romanian dictators with a penchant for tattoos” or “Support the military industrial complex of the United States and Israel...”

The command is not the commands to the seven churches because those weren’t commands to the churches but to the seven angels, or spirits, of the seven churches...

What Jesus asks of the seven churches is that they’d listen to someone read the book: “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear,” says Jesus (Rev. 1:3). It’s the first of seven beatitudes in the Revelation.

I looked up all the direct commands in the Revelation so far. There are a few specific commands to John like “*Write,*” “*Measure,*” “*Come up here.*” Last week, we read a command to “*Come out of her my people.*” But in sixteen of twenty-five times so far, John, and we, have been commanded to “*Look*” or “*Behold.*”

And now in Revelation 19:10 “***Worship God.***”

If you’ve been confused: This is the point. This is what God wants: worship—*proskuneo* in Greek. *Pros* is a prefix meaning toward...*Kuneo* means to kiss and is probably the source of the German word *kuss* and the English word *kiss*.

To worship is to kiss with all your heart mind, soul, and strength. God wants worship; He wants a kiss. The kiss may manifest in an infinite number of ways, but at the heart, it must always be *proskuneo*—a passionate kiss offered in freedom.

In January of 1978, I took Susan Coleman to see *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. It was our first date, and I planned to kiss her.



I was something of a beast, at the time; I didn't really know her, but I saw that she was *good for food and a delight to the eyes*—so I walked her to the door, said, “good night,” and planted a wet one right on those beautiful lips.

It was just like kissing a post. She was afraid; she didn't trust me; she didn't know me, and so her heart, mind, soul, and strength were divided. She kissed me with her lips, but her heart was far from me. If there were a rating system for all the kisses in the world that kiss would've been ranked in the bottom five, or maybe, ten percent of all kisses.

It was a terrible kiss. So, I pulled out a gun pointed it at her forehead, and said, “Kiss me or else!” Actually, I didn't do that because that's an almost entirely ineffectual way of obtaining high-quality kisses.

Three times, very clearly, Scripture claims, “*Every knee will bow and every tongue give praise.*” I've been told that, for most folks, that will happen at the point of a gun... or some other instrument of torment and fear. But you see that's an entirely ineffectual way to obtain quality kisses.

So how do you obtain high-quality kisses? Do you threaten? Do you pay?
Is that “the way”?

According to Scripture, there was one kiss or set of kisses, from a kisser, that probably rate just about best in all of history... And Jesus obtained those kisses; it might've even been on a first date... but probably the second.

In Luke chapter seven, Jesus dines at the house of a Pharisee when a harlot falls at His feet weeping, anointing His feet with perfume, tears, and kisses. When Simon the Pharisee expresses his disapproval, Jesus turns to him and says, *“You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet—that’s proskuneo—she has not ceased to kiss my feet. Therefore I tell you her sins, which were many, are forgiven (let go—gone. I don’t care about them anymore because I got what I wanted)—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little loves little.”*⁴

Do you think you’ve sinned much? Look around the room, if you think it would help. Do you think you’ve sinned much? If not... You must not believe that you’ve been forgiven much, and so you must be a lousy kisser . . . and definitely *not* a worshiper.

Well anyway, that’s how Jesus makes good kissers. And that’s what God wants—an entire world of non-stop *proskuneo*. And that’s what the Revelation is all about; it’s about how the Bride is made ready.

Immediately after Jesus tells the weeping, kissing, former harlot that her sins are forgiven in Luke chapter 7, we’re introduced to Mary Magdalene in chapter 8. Some say that she was married to Jesus. I doubt that’s true, and yet, of course, it *is* true . . . for we are all Mary. We’re Mary, but where the Harlot once stood, suddenly, the Bride of Christ appears.

Let’s read our text!

Revelation 19:1 *“After this...”*

After what? ...after the judgment of the great harlot.

As we saw last week, the great Harlot is a world ruler of this present darkness. She is an economy of *porneia*—which is the attempt to buy and sell love. She is a city... and in particular, Babylon, Rome, and Jerusalem. And ever since we took the good to make ourselves good, we’ve become pretty great harlots too.

In the last chapter, the Lord cries, “Come out of her my people.” And just like those that worship the beast, these people, participating in *porneia*, appear to be *all* the people who dwell on the earth.

19:1 *“After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven...”*

I think we’re supposed to wonder, where the hell did all these people come from? We just witnessed the annihilation of all people on the surface of the earth. And now this great multitude in heaven starts worshipping.

They sound like the multitude in Revelation 5, which was *“every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them.”*

19:1 *“After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven*

crying out, 'Hallelujah!'

This is the first time this word appears in the New Testament. This instance, and the three instances we're about to read are the only places in which this word appears in the New Testament at all. It's actually a Hebrew interjection that means "Praise Yahweh!" or in Greek, "Worship God!" (*to theo proskuneson*).ⁱⁱ If you count Hebrew interjections, this is an imperative command too. We are being told in Greek and Hebrew: "Worship God!"

Revelation 19:1-2

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just..."

Notice that they're worshipping *not* because they've avoided God's Judgment; they're worshipping because they just *witnessed* God's Judgment. It's just; that means it's right.

It's just like the end of (Isaiah 66:23-24)—these verses used to scare me more than any others in all of the Bible; now they fill me with the most hope! In this chapter, all flesh worship the Lord, for all flesh walk out to the edge of the New Jerusalem and see their old flesh, their own corpses, burning in the valley of *Gehenna*.ⁱⁱⁱ They have been judged and delivered from themselves.

Revelation 19:1b -11

Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute (porne) who corrupted the earth with her immorality (porneia) and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

That's the blood that's wine and wine that's blood.
That's the vengeance we bleed when we forgive our enemies.
That's the double vengeance we preached about last time.

Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever [literally, "for ages and ages."]

"Smoke" can mean many things . . . Here it may just mean that evil is destroyed, but in chapter 8 it referred to the pleasing aroma of sacrifice (Rev. 8:4, Psalm 141:2). "*This is your spiritual worship,*" wrote Paul: "*This is your logical act of worship that you present yourself a living sacrifice.*"

You know? Sacrifice is utterly terrifying from the perspective of the earth or from the vantage point of the harlot; it's losing your life—your psyche. But from the standpoint of heaven or the heart of a Bride, it might be something entirely different: losing yourself and finding yourself, losing your life and finding your life, losing your fig leaves and finding your Husband—your Helper. Remember: Adam—humanity—couldn't find his Helper.

Well, *“This is Love,”* wrote John, *“not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”* (1 John 4:10 NIV)

Love is sacrifice. So . . .

From the standpoint of the harlot Love is inconceivable.

But from the standpoint of the Groom and Bride it a communion of self-sacrifice called Love may be all that matters.

Well, God is Love, who freely and constantly gives Himself for all.

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” And from the throne came a voice saying,

*“Praise our God, all you his servants,
you who fear him, small and great.”*

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

*“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.
Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;
it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

This is a direct reference to Isaiah 61, which we read last week and which Jesus quotes in the synagogue in Luke 4. [Is. 61: 1-7] It starts with a reference to the cross, as the day of vengeance... and then it describes the double vengeance of God's Grace...

And then in verse 10 we read:

*I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God,
For he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
And as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
To sprout up before all the nations,*

Rev. 19:8

“It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

The harlot was also clothed in fine linen . . . so a harlot can look just like a bride. The harlot was clothed in fine linen . . . but it wasn't given to her; she paid for it, at least in her

own mind.¹

The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints; the saints are us. A saint has been stripped of his or her ego and fig leaves, and clothed with the righteousness of Christ—or the righteousness that *is* Christ, her Husband.

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those... There are seven beatitudes in the Revelation—this is the fourth. ...Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Just before He was crucified (Matt. 22:1-14) Jesus told a parable about a king who held a marriage supper for his son. He invited all he could find . . . He invited *all*, "*the bad and the good.*" All are called but one is chosen.

At the wedding banquet, the friend of the king has no wedding garment. The King chooses to throw this friend into outer darkness. I think that friend is His Son and our Lord, the Bridegroom. He had no wedding garment for it had been given to all of us His Bride:

- *He who knew no sin became sin that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).*
- *He is our righteousness, writes Paul (1 Cor. 1:30).*

Every good deed you do is the fruit of His Spirit: *Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faith...* He clothes us with His robe of righteousness. We preached on that a couple of years ago and you can find the message on our website. "The Clothes Make the Man", (8-30-15). It's one of my favorites.^{iv}

Verses 9-10:

And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus.

That's weird because this appears to be one of the seven bowl angels, who come from the temple in heaven, who are dressed just like Jesus and who remind us of the Seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth and to the seven churches. If the angel is not the Spirit of Jesus, it sure reminds us of the Spirit of Jesus—the Spirit of the Helper. That *is* the Helper.

The Holy Spirit is God, but nowhere are we told to worship the Holy Spirit... And yet over and over we're told to worship in, by, and through the Holy Spirit...

Jesus is our Husband and Helper, but in John 16 He promises to send another Helper—who dwelt with them and will be in them—the Spirit of Truth.

The Helper helps us recognize our Helper, who is the Truth and the Life.

¹ Do you suppose the Harlot is jealous? That's why we crucified Jesus.

The Helper is the Spirit of Jesus, who helps us trust our heavenly Father.
The Helper helps us worship . . . in Spirit and in Truth (John 3:23).
And now we come to a mystery beyond our comprehension, for it's the boundary of eternity and time, the boundary of God and us, the boundary of Jesus and the old Adam.

In 1 Cor. 6:16 Paul writes: *"Do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute (porne) becomes one body with her. But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him."*

Did you get that? When we commune in worship with God, our spirit is God's Spirit and God's Spirit is our spirit... and maybe the true us... no longer us, but Christ in us... I think that's faith, hope, and love in us... It all makes your head spin.

But whatever the case, we now know what God wants.
The angel says, "Worship God." And that's what God wants: a good kiss.

About thirty-eight years ago, October 30, 1982, I received a kiss that surely rates as one of the best in the history of the world. I had just dropped to my knees and said, "Susan, would you marry me?" She literally knocked me on my can with kisses.

Susan had never been a harlot, except in the way that we all are harlots, but before that night all of her kisses had been laced with fear.

In 1 Cor. 6 Paul writes that the person who participates in *porneia* wounds his or her own body, whereas, with other sins, we wound other bodies. See? With *porneia* we bind our body to another body that then becomes one body and then we tear that body apart, leaving a wound, and eventually a calloused and hard heart until God heals that heart with the double vengeance it gave. Grace.

If you spend much time in Scripture, you'll be surprised to find that God doesn't seem to have as much of a problem with the joining together, as He does with the tearing apart—after all, we will be, or are, all joined together in Him.^v "There is one body," wrote Paul.

Well anyway, before October 30, 1982, Susan worried about losing my love, as well as earning my love. So, her kisses were laced with fear. But once she believed my covenant promise to always love, there was no fear of losing my love and there was no more love to be earned, and therefore, no failure to be feared. The covenant meant that she could no longer pay for me, for me was free. And so, she kissed me in freedom... just because she wanted to . . . as she wished.

As we preached several months ago, in Jesus' day, a boy would propose to a girl by offering her a cup of wine, that represented the blood of a covenant. If she drank from the cup, she accepted the wedding proposal. When Jesus offered the cup to His disciples, He was proposing and setting them free...free from fear, so they could have faith in Love.

Don't forget that everything we've witnessed in Chapter 17, 18, and 19—the destruction of the harlot and the appearance of the bride—everything happens because, at the end of the sixth day and start of the Seventh, as the seventh bowl of wrath is poured out on the earth, Jesus cries, “It is done,” and gives Jerusalem a cup of blood that's wine and wine that's blood.

The harlot is destroyed and the bride suddenly appears because the woman was made to drink the cup of double vengeance, which is Grace.

The bride appears where the harlot was, and the Bride looks as the harlot did, but the Bride is entirely different:

The harlot dressed *herself* in gold, jewels, and pearls.
The bride is gold, jewels, and pearls.

The harlot was trying to make herself beautiful to get what she wanted.
The Bride *is* beautiful, for she knows that she is wanted by the Groom.^{vi}

The harlot glorified herself.
But the Bride glorifies her Groom, and is glorified.

The harlot was in bondage to herself.
But the Bride has lost herself.

For the harlot, love was a law: “the knowledge of good” to make herself good.
For the Bride Love is a Life: a communion of Life that is the Good.

The harlot was in control.
The Bride has surrendered control.

The harlot kissed for some other reason.
For the Bride . . . kisses *are* the reason.

The kisses of the Bride are free... ^{vii}

You might think the harlot is free, and the Bride is in bondage.
But the harlot has chosen a lie, and a lie is untruth, and untruth is non-being.
To choose a lie is to bind yourself in the deepest of prisons.^{viii}

The harlot chooses the lie and is in bondage to the father of lies.
The Bride is chosen by the Truth and is thus set free.

Remember we said in chapter 11: *If you had free will . . .*
You would never deliberate between choices,
Your will would be unrestrained by any law,
You would constantly will what you want and want what you will . . .

Everything would be “as you wish.”
You would be God, or the Spirit of God would be seated on the throne in the sanctuary of your soul—in a communion, a communion of Love.

Well... *IF* a bride wants to kiss her husband, the kisses are free.
And free kisses are the very best kisses.
And that is what God wants.
And that must be the reason for all the drama, the fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, and miracles in the Book of the Revelation.
As well as the reason for all the fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, and miracles in *your* life...

God is the author: He’s telling you the story, and that’s what He wants—*proskuneo*, free kisses... Kinda like this:

Clip #1 from *The Princess Bride*

Grandfather: *I brought you a special present.*
Kid: [excitedly] *What is it?*
Grandfather: *Open it up.*
Kid: [opening the gift] *A book?*
Grandfather: *That's right, when I was your age, television was called books; And this is a special book. It was the book my father used to read to me when I was sick and I used to read it to your father...and today, I'm gonna read it to you.*
Kid: [less interested] *Does it got any sports in it?*
Grandfather: *Are you kidding? Fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, miracles.*

Kid: *It doesn't sound too bad. I'll try and stay awake.*
Grandfather: *Oh, well, thank you very much. That's very nice of you. Your vote of confidence is overwhelming. Oh..alright.. "The Princess Bride" by S.Morgan Stern, Chapter 1.[From here on, the Grandfather will be known as the Narrator]*
Narrator: *Buttercup was raised on a small farm in the country of Florin. Her favorite past-times were riding her horse and tormenting the farm boy that worked there. His name was Westley. But she never called him that. Isn't that a wonderful beginning?*
Kid: [with no enthusiasm] *Yeah.. It's really good.*
Narrator: *Nothing gave Buttercup as much pleasure as ordering Westley around.*
Buttercup: *Farmboy, varnish my horse's saddle. I want to see my face shining in it by morning.*
Westley: *As you wish.*
Narrator: *"As you wish" was all he ever said to her.*
Buttercup: [holding two empty pails] *Farmboy, fill these with water....please?*
Westley: *As you wish.*
Narrator: *That day she was amazed to discover that when he was saying, "As you wish," what he meant was, "I love you." [The scene changes to the couple passionately kissing at sunset.]*
Kid: [interrupting the story] *Hold it! Hold it! What is this? Are you trying to trick me? Where's the sports? Is this a kissing book?*
Grandfather: *Wait, just wait.*

The Revelation is a “kissing book...”

And now, I’m kinda banking on the fact that you’ve all seen *The Princess Bride*. It’s the classic fairy tale.

In his book *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton wrote: “The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy tales. They seem to me to be the entirely reasonable things... It is not earth that judges heaven, but heaven that judges earth.”

All week, I’ve been wrestling with another book: *Philosophical Fragments*, published in 1844 by Soren Kierkegaard. It’s a philosophical discourse in which he asks the question: “How could a mortal person, ever come to know the Truth—eternal Truth.”

And He wrestles with another age-old question posed by Socrates: “How we could seek the truth, if we never knew the truth... and if we knew the truth, why would we seek it?”

Kierkegaard twists it around and suggests that the Truth is seeking us, and has created, or does create, the condition or capacity within us to recognize truth when the Truth comes to visit.

I don’t think I understand Kierkegaard well, but fortunately, he tells a fairy tale in *Philosophical Fragments*.

He tells the story of a great and powerful king, who from a distance fell in love with a humble maiden, a farm girl... and then, earnestly desired that she would return his love... he earnestly desired her kisses—free kisses.

But suddenly this king is seized with a great problem and a tremendous sorrow. Kierkegaard writes: “Love is triumphant when it makes that which was unequal equal in Love.”

The king realizes that He and his beloved are unequal. If he elevates her to his position before he wins her love, he would never know, but even more, she would never know, if she loved him truly—if she loved him in freedom.

- If he forced her to marry him, it wouldn’t be free and wouldn’t be love.
- In fact, if he merely revealed himself as king, it wouldn’t be free and might not be love—not true love.
- If he revealed his riches and the glory of his kingdom, he wouldn’t know, and she wouldn’t know, if it was *him* she loved, or his *kingdom*.

She might love him for one of a million other reasons...but if you love someone for any reason, other than love, it’s not free and not true love; it’s harlotry. You can’t love for some other reason, for Love *is* the reason.

And so the king realized that he had but one choice and that was to surrender his

Kingdom, his wealth, and his power, for the sake of love...he must sacrifice all to love. No choice but to leave his castle and become a servant and even more a slave... in the hope that his wish, would become her wish, and he could receive her kisses in freedom.

The Truth is King and we are all imprisoned in lies...
And Kierkegaard refers to this descent of the King as the Miracle.

In the words of Saint Paul “...*though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and being found in human form he humbled himself becoming obedient unto death even death on a cross*” (Phil. 2:6-8).

Jesus, King of Kings, became a farm boy like Westley in *The Princess Bride* and said, “*As you wish*” all the way to the point of death upon a cross. That’s the romance of God.

It was the harlot that nailed Jesus to that tree in the Garden.
It was you and me that took His life and claimed it as our own.
It was our wish. And it was the Romance of God to grant it.

But now I can’t just say, “Hey, y’all, that was the king on that cross,”... and then expect all of us harlots to simply choose to turn ourselves into the Bride. That was Kierkegaard’s point, and why the King humbled himself in the first place... so we would love Him in weakness, for who He is, and not for what He has—His Kingdom.

I can’t do that... And yet that’s just what we, the Church, have often done:
We’ve said, “Jesus is the king, and if you want his kingdom, just call him ‘Lord.’”
But Jesus said, “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord Lord’... and I will say to them depart from me, I never knew you... (Matt 7:23).” The Truth does not know untruth—that is the harlot... Jesus knows His Bride.

See? We think we’re making converts, and perhaps we’re just making better harlots . . . harlots, who think they possess the king, but have no clue as to who He is. He is True Love.

You know, a harlot is a woman that’s paid to pretend she’s the Bride. So, if a harlot simply decides to be a bride, she’ll simply become a much better harlot—like the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted the kingdom and so dressed themselves up like the Bride, but couldn’t recognize the King even when he hung on a tree in front of them.

“We cannot solve the problems we have created with the same thinking that created them,” wrote Albert Einstein.

We created the harlot with our desire to take the knowledge of the Good. And now we can’t fix ourselves by taking more knowledge and trying harder. To be a Bride is not the harlot’s desire; to be a giver is not the taker’s desire; to choose the truth is not the liar’s desire. You can’t just desire an entirely new desire. To love is not merely a human

desire; it's not our wish.

The harlot can't choose to become the bride because the harlot is the choice to control Love rather than surrender to Love. The harlot isn't free, because she's chosen evil and evil is an illusion. The harlot is not and the Bride is who I am.

It must be significant that the harlot doesn't choose to become the Bride... The harlot must be destroyed, so something new can be born in her place. Jesus said to Nicodemus, the Pharisee, "*You must be born again.*"

Do you see?

No one simply chooses to be born but maybe a New Self can be born of an old self.

Whatever the case, it's not your doing.

To His disciples, Jesus said, "*You didn't choose me, I chose you.*"

The harlot can't dress herself in her own good deeds, pretend to be the Bride, and so become the Bride. She must be stripped of her fig leaves and harlotry and someone else must give her the deeds with which to dress herself... and make herself ready for the King, His Kingdom, and the Great Banquet.

In Jesus' day, if a girl drank from the cup and accepted a boy's proposal, the boy would then leave to prepare a place for her . . . Meanwhile, she would make herself ready, light her lamp, and wait for him, for he would often come like a thief—at an unexpected hour—in order to take her to the wedding banquet where they would consummate their marriage as everyone celebrated their love and union for an entire week. It was the best party around!

Well, just the boy's departure, after the proposal, would prepare a place for the bride—a place in her own heart, called hope—hope that would be filled with faith and then with love—her bridegroom's love... I mean, she would become his sanctuary and he would become hers. He would create her choice with his choice, and then, nurture that choice with romance.

Well, Jesus' death and resurrection is the romance of God; He died once and for all—all people, in all of space and all of time.

So you see, the King is still coming to us in weakness.

God, the Author of this story, is arranging all things so you would see Him.

And Both have sent their Spirit so you would recognize Him when you see Him...

So you would freely wish, what God has always wished... and that's for a kiss freely offered to Him from you—*proskuneo*.

In John 12 Jesus says, "*When I am lifted up from the earth (and he was speaking of his death on the cross)... I will draw [helkuo, which is also translated romance]... I will romance all people to myself.*"

In John 6, Jesus had already told them, “*No one can come to me unless the Father draws [helkuo, romances] him.*”

See? It’s not only Jesus that romances you; the Father arranges all things that you would be romanced, and they both send their Spirit—the breath of God—that’s the miracle in us.

So, according to plan, in the fullness of time, at just the right moment, God in Christ Jesus lifted His head on the cross, cried, “*It is finished,*” and delivered up His Spirit.

I think that’s the same Spirit that made us humans in the first place

That’s the same Spirit that filled the temple on Pentecost.

And the same Spirit that whispers in the empty places of your soul, “Have hope.”

That’s the same Spirit that helps you to recognize your Helper.

God is your Helper—your Husband.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all romancing you.

The Father has arranged all things:

...Even a tree, in the middle of a garden, in which you did as you wished.

...Even a choice to seize control and make yourself a beast and a harlot.

...Even the events, which threaten that control, like earthquakes, famines, heartbreaks, tribulation, troubles, monsters, and death.

Remember what God said to Hosea about his harlot bride?

Behold I will allure her, romance her,

I will bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.

I will make the valley of trouble a door of hope...

And then you will call me, “my husband.” (Hosea 2:14-16)^x

The Father arranges all things...

And Jesus still comes to us in weakness...

He is Love.

He is the Truth.

He is the tender Word that speaks... We think it’s nothing, but it’s the King of Kings.

He is the Truth in every story... We think it’s weak, but it’s infinitely strong.

He is the Love that we encounter in people everyday...

We think it’s just a nice idea, but it’s the idea that holds all things together.

He is the beauty in every flower. He is the logic in every argument.

He is the rhythm in every song.

[Peter begins to sing.] “*The mere idea of you, the longing here for you, you’ll never know how slow the moments go till I’m near to you. I see your face in every flower. Your eyes in stars above. It’s just the thought of you the very thought of you my love.*”

The Father arranges all things; Jesus still comes to us in weakness, and it is the Spirit in our souls that causes us to hope . . . and then have faith, Faith in Love who is our

Husband. True Love is our Husband.

In the *Princess Bride*, Westley has no money so he leaves the farm to seek his fortune across the sea.

Westley says to Buttercup, "Here this now, I will always come for you."

"How can you be sure?" she asks.

"Because this is true love," he replies.

Westley is abducted by the Dread Pirate Roberts, who is said to never leave prisoners alive. When Buttercup hears the news, she sinks into despair and agrees to marry the evil Prince Humperdink. She is to receive an entire kingdom, but she doesn't love the king. And that would make her something of a harlot.

Just before she is to wed, she's abducted by some thieves, and then by the Dread Pirate Roberts. He wrecks her world, takes away all her control, and she thinks she will die.

She doesn't realize it's True Love, having come, to set her free.

She doesn't know it's Westley (Westley who inherited the position of head pirate, and immediately used his freedom to come find Buttercup).

She doesn't know it's Westley and Westley doesn't know if she still loves him.

She wishes to kill him, and then she wishes to die with him...

Clip #2 from *The Princess Bride*

Man in Black: He died well, that should please you. No bribe attempts or blubbering. He simply said, "Please. Please, I need to live." It was the "please" that caught my memory. I asked him what was so important for him. "True love," he replied. And then he spoke of a girl of surpassing beauty and faithfulness. I can only assume he meant you. You should bless me for destroying him before he found out what you really are.

Buttercup: And what am I?

Man in Black: Faithfulness he talked of, madam. Your enduring faithfulness. Now, tell me truly. When you found out he was gone, did you get engaged to your prince that same hour, or did you wait a whole week out of respect for the dead?

Buttercup: You mocked me once, never do it again—I died that day!

The Man In Black is about to reply as they stand there on the edge of the sheer ravine. But then something catches his attention and as he stares at it briefly: the dust cloud caused by Humperdinck's horses is rising up into the sky. While his attention is on the dust cloud, rising high, Buttercup pushes him with all the strength she has.

Buttercup: You can die too, for all I care!!

Th Man in Black teeters on the ravine edge, for a moment, then he begins to fall. Down goes the Man in Black. Down, down, rolling, spinning, crashing always down toward the flat rock floor of the ravine.

Buttercup stares transfixed at what she has wrought. There is a long pause. She stands there, alone, as from far below the words come to her, drifting on the wind—

Man in Black: ... as ... you ... wish...

Buttercup: Oh, my sweet Westley; what have I done?

And without a second thought or consideration of the dangers, she starts into the ravine. A moment later, she too is falling, spinning and twisting, crashing and torn, cartwheeling down toward what is left of her beloved.

Cut to both of them at the bottom of the ravine.

Westley: I told you, "I would always come for you." Why didn't you wait for me?

Buttercup: Well ... you were dead.

Westley: Death cannot stop true love. All it can do is delay it for a while.

Buttercup: I will never doubt again.

Westley: There will never be a need.

And now, they begin to kiss; it's a tender kiss, tender and loving and gentle and—

The Kid: *(off-screen)* Oh no. No, please.

Cut to the kid's bedroom

Grandfather: What is it? What's the matter?

The Kid: They're kissing again, do we have to hear the kissing part?

Grandfather: Someday, you may not mind so much.

Well, the Evil Prince Humperdink captures them both.

He tells Buttercup, that now she must marry him.

That's Buttercup's nightmare, and so, she literally wakes from her nightmare and tells Humperdink she'd rather die.

Meanwhile, Humperdink kills Westley with infinite suffering in the pit of despair...

But it turns out that Westley is not all dead, but only mostly dead, and so a miracle brings him back to life... but he's incredibly weak. In weakness, Westley and his friends rescue Buttercup. And then . . . she gives him a kiss...

"Since the invention of the kiss there had been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure. This one left them all behind."

She wished, what Westley had always wished, and so the kiss was entirely free.

I'm saying that the Revelation is a "kissing book."

Your life is a kissing book, or at least, a kissing story:

God your Father is the Author of the story.

Jesus is the Bridegroom and you are the Bride.

Even now, the Spirit may be whispering in your heart: it's True.

It's all the Romance of God. The fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, and miracles... are all because God is creating a brand new desire in you... The desire to love Him, the way He has always loved you: absolutely... and in perfect freedom.

Clip #3 from *The Princess Bride*

[The scene opens on a dark night with horse riding out a hall. Peter Falk, the grandfather is reading to his grandson.]

Grandfather: *They rode to freedom. And as dawn arose* [An image of pink clouds above a mountainous valley.]

Grandfather: *Westley and Buttercup knew they were safe. A wave of love swept over them.* [The scene changes to show Westley reaching for the Princess Buttercup to kiss.]

Grandfather: *And as they reached out to each other. . .* [The scene changes abruptly, just as they are about to kiss. The grandfather pauses.]

Grandson: *What? . . . What?*

Grandfather: *Nah, it's kissing again. You don't want to hear that.* (He waves dismissively.)

Grandson: *Well, I don't mind so much.*

Grandfather: *Okay. Since the invention of the kiss, there have been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure. This one left them all behind.*

[The scene changes to Westley and Buttercup kissing, and then back to the grandfather in his grandson's room.]

Grandfather: *The End.* (He closes the book and they smile at each other. He then raises his pointer finger) *Now, I think you ought to go to sleep.*

Grandson: *Okay.* (The grandson lies down and the grandfather stands to leave, picking up his hat and putting it on.)

Grandfather: *Okay.* (He starts putting on his coat) *Okay. Okay.* (He takes off his reading glasses and starts patting his pockets.) *Alright.* (He looks around, waves and turns to the door.) *Shalom.*

Grandson: *Grandpa?*

[The grandfather turns to look at his grandson.]

Grandson: *Maybe you could come over and read it again to me tomorrow.* [The grandfather's eyes smile]

Grandfather: *As you wish!*

Whenever I get to the end of a sermon, I'm always tempted to give us a list of things to do... things that a beloved Bride would do. But you see that's like giving advice to a harlot on how to become a better harlot. God doesn't want you to *act* like a Bride. He wants you to *be* His Bride. So... I'll just tell you the story; I'll just preach the Gospel.

Communion

He took bread and broke it saying, "*Take and eat, This is my body given to you.*"

He took the cup saying, *“This cup is my covenant, in my blood. Drink of it all of you.”* And so . . . may you come to the table, and then if you’d like to, feel free to worship. “As you wish.”

Benediction

Martin Luther famously said, “Love God and do as you please.”

That’s called worship, and that’s what God desires—free love. And so, whatever you do can be worship! All is to be worship, but the moment I say that something may lie to you; something may raise a question in your mind: “Well . . . how do you know? Maybe you’re a beast or a harlot.” And you see you kind of are. So, we worry and think maybe that was harlotry and not love or that was beastly and not really human of me—not like you. You might begin to judge yourself. Don’t judge yourself. You can’t separate yourself between the old man and the New Man.

If that fills you with fear, don’t fear because the next thing that happens in the Revelation is absolutely astounding. It used to be the scariest part for me in the whole book and now I think, maybe it’s the best. We’ll continue this series in a few weeks. But the next thing that happens is the King rides in on a white horse, and He’s called the Word. And the Word judges and separates; He redeems and does *what we cannot* do.

Love God, and do as you please.
In Jesus’ name, Amen.

ⁱ She was “forgiven much,” which means:

#1: She knew she sinned and had felt the pain of that sin... that’s like one dose of vengeance. And

#2: In that place of sin, she experienced the wonder of God’s grace... that’s God’s vengeance upon our sin.

“Where sin increased Grace abounded all the more”—that’s the double vengeance, we spoke of last time.

She was forgiven much and now she loved much.

She loved with all her heart, mind, soul, and strength.

ⁱⁱ I didn’t count this in my list of 2nd person aorist imperatives because it’s a Hebrew interjection, but it just amplifies my point: Suddenly, God is telling us just what He wants... and He’s doing so in Greek and in Hebrew.

ⁱⁱⁱ As we’ve preached on numerous occasions, they look at “the corpses of the me who have rebelled against me (the Lord).” Isaiah has just spent 66 chapters revealing that all men have rebelled against the Lord and all their deeds are as filthy rags, and furthermore the Messiah has numbered Himself with the “transgressors,” (the rebels—same word). He has taken our sin and given us His righteousness.

^{iv} Well no matter what you think of that, if you’re here in worship or simply reading this manuscript because you seek the Lord with just a mustard seed of faith, you’ve been invited.

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him,” said Jesus. (John 6:44)

^v There is no giving or taking in marriage in Heaven, not because no one is married, but because all are married to Christ and one Body in Him.

vi

The harlot has knowledge of love and so tries to act loving in order to make a living.
The Bride is known by Love and so gives birth to life, which is more love.

The harlot is of this temporal world and is passing away.
The Bride descends from Heaven and is eternal.

^{vii} The kisses of the Bride are free, unless of course she doesn't trust the covenant... but if she believes the promise, all the kisses are free and she is free.

^{viii} "The classical Platonic-Aristotelian-Christian understanding of freedom is one in which the rational will of necessity, when set free from ignorance, wills the good end of its own nature; and perfect freedom is the power to achieve that end without hindrance. Thus God is perfectly free precisely because he cannot work evil, which is to say nothing can prevent him from realizing his nature as the infinite Good. Similarly, for Gregory of Nyssa or Gregory of Nazianzus, perfect freedom is liberation from the fetters of ignorance that constrain the rational will from seeing the Good as what it is.

For Augustine, the highest freedom is the perfection of human nature in a condition of *non posse peccare*. For Maximus, the natural will is free because it tends inexorably towards God, and the gnostic will is free precisely to the degree that it comes into harmony with the natural will. And so on. Since, after all, all employments of the will are teleological—necessarily intentionally directed towards an end, either clearly or obscurely known by the intellect—and since the Good is the final cause of all movements of the will, no choice of evil can be free in a meaningful sense. For evil is not an end, and so can be chosen under the delusion that it is in some sense a good in respect of the soul (even if, in moral terms, one is aware that one is choosing what is conventionally regarded as 'evil'); and no choice made in ignorance can be a free choice.

In simple terms, if a deranged man chooses to slash himself with a knife or set fire to himself, you would not be interfering with his 'freedom' by preventing him from doing so. You would be rescuing him from his slavery to madness. This is why the free-will defense of the idea of an eternal hell is essentially gibberish."

--David Bentley Hart

^{ix} It's in the wilderness and the trouble that we are forced to surrender control. It's there that we stop depending on ourselves and look for our Helper.

35

The Violence of Grace

The Violence of Grace

Revelation 19:11-21

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

October 14, 2018

Peter Hiatt

Prayer

God, I have mortal flesh and I confess that my mortal flesh would like to preach, but I pray that you would silence it and something immortal would preach. Lord God, I ask that through the power of your Spirit, you would give all of us the courage to listen. In this moment Lord God, we surrender our flesh to you and call on you to do something divine. In Jesus’ name, we pray, Amen.

Message

This is it; today we read Revelation 19... what most folks refer to as the second coming of Jesus Christ.

It’s the topic of this book: *The Glorious Appearing*. *The Glorious Appearing* is the twelfth book in the “Left Behind” series, which sold 80 million copies in all. *The Glorious Appearing* was on the New York Times best-seller list for twenty-two weeks.

Let me read a bit:

p. 103 “... all twenty-one judgments that have come from heaven in three sets of seven, (That’s the Revelation so far) have been God’s desperate attempt to get man’s attention.”

p. 132 “This is sure different from the last time Jesus came,” Naomi said.

p. 178 “God knew that eventually, sinners would grow weary of their own poverty, but his patience had a limit. There came a time when enough was enough.”

p. 203

Heaven opened and there, on a white horse, sat Jesus the Christ, son of the Living God... The armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed him on white horses.

An angel... cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

p. 208

As Rayford slowly made his way down to the desert plains, though he had to concentrate on missing craters and keeping from hitting splayed and filleted bodies of men and women and horses, Jesus still appeared before his eyes—shining, magnificent, powerful, victorious.

And that sword from His mouth, the powerful Word of God itself, continued to slice through the air, reaping the wrath of God's final judgment. The enemy had been given chance after chance, judgment after judgment to convince and persuade them. To this very minute, God had offered forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption, salvation. But except for that now-tiny remnant of Israel that was seeing for the first time the One they had pierced, it was too late.

p. 218 "That's Jesus. And He's here now. That rod of iron sounds like He's going to take no baloney from anybody, doesn't it? I heard that."

p. 226 "Tens of thousands... grabbed their heads or their chests, fell to their knees, and writhed as they were invisibly sliced asunder. Their innards and entrails gushed to the desert floor, and as those around them turned to run, they too were slain, their blood pooling and rising in the unforgiving brightness of the glory of Christ."

p. 285 "The conviction that shone in the eyes of Jesus was of one who had finally had enough."

So, according to this book, and most American Christians, it would seem, Scripture is mistaken... AND:

- The steadfast love of the Lord does *NOT* endure forever, but, in fact, ceases.
- And His Mercies *DO* come to an end...
- Because "He does *NOT* actually accomplish all things according to the council of His will..."
- But at some point, He'll just get desperate, snap, and go postal on all humanity. . . . And that's actually His Glory: "un-forgiveness." As Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins put it: "...*blood pooling and rising in the unforgiving brightness of the glory of Christ.*"

Now, obviously, some folks really like that picture of a Jesus that stops taking baloney from the damn hippies and such. They love the fact that Jesus finally gets violent... on some folks—other folks, that is.

On the other hand, some people are utterly horrified that Jesus would be described as violent . . . at all . . . or even allow for violence in His creation.

Last week, I watched a YouTube video in which my old friend Lisa described how she and her husband visited Auschwitz, and how he had lost his faith and hers was badly shaken. The video has almost 1.5 million views.

Michael and Lisa used to attend our old church on Lookout Mountain. And, the church they started, used to meet at the Sanctuary on Sunday nights. Michael and Lisa became two of the most popular Christian artists in America. They wrote much of the music we sing on Sunday mornings, including a song that repeats "God is love" over and over and over again.

I preach, “God is Love” for, John, wrote, “God is Love.” Some folks think that means He wouldn’t allow for violence—not like Auschwitz. So, when they see violence they think: “God’s not in control or He doesn’t exist.” They think Love would not allow for violence and, certainly, never be violent.

That’s why many in our particular community of belief now argue that God never actually instructed anyone to sacrifice... ’cause it’s violent. Clearly, according to Scripture, God does not need the blood of sheep and goats, and yet you’ve got to do incredible violence to the Bible to suggest that He never called for sacrifice, in the tabernacle, the temple . . . or even on a cross.

The high point of New Testament theology is when Paul writes to the Romans saying, “*Therefore present your bodies as living sacrifices, for this is your spiritual—logikos, logical—worship.*” Living sacrifice . . . It’s not like Jesus ended sacrifice; it’s more like He was the one that, finally, got it going—Jesus, Yeshua, is the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 “*The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (machaira, in Greek. It refers to the large knife that the high priest would use in the temple when butchering the sacrifices)... sharper than any two-edged sword piercing to the division of soul and spirit, joint and marrow... (See: the Word not only cuts flesh from bone; it cuts soul from spirit—that is, psyche from pneuma) ...soul and spirit, joint and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

That’s called Judgment - *krisis* is the noun, *krino* is the verb - It means to separate or cut. That’s what the WORD does.

John 1:1, “*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God,*”

So, God seems to be rather violent.

To be violent is to violate something.

Why is God so violent? Who, or what does God violate? And how does He do it?

Let’s start reading in Revelation 19, where we left off last time at verse 10:

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy¹... Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in (also “by” or “with”) righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire (just as John saw at the start of this vision, 1:4), and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white

¹ The testimony of Jesus: That could refer to the testimony that Jesus speaks or the testimony that is itself, Jesus, . . . or both.

horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations (not “some nations,” not “part of each nation,” just “the nations.”) and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He [will] tread the winepress...

That’s how the ESV translates this: “Will tread”
But the Greek is “He *does* tread.”
It’s a simple second person present indicative verb.
The translator just changes it trying to make sense of things.²

Scripture reads: He *does* tread the winepress.

- That means this isn’t simply a description of something that happened in the past.
- And it’s not a threat about something that might happen in the future.
- It’s an explanation of something that is happening *right now*. He does tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God NOW.

A few weeks ago, we saw that this winepress produces wine that is blood and blood that is wine . . . and must surely be the cross.

Early Church Fathers argued that the blood on His robe is His own.
But still . . . His blood is our blood, right? And our blood is His?
“The life is in the blood.” And He is “the Life.”
His Spirit, His breath, is the oxygen in the blood . . . all blood.

Well, He was crucified “once and for all,” all people in all space and time.
He does tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God . . .
Right now . . . where eternity touches time.

From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He does tread the winepress of the fury [thumos: passion] of the wrath [orge: anger] of God the Almighty [pantokrator in Greek, the all powerful].

That means that He “accomplishes all things according to the council of His Will.”
His Will is entirely free... And His Will is His Word.

On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.
—Revelation 19:10-16

Deut. 10:17 That’s a title for *Yahweh*— the Lord God.

He seems to be violent, but it’s a strange kind of violence.

This is judgment, but it’s a strange kind of Judgment.

It’s strange like Judgment is strange in the Gospel of John

John 3:19 “*This is the Judgment (the one judgment) the light has come into the world.*”

John 5: 22 “*The Father judges no one,*” says Jesus, “*But has given all judgment to the*

² (But we don’t Judge the Word; The Word judges us.)

son.”

John 8: 15 “You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, My judgment is true.”

He’s like the Judge who is the judgment of not judging . . . You know? The fact that God forgives is like an unforgiving judgment on all our unforgiveness—as if refusing to forgive is the unforgivable sin.

John 12:31 “Now is the judgment of this world; now is the ruler of this world cast out.”

Do you suppose Judgment is now? Even, as I’m speaking this Word?

John 12:47

“I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world (not some of the world, just the world). The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.”

The Word He speaks is called reality . . . eternal reality ³.

Well, I’m just saying the violence is strange . . . or in biblical parlance . . . Holy.

But make no mistake: It is violent.

So, who or what does Holy violence violate?

Revelation 19:17-21

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.” And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war.

(Remember that this is what happens at the end of the sixth bowl, which is like the end of the sixth day, which is the Friday on which humanity nailed the Word of God to a tree in a garden.)

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur (Theion: It’s also translated “Divine Being” in places like Acts 17:29. Theion comes from Theos, meaning God) And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

³ And according to Scripture (Hebrews 10:26), the sacrifice of Christ was the end of the ages (the aions), which must be the beginning of God’s Age (the aionios—that is life eternal).

Now, this is nothing new in Scripture . . . the prophets said this would happen:
In Zephaniah Kings and princes are invited to a sacrificial feast and it turns out that they are on the menu . . . ⁴

In Ezekiel 39, God calls to the birds of the air to come to His sacrificial feast and eat the flesh of kings . . . and all nations.

It's like men have eaten the birds and now God turns the tables.

It reminds me of my favorite cartoon. [Cartoon is shown, see the description below.]

Colonel Sanders arrives at the pearly gates and finds a giant chicken: "Uh oh..."

Anthropologists speculate that this is the reason we find the practice of sacrifice in every ancient culture, down through the ages. There's something inside of us that tells us "life is sacred." And when we take life and eat life a deity must be thanked for that life.

Something tells us that if we take life, we should, in some way, give life back—"the life is in the blood." The temple, when you study it, was like a giant barbecue. You know? Most of the sacrifices were eaten and it was like a great banquet.

In America, we constantly take life, drain the blood and eat the flesh, and thank no one! We think we're so advanced. So, I wonder what we'll find at the pearly gates—what have we sacrificed?

In case you're a vegetarian and think you're off the hook—grain and grapes are also life, bread and wine is life, and both are considered sacrifice in Scripture. Jesus said, "I am the Life."

We constantly feed our flesh with Life . . . and Jesus is the Life.

You know they ate much of the sacrifices in the temple; it was a great banquet. The temple was all about blood. It was almost like a heart in the middle of Israel circulating blood, which is life. It was a stone heart . . . and maybe one day it would be made a heart of flesh.

Well, we were asking this question: Who or what does Holy violence violate?

Then the angel in the sun invites the birds of the air to eat the flesh of "all men."

That's all people . . . not some, all. That's violence on all—including the tribulation saints and the ones that were *supposedly* raptured before the tribulation. They even quote the text in the "Left Behind" books. But it's like it just doesn't register . . . not with them and not with us!

I mean you do know that one of two things will happen to your flesh, right?

1) It will be eaten by something: birds, worms or bacteria... OR

⁴ Indeed (v.3) it appears that all of humanity is.

2) It will be burned with fire ⁵.

Revelation 19: 17-18 “...Come, gather for the great supper of God to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”

God is like thoroughly violent toward our flesh...
What does God have against our flesh . . . human flesh?

I've been asking this question ever since college when I was horny and I memorized Romans chapter 8... “*The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.*” I think the mind, or disposition, governed by the flesh could be called the *psyche*.

So, what's God's problem with the flesh?

People used to argue it was sex, but God's first command is to have sex—that's physical communion within the covenant of marriage bearing fruit that's life. Now, there's a wrong way to have sex, but how could enjoying God's first commandment be disobeying that same commandment?

Some say the flesh is hunger for food and a desire for riches like gold . . .
But the streets of the New Jerusalem are paved with gold.
And heaven itself is a great banquet.

I've read and thought about this long and hard, and I think I know.
You know what's wrong with your flesh? ***It's alone.***

“Alone,” is the very first thing ever declared to be “not good” in all of Scripture.
And it was “not good,” before the fall. God breathed His *pneuma*, His Spirit, into dust and Adam became a living *psyche*, a soul . . . then, God looked at the Adam, and said, “*It is not good for the Adam to be alone.*”

Think about that:

Adam was alone, which is “not good,” which is evil, BUT Adam didn't know evil, and he didn't know the Good—who is God.

Adam is alone... and yet so very not alone.

Adam is alone in the presence of God, who is the Good, who is Love.

⁵ “The day you eat of it you will surely die,” said Yahweh.

All human flesh dies and God is hostile to the mind set on the flesh.

I think that's what Scripture refers to as the *psyche* or “the soul.”

Romans 2:9. This is a literal translation: “There will be tribulation and wrath on every *psyche* of man—those doing evil.” Jesus said, “You must lose your *psyche*... to find it.”

Adam is alone, but he doesn't know Love, or "not Love;" that is, "good or evil."

Adam is alone, so God says, "I will make a helper fit for Adam..."

And that's not Eve—Eve is simply a side of Adam: she is he, and he is she . . . and both need a Helper—male and female teaches us about the Helper, but neither is the helper for humanity.

Over and over Scripture declares, "*God alone is our helper.*"

The problem with our flesh is that it's alone. And this is what I mean:

- Pinch yourself... really hard... Do it! Did it hurt?... If not do it harder, until it hurts... Did it hurt? YES
- Now turn to your neighbor and pinch them just as hard... Did it hurt? NO... I mean their pinch hurt you, but your pinch didn't hurt you. Did your pinch of them hurt you? No.

Understand? Your flesh only feels its own pain and its own pleasure.

Your flesh is alone . . .

And yet there are some exceptions:

There is a moment in the sacrament of the covenant of my marriage when my bride's pleasure is actually my own pleasure. Scripture claims that, at that moment, two become one flesh.

Another instance is when I was a kid; I couldn't wait for presents on Christmas morning . . . As a new dad, I couldn't wait for presents on Christmas morning, but not because I was getting them, but because I was giving them. I mean, I actually felt my kid's joy... as if, they were my flesh.

And we say that about kids—"that's my flesh and blood."

And because I had four kids, I think I enjoyed Christmas four times as much as a dad, then I did as a kid. I actually enjoyed giving more than receiving! It wasn't a law; it was just a reality!

Imagine if you considered every person in this world to be your kid—I mean your own flesh and blood...

- We're utterly terrified to do that, aren't we?
- We're terrified because we couldn't endure the pain.

But imagine if you could endure the pain, or didn't feel the pain, but felt the pleasure—it would be the pleasure of 7.4 billion people combined.

You know, in a single body, all pain comes from places wherein that body is broken or separated... But pleasure is what the body feels when all parts live in perfect communion. If we were all one healthy body, the pleasure would be unspeakable.

So what's wrong with human flesh?

1. It's alone and can barely even imagine not being alone or ever wanting to be anything other than alone.
2. Firstly, it's alone and secondly, it grows. Now, brace yourself, it grows by taking life and excreting death; It grows by eating food and pooping.

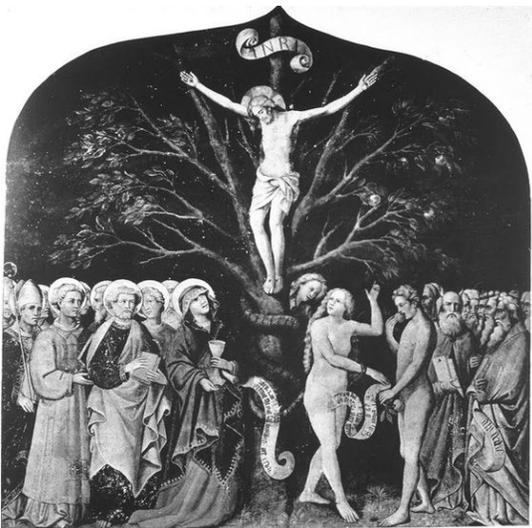
You're embarrassed, but don't be; we all poop.

NOW PAY ATTENTION!

The flesh grows by taking life, and Jesus is "the Life." It appears you have a deity to thank.

And the psyche grows by taking knowledge of the Good, and using it to judge itself and its neighbor; it grows by competing; it grows by telling itself that it has made itself righteous. It is self-righteous; it is your ego. In biblical lingo, it takes the law and justifies itself in the power of the flesh. And it is horrifically alone. "It's not good that the Adam [*ha adam*] is alone."

But this was not a surprise to God, and He is still making the Adam in His image. In the middle of the Garden, God had planted a tree...



It's how we learn to love. And He's still making *ha adam* in His image.

The tree was either one tree or two trees in one spot—that looked just the same. On the tree was the Good in flesh, and the Good is the Life—who is Jesus.

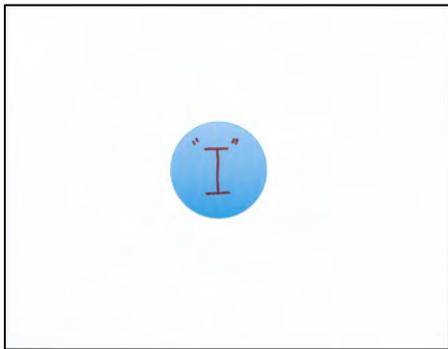
Eve and that first Adam saw that the tree "was good for food," and so they take the life, eat the life, and produce death . . . like a beast.

And they saw that it was “desired to make one wise,” so they took the knowledge of Good, and, like a whore, used the Good to make a life . . .

Adam and Eve are each one of us . . .

But you see? There is something that you’re beginning to know that you didn’t know the day you were born into this fallen world: you are beginning to know that it’s not good to be alone; you are beginning to long for Love—who is your Helper and who rides a white horse.

Well anyway, it’s not Good that *ha adam* is alone... It’s evil.
And to help us understand the evil and the Good... I’ve been producing these beautiful and sophisticated graphics as we’ve preached through the Revelation. Maybe they’ll help now:



In the beginning, God breathed His spirit into dust creating my soul . . .

Remember the blue dots we’ve been talking about?

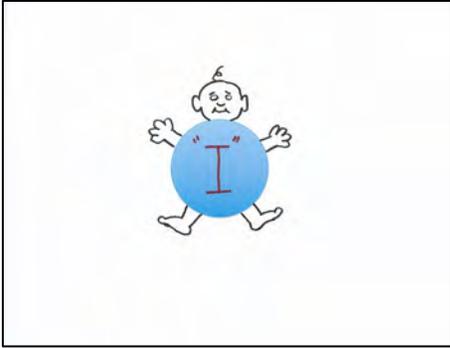
I think, my spirit must be the thing that says “I,” and is the breath of I Am.

“I” is so hard to talk about, for the moment I think about “I” it has become “me.”

“I” is the thing that observes “me” and, so, can’t be the “me” that is observed.

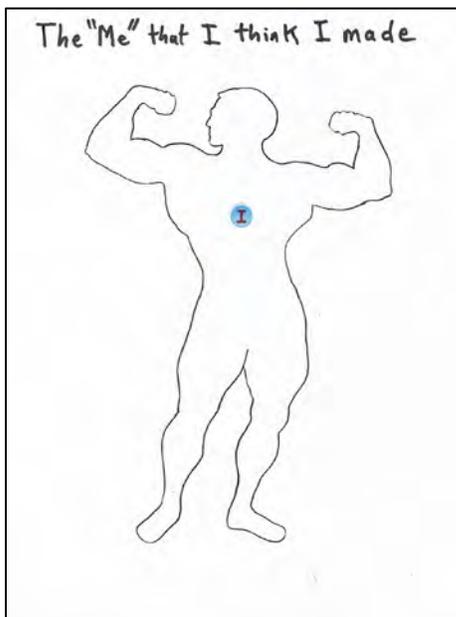
“I” am now, but “me” is a thing I imagine in space and time (It exists in the past and future, but not now. Even now is difficult to talk about because when you say now, now is already in the past.).

I think “I” can be described as consciousness... and “me” is my soul—a blue dot.
If I were better at graphics, I’d try to make each of these dots look like a baby.



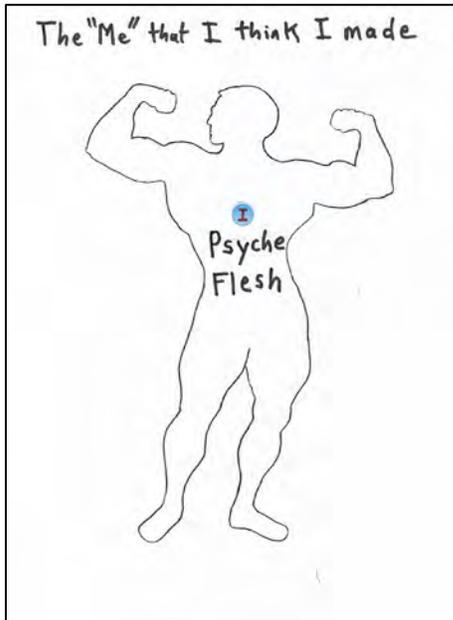
Well, in the beginning, I didn't know I was alone and that it wasn't good to be alone. But soon I took knowledge of the Good, realized I wasn't Good and tried to make myself Good so that I would never be alone so that everyone would like me . . . I tried to make *myself* Good, which resulted in only being more alone . . .

In other words, I tried to make myself in the image of God.
In other words, I tried to justify myself in the power of the flesh.
In other words, I tried to make myself righteous, and made myself unrighteous.
In other words, I grew an ego, which I thought was "me."

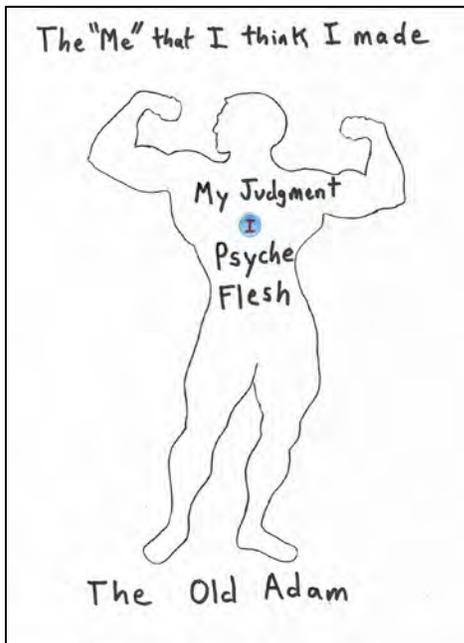


So, when people said, "Who are you Peter?" I would answer by describing what I had done—my deeds; I thought, "*I am my resume.*"

Jesus calls this "me" the human "psyche;"

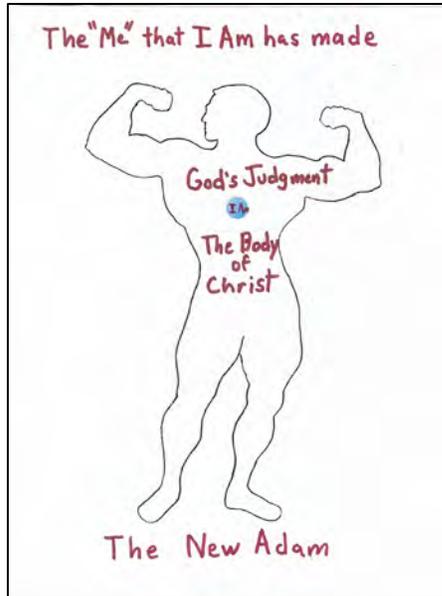


John and Paul refer to it as the flesh—or this body of death...
When Paul describes his flesh, he describes all of his religious accomplishments, and then says that they're worth *scubula*, which is Greek for "shit." Self-righteousness is shit according to Paul.



This is the sum total of the judgments that I—I alone—have made in space and time.
This is the Old Adam...

BUT CHECK THIS OUT:



This the New (or Eschatos) Adam

This is the sum of the judgments that I AM has made in space and time.

I don't know if I said that correctly...but

This Body is the manifestation of the Judgment of God.

This is the Body of Christ and the psyche of God.

This is a profound mystery, but Jesus the Christ did have human flesh,
but now He has a different kind of flesh... (1 Cor. 15).

He had a *perishable* body, but now he has an *imperishable* body...

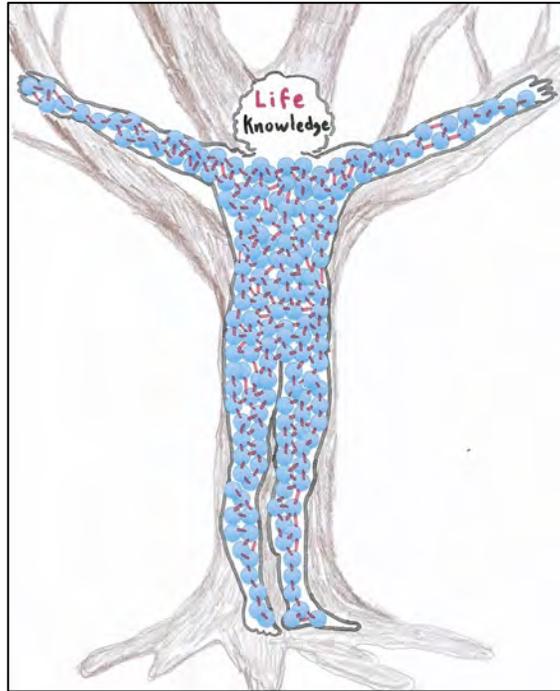
And He's in the process of giving that body to you...

But, you must lose your psyche in order to find it...

You see? Jesus doesn't think like you or me.

He doesn't feel only His own pain or experience only His own pleasure.

He weeps with those who weep and laughs with those who laugh . . . as if each of us—
all of humanity—was His own body.



This is the judgment of God. This is the Good and this is the Life.

His Judgment is to freely bleed for us.

[Image of Jesus bleeding and crucified on the cross]

His Judgment is to sacrifice Himself for each and for all.

His Judgment is absolute, relentless, and furious grace...

On His last day, enthroned on the tree, He cried,

“Father forgive them” and “It is finished.”

This is the judgment of God... and it violates my Judgment, my psyche, my flesh...

- It violates the illusion that I am my own creator and savior.
- It violates the anti-Christ, the imitation Christ that I think is “me.”
- It violates the abomination that justifies itself before men... that which is exalted among men... the lie that takes its place on the throne in the temple of my soul.
- It violates the beast that consumes life, that strives to be first by consuming the last... (Look! the first has made Himself last).
- It violates the whore that attempts to buy and sell Love... (Look! love is free).

When I see that with my every choice to exalt myself I crucify God’s self—and He let’s me (He forgives me)—it obliterates my ego.

In other words:

- It violates the hell, which I have created for myself, and in which I am imprisoned.

You see? My flesh is why I am alone.
My psyche is the fig leaves with which I've clothed myself and where I hide.
My ego is why I compete, thinking that I must take life to make a life... and Jesus is the Life. He didn't crucify me; I crucified Him.
My flesh, my psyche, and my ego are why I am so violent.

We Americans cloak our violence with civility, don't we? But one could argue that we rich, competitive, and independent Americans are the most violent lot in the world.

Adolph Eichmann was violent. He was a principal architect of the Holocaust, and the genocide at Auschwitz. In 1962, having been captured in Brazil, he was tried in Nuremberg Germany.

A little old Jewish man, who had survived Auschwitz, was called to testify. When Yehiel Dinur entered the courtroom he stopped as his eyes met those of Adolph Eichmann. He began to tremble and then shout and sob as he collapsed on the courtroom floor.

When it was over, Mike Wallace interviewed him and asked him what had happened; was he terrified at the site of this inhuman monster? Dinur responded, "I was terrified about . . . my self . . . I saw that I am capable to do this... exactly like he."
"My self . . ."

Do you realize that your self is your own worst enemy? It's what God was revealing to His chosen people, the Jews, all along. He caused them to recognize evil in their enemies and, then, revealed their greatest enemy was the self. Wouldn't it be nice to get rid of your self?

Do you realize that every moment of true joy that you have ever experienced was a moment in which in which you lost your self; you stopped thinking about your self, then, later you found yourself and thought, "Wow, I was happy."

Well, Good News: Your flesh will be eaten by worms or burned with fire...
But wouldn't it be nice to have it removed before that happened?
Jesus said, "*If your right hand causes you to sin, better to cut it off, then to be thrown into the fire with it.*"

The problem is, that it's not just your hand that causes you to sin; it's your flesh that causes you to sin; it's your very psyche. You actually need a self-ectomy—a full body transplant.

You know, I think that's why we get old and shrivel up . . .

It's so we'd get sick of our flesh and surrender it to God before He takes it away. And He will take it away . . . that can be a terrible experience . . . like being slaughtered . . . or a good experience . . . like a surgery to remove cancer.

But that God cuts the flesh away isn't bad; it's Good... It's His Judgment.

Jesus doesn't save us from the Judgment of God.

Jesus *is* the Judgment of God that saves us from ourselves...

The Judgment of God is the Word of God.

It's the Flaming Sword at the entrance to the Garden of Eden.

It's the Knife in the hand of the High Priest.

It's the thing that cuts to the division of *psuche* and *pneuma*.

The Judgment of God is the Word of Relentless Love—it's Grace.

God violates our violence with Grace.

Now, you may say, "**Come On!**" "We're talking about cutting the flesh from the bones of all men, how could a Word ever be described as that violent?" Because, I think, it is . . .

I've been preaching for almost forty years. I've preached about abortion, divorce, adultery, money, politics, and every hot topic you could think of, but nothing has ever come close to inspiring as much hatred as preaching "God is Salvation." And nothing, not even the illusion that *you* are salvation is stronger than God and His Judgment of Grace!

"God is Salvation" is a word, *Yahweh*, *Yasha*, *Ye-hoshua*, *Yeshua*, Jesus.

Well, I preached Jesus Wins . . . and I have never in my life witnessed so many people so angry and so thoroughly offended.

The week that I was tried and defrocked, Philip Yancey took me to dinner.

He wrote one of my favorite books, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*

At one point he said, "You know Peter, I don't think I disagree with anything you've said. I think God is capable of all these things... But do you understand that what you're preaching cuts into something almost primal in people?" I think he used the word "*visceral*." Something "primal and visceral."

I felt so broken, I don't think I answered out loud, but I answered in my heart:

"Yes . . . Yes I do know . . . I think that thing is called the flesh."

You see: the news that "*God is Salvation*," means that "*you are NOT salvation*" at all.

- It means that no flesh will boast in the presence of God.

- It means that your ego is destroyed, your resume has been burned, and you are no better than anyone else . . . even Hitler.

- It's the Word that delivers you up to crucifixion.

And check this out:

It doesn't end sacrifice; it's the Judgment that gets it going.
Love is not the opposite of sacrifice; sacrifice is the very definition of Love.

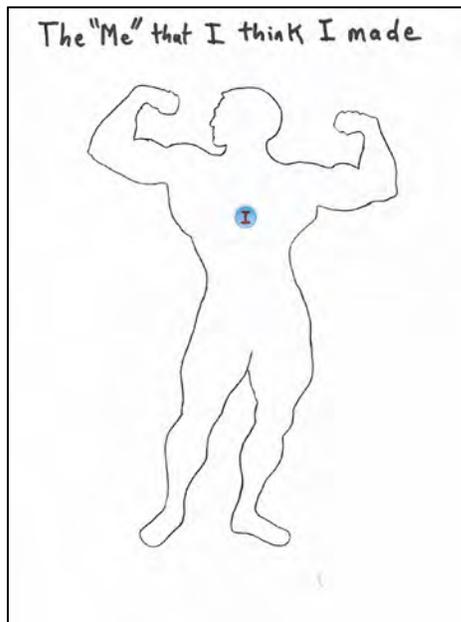
"In this is Love," wrote John *"not that we loved God, but he loved us and sent his son [who is Himself, God's psyche]— to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."*
God didn't love so you wouldn't have to love, but so that you would *get* to love.
And God didn't sacrifice so you wouldn't sacrifice, but so that you would *want* to sacrifice... so that you would choose to love in perfect freedom.

1. When one person sacrifices it looks like a naked man nailed to a tree.
2. When two people sacrifice it looks like a happy marriage or a honeymoon.
3. When everyone sacrifices it looks like a party, or a Body, where each member bleeds into the next member, and there is no pain for all are joined as one and each member feels the pleasure of all.

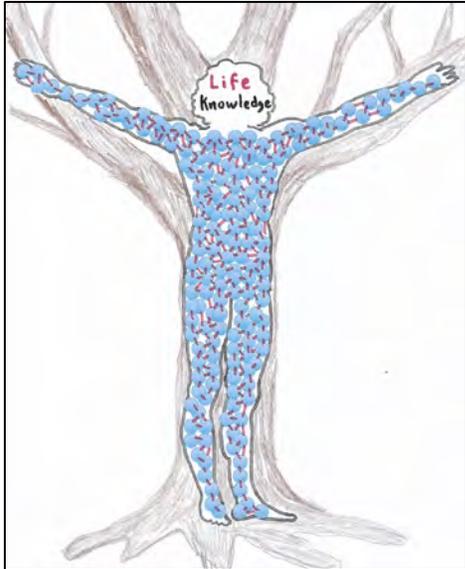
When everyone sacrifices it looks like the New Jerusalem coming down.

In Ephesians, Paul writes, *"There is one Body and one Spirit... Put off your old self, [your old man]... and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and... put on your new self, [new man, new adam] created in the image of God."*

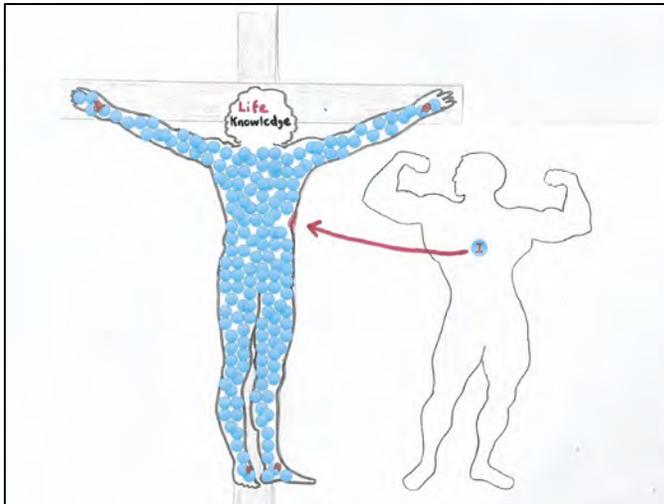
What's your old self? Well, that's the "Me" that you thought you had created.



And what's your new self? Well, that's Jesus:



And how do you put Him on? Something like this:



This is how you become very, very “not alone,” and that’s Good, that’s Life.

At the cross, Jesus destroys your natural body—your flesh.
And He gives you a spiritual body—His flesh.

“As in Adam all die, so in Christ will all be made alive.” (Romans 5, 1 Cor. 15)
We die with Him and rise with Him, just as He dies with us and rises with us.

He said, “The judgment you pronounce is the judgment you receive.”
He pronounced, “The day you eat of it, you will die,” and He did—with us.
He pronounced, “Let us make man in our image.”
And He is . . . rising in us, as us—the new us.
We are His Body AND He is our head.
We are His Bride AND He is our Helper.

About fourteen years ago, I spoke at a conference in the Czech Republic.
I spoke on the Revelation and on the last day I visited Auschwitz . . . alone.
I walked through the ashes in the field, saw the gas chambers and the ovens...



At one point, I went into the barracks and crawled up into one of these bunks and just laid there, and I had this overwhelming impression:
“He was here... The King of the Jews was here.”

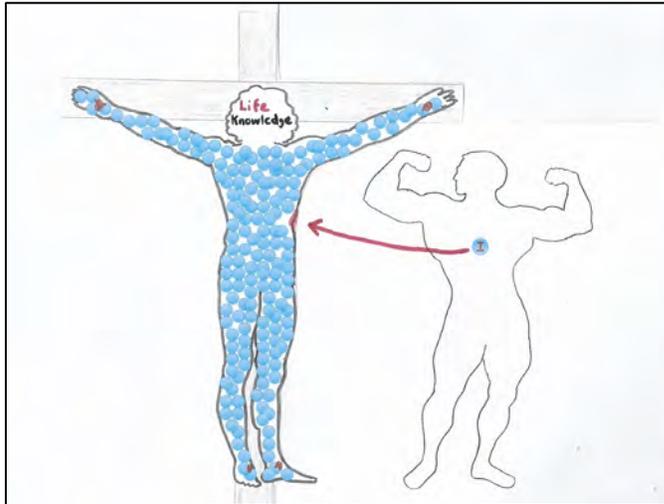
In prayer for a friend, I had recently seen Him in places even more God forsaken than that! And now I knew it was just like Ezekiel prophesied: The birds would eat the flesh, cut from the bones of all... but the son of Man would prophesy to the bones, and the dry bones would live, and new flesh would appear on them all, and God would bring them all—the whole house of Israel (that even includes Judas!)—into the land (Ezekiel 37:11).

Judgment begins with the house of God (1 Peter 4:17) and it ends when we are all His House.

The King of Kings and Lord of Lords cuts the flesh from all men . . .
And in one and a half chapters (Rev. 21:5) a voice will come from the throne . . .

Saying, *“Look, I make all things new.”*

And then begins the party that has no end for it is the End.
It’s the resurrected Body, Bride, and Temple of our Lord.
It’s us made in the image of God... and God is insanely happy.



Now, I realize you may have many questions. We’ll preach on this more next week and in the weeks to come, but if you feel utterly lost . . . maybe this will help you understand the Revelation of Jesus.

One day about twenty-one years ago when my daughter Elizabeth was about eight, the two of us were driving down the mountain after church. Elizabeth would be embarrassed about this, but she’s married and lives in Chile now, so she’ll just have to deal with it . . .

Well, as we were driving she said, “Daddy I saw something in church today...”

After you preached, when people came forward for communion, I saw these like ‘cutter things,’ they would swing down and cut off people’s arms and legs and heads and stuff... but as these people hobbled around taking communion, they began to bump into each other and then, like, fuse together... they’d fuse together at the point of the wound... where they’d be cut.”

She said, “Daddy, I wasn’t frightened, ’cause it was really cool because in the end they had all formed one, huge body, and nothing could hurt it.”

And I bet, it was insanely happy.

Communion

On the night Jesus was betrayed—sacrificed, by all of us—He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you; take and eat, and do this in remembrance of me.”

And in the same manner, and having given thanks, 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; do it in remembrance of me."

At the table, we literally re-member His Body... as He re-members us into His Body. So, don't run from the Judgment of God; run *to* the Judgment of God. Let Him re-member you.

He cuts off that which divides us from one another and from God and He stitches us together like the world's greatest surgeon, for that's who He is. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel! Amen.

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly minded,
for with blessing in His hand
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture -
in the body and the blood.
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day,
that the pow'rs of hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away.

At His feet the six-winged seraph,
cherubim, with sleepless eye,
veil their faces to the Presence,
as with ceaseless voice they cry,
"Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, Lord most high!"

Paraphraser: Gerard Moultrie (1864)
Tune: PICARDY
Communion Liturgy

[Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wl4u8lnDQs>]

Benediction

Life hurts doesn't it? In this world we experience physical pain and we experience psychic pain. We have an enemy that will lie to us whenever we experience pain and say, "That's because God hates you!" But you see? It's the exact opposite. It's because God wants you to share in His joy! "*No man ever hates his own flesh,*" wrote Paul, "*but he nourishes and cherishes it as his own body.*" The *Eschatos* Man does not hate His own flesh. You see? There are different kinds of flesh. And maybe this is a shock: you are not your own; you are the Body of Christ. And He loves you more than you can even possibly begin to imagine. So, believe the Gospel, in Jesus' name.

There's another guy (Dale Eben), that had a vision at church about ten years after Elizabeth had her vision. He and Amy were serving communion and He said, "Peter you preached this sermon on dreams and how our dreams can kill reality but if we give up our dreams, and God replaces them with His dreams, they become something amazing. I asked God what His dream was and just before Amy and I got up to serve communion He showed me a picture of everyone in the church coming through the communion lines and once they had taken the bread, dipped it in the cup, and eaten, they would congregate in groups but in what seemed to be a very structured way. Over time, the groups grew to form a body, but not just any body, Jesus' body. And even more than that, every person was climbing onto the cross and taking their place in the Body and everyone together was the Body of Jesus, on the cross.

That's God's dream! God desires that we connect—that as Christians we just get together. The way we connect can take all sorts of different forms, but it's not getting together as the world gets together. In other words, you're not getting together to judge each other. Do you remember what Jesus said? He said, "I judge no one." However, the Word He speaks will judge them on the last day.

So, the idea of connecting with other believers is that you would just get together and love each other and speak the Word of Grace. That Word cuts people; it cuts away the ego it cuts away the arrogance and the things that divide us from each other so that we can begin to experience the joy of the great party that is the Kingdom of God. If you're not already in a place where you can connect with other Christians, we encourage you to do so.

Are you looking for connection but you don't live in the Denver area? Keep reading:

**Hi there! This is Kimberly Weynen, Peter's assistant (I type up these manuscripts). If you follow these sermons online and are looking for connection with others who believe that Jesus is Savior of All (that God is reconciling to himself "all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross"), I wanted to suggest that you check out a small community I have started called hopeforallconnection.com (It's geared specifically to those who are seeking friendship and connection but might feel a bit isolated due to their beliefs that God is reconciling ALL).*

At HopeForAllConnection.com you will find a small community of believers who desire to grow in the message that Jesus is reconciling all and foster meaningful friendships with each other. We currently have a map that can help you possibly find others nearby who are looking for connection; we have a Facebook group called Hope For All Connection Group where we gather for weekly prayer and discussion on various posts throughout the week, and a weekend book or Bible discussion. Also, twice per year we help start up small phone fellowship groups. We'd love to meet you!

Also, if you've ever thought of starting your own small group, did you know we have discussion questions available for all the sermons in the Revelation series and will soon have them for all of the Ephesians series as well? You can find them by scrolling to the bottom of each sermon page and clicking on the provided link.

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.

36

The Word Wins

The Word Wins

Revelation 19:10-21

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

October 21, 2018

Peter Hiatt

Message

Do you ever feel like an ass . . . when you try to tell people about Jesus?

I do . . . I was thinking about why that is and I think it's for several reasons:

For one, the Word of God offends people; it cuts into their ego. Charles Wesley wrote, “Nothing is more repugnant to capable, reasonable people than grace.” I didn't use to believe that, but I do now. Frankly, I'm surprised anyone comes to church, especially after a sermon like last week's. Do you remember last week's sermon? I preached *God* is salvation, which *me you* are *not* salvation at all! In other words, you're no better than any else—even Hitler! Jesus is better than Hitler, but you—on your own—are better than no one else.

You see? The Word of God just obliterates the human ego—any ego.

One night, years ago a friend of mine had an encounter with Jesus as we prayed for her deliverance from some horrid memories in her past. At one point, Jesus stood in front of her in the Glory of His Relentless Grace—His relentless love. As she was having this vision I remember saying to her: “Look! You are entirely forgiven. Your sins are absolutely forgiven you!”

I remember! She grabbed me and screamed at me through her tears: “Don't you get it? I don't want Him to forgive me!” Understand? If you're forgiven, you cannot justify yourself; you've been justified.

Pride and shame are two sides of the same idol and that idol is the self. The Word of God is a knife that sacrifices the self, the psyche, the flesh. That's what we talked about last week. The Word cuts away that which separates and is the will that binds all things together, such that none is left alone . . . *“It's not Good that the Adam is alone.”*

So #1, the Word of God offends people and #2 when I speak it, I often feel like a fool. I have to testify to something that I cannot fully comprehend. People want something that they can understand and use to make a life—to make their life work. I can't make the Word of God work for you. And that cuts into my ego!

The Word offends people, makes me feel like a fool, and # 3 sometimes I despair that it makes any difference at all. It seems so broken and weak. Actually, all words seem weak, while “sticks and stones” will “break your bones.”

All words seem weak, particularly in this modern era . . . ever since the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment (or age of reason) refers to the last three hundred years and a view of reality built on a Newtonian understanding of space and time. It's the idea that only matter and energy are real, while words and ideas are more like a mythical byproduct of chemicals in the brain.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Enlightenment led to Christian Liberalism. That's the idea that we couldn't take the Bible too seriously and that, in the words of Rudolph Bultman, it needed to be "de-mythologized."

The claim that God created all things with a word, and a statement like "*Before Abraham was I am,*" must clearly be poetry—"poetry" *not* reality—thought the Liberals.

In the 20th and 21st century, Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reacted by arguing that we need to take the Bible literally. And yet, by "literally" they didn't mean according to the author's literary intent, they meant that they needed to take everything in the context of our modern notions of space and time, and thereby make it reasonable to us.

- So they developed simple theories to explain the work of the cross—the atonement.
- And they developed maps of the end times, which would fit in the boxes on any human calendar.

Ironically, like the liberals, they thought matter is what matters and words are weak.

Even the Pentecostals and Charismatics got in on the action...

Some think that unless someone shakes or a leg grows nothing really happens as if the flesh availeth much and the spirit availeth little.

Jesus said, "*It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life*" (John 6:63).

Well, my background is liberal, fundamentalist, charismatic... and I'm sympathetic to each; *I'm just pointing out* that for all of us modern folks, non-Christian and Christian, words seem weak.

They must've really seemed weak along about 70 AD in Asia Minor when the seven churches received a circular letter from John the beloved disciple exiled on the island of Patmos. By 70 AD, Nero had already burned countless believers in the Coliseum in Rome or offered them as sport for the Gladiators in Rome.

Much like America today, in ancient Rome it wasn't Truth or Love that reigned supreme; it was all about power—life was the survival of the fittest.

Clip from *Spartacus* the movie:

[Spartacus is exhausted and covered in blood from fighting others in order to stay alive. He is granted life because he was able to remain alive by killing others in the arena. At the declaration the crowd that was observing the fights jumps to its feet and begins chanting: "Spartacus" over and over.]

That's a modern, explicit, and very graphic depiction of Spartacus, the Roman slave who became a champion Gladiator and won his life by taking others' lives.

In 73 BC Spartacus lead a rebellion against Rome; he fought power with power and Rome crushed Spartacus and his fellow slaves.

In 70 AD it was the common belief that none could stand against the supernatural beast called Rome... let alone seven little churches in Asia Minor.

[Image of the *Alexamenos Graffito*]

This is actually a little graffiti from Rome... it's called the *Alexamenos Graffito*. It's graffiti as well as, possibly the very oldest depiction of Jesus in the world.

[Clearer image of *the Alexamenos Graffito*]

This is a line drawing of the graffiti, so you can better see the image. It's a picture of a man worshipping another man, crucified on a tree . . . a man with the head of an ass. The graffiti states: "Alexamenos worships [his] God."

To speak the Word in Rome was to look like an ass. And, of course, you remember that when Jesus entered Jerusalem he rode an ass, which was obviously a disappointment for many Jews but it was just as Zechariah had prophesied (Zech. 9:9)

"Behold your king IS (like right now) coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of an ass."

An ass meant humility.

The Jews didn't want a savior on an ass that would save them from themselves.

They wanted a king on a warhorse that would save them from the Rome.

But that's how He came—humble and riding on an ass.

In Revelation 19 He comes again . . . or maybe I should just say:

In Revelation 19 He *comes* . . .

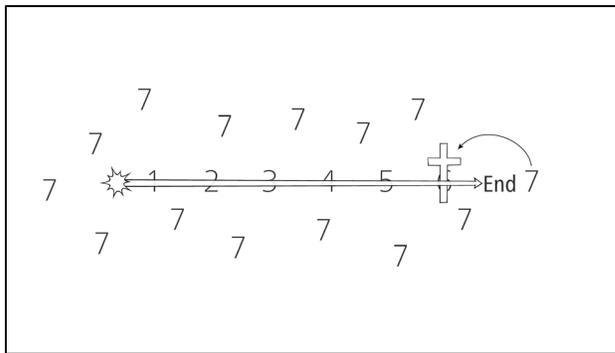
In Acts 1:11 an angel tells the disciples that Jesus will come in the same way that they saw Him go, and yet the Bible never uses the phrase "The Second Coming."

To the High Priest on Good Friday Jesus said, *"I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven"* (Matt. 26:64).

That means that ever since His crucifixion, Jesus has been coming in power . . . but maybe we're not so good at recognizing real power. Jesus is the Lion of Judah, but standing before the High Priest He looks like a slaughtered lamb. So, will Christ come again?

Well, it's clear, that time as we experience it, the ages (*aioms* in Greek), will come to an end. But Scripture is also clear that Jesus is "the end" (Rev. 22:13) and His sacrifice is the "end of the ages" (1 Cor. 10:11, Heb. 9:26) come to us and even revealed in us as Faith.

That's why I keep showing you this funky timeline:



In 2nd Thessalonians (2:8) Paul writes that the man of lawlessness, the imitation Christ, will be destroyed by the breath of Christ's mouth and the *epiphanao* of His *parousia*, that means the epiphany of His presence or the manifestation of His coming—as if He's always coming but we don't always see it. One day it will be manifest .¹

You may remember that this actually happened (the *epiphanao* of His *parousia*) to Saint Paul on the road to Damascus: Jesus appeared to Paul and just His appearing destroyed the imitation Christ, which was the flesh of the old Pharisee named Saul. Just the revelation of "God is salvation," utterly destroyed the illusion that "Paul and his own deeds were salvation." Later Paul would write, "*It's no longer I who live but Christ in me.*"

Technically if we want to be accurate Scripture records a second coming of Christ along about 35 AD on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. And yet, Christ is still coming, and has been coming since Good Friday . . . at least.

So, if we believe Scripture, Christ is coming now.
He is always coming . . . and . . .

We will see Him, but currently, we seem to have a hard time recognizing His presence . . . as if something is blocking our view...

Well, even talking about this kind of stuff is hard; it kinda makes me feel like an ass, like a fool.

Revelation 19:10

The angel says, "*The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.*" "Testimony of Jesus" can mean testifying *to* Jesus—being a witness, OR Jesus testifying through you maybe even with you. Whatever the case, when you testify to Jesus, you prophesy.

And it means that *all* the prophets were testifying to Jesus, and the more I study, the more I see that it's true. Through Isaiah God says, "*I am Yahweh and beside me there is no savior.*" They all testify that we are not salvation, "God is salvation," *Yeshua* . . . And yet each of them feels like an ass: God actually commanded Isaiah to prophesy naked for three years with "*buttocks uncovered*" (Isaiah 20:1-6).

A few years ago a friend told me, "Peter God showed me that this Scripture is for you." I said, "Thanks . . . I guess." I don't have a problem with being naked *of clothes*... but I do have a problem with being stripped *of my ego*; that's another matter.

God tells Ezekiel to eat the scroll, speak the Word, and that people won't listen. God once showed me that he was telling me to do the same.

Jeremiah finds God's Word and eats the words. They become a delight to his heart, and yet he finds himself alone and weeping.

See? They each testified to Salvation and felt like an ass.

Think of Hosea: Hosea is commanded to marry a harlot because God is married to a harlot.

We just witnessed the destruction of the Harlot in the last chapter of the Revelation, and we're about to behold the Bride—the New Jerusalem coming down. But in between the Old and New Jerusalem, we see this rider on a white horse.

Jesus rode an ass into old Jerusalem . . . or at least that's what we saw. Jesus is the Lion, but He looks like a slaughtered lamb . . . that's what we see. Jesus rides a warhorse in Revelation 19, but we're seeing with from the perspective of heaven... on earth maybe all that we see is a donkey.

Revelation 19:10-21

... the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread (literally: "He treads") the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, [not "some," "all"] both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur (Theion: "divine being"). And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

We preached about most of that last week, and this week, I'd just like to point out that the Word wins... That is, the Word conquers.

Remember that the Revelation is sent to seven little churches in Asia Minor, and it's all about conquering, that is winning; our national dialogue seems to be all about winning . . . although we're not sure what that means.

Well, the Word that is Faithful and True wins, and that's weird, 'cause when we speak it (a word that is faithful and true), we often feel like an ass and end up looking like a slaughtered Lamb.

What is “the Word of God?”

The word “Word,” translates the Greek word *Logos*, from which we get our word Logic. The Word is the logic, reason or idea of God.

Physicists now argue that the idea in an observers thoughts may actually be more real than matter and that all matter came from something that we previously thought didn't matter—that which is not matter, that which is “outside” of space and time and “before” the Big Bang. In other words, the age of reason was entirely unreasonable—not only scientifically but also philosophically, for all matter and energy appear to be based on an idea, a *logos*, a word.

The Word is Reason . . .

What is “the Word of God?”

✓ Reality

Indeed it's the very fabric of reality.¹

“In the beginning was the Logos, the Idea, the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God... all things were created through him and without him was not anything made that was made,” writes John.

In Hebrew, they really don't even have a word for word.

Dabar is translated Word, and it means, “thing.”

So all real things are the manifestation of a word—the Word of God.

Nothing could possibly be more powerful than the Word of God.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. We have beheld his glory . . .”

¹ Almost as if reality is the vibration of meaning on superstrings in multiple dimensions; that's actually String Theory.

His name is Jesus, actually *Yeshua*, short for *Yahweh Yasha*, that is: “*God saves*” or “*God is Salvation.*”

What is “the Word of God?”
✓ Reality
✓ Jesus

Jesus is the Word of God in flesh and He constantly quoted Scripture. The Word of God is a character that appears over and over in all of Scripture—in the Old Testament and New Testament. John records Jesus as saying, “*Scripture can’t be broken.*”

What is “the Word of God?”
✓ Reality
✓ Jesus
✓ The One revealed in Scripture

Scripture isn’t an analytical explanation of the Word, as if the Word could be comprehended by us. Scripture is His story (the Word of God) in space and time.

If you said to me, “Peter who is your wife Susan.” I wouldn’t give you a description of her physiology or biology, I’d tell you stories of things she’s done.

God is what He does, and does what He is: God is Salvation, and in flesh: Jesus. And He’s called us to testify of Him, that is, to preach the Word—the Gospel, Good News.

What is “the Word of God?”

- ✓ Reality
- ✓ Jesus
- ✓ The One revealed in Scripture
- ✓ The thing we’re told to “announce”

It’s not a threat, or a bargain, or a deal; it’s an announcement.

It’s an announcement not of what *might be* but what *is*.

It’s the revelation of reality, that is, Jesus, that is, the Judgment of the Creator.

The Judgment of the Creator is a Lion and a Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

To His disciples just before He ascends in Luke 24 He says, “*It’s written that the Christ rose from the dead that is repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations.*” It is to be proclaimed.

Forgiveness is not *earned* but *announced*... BECAUSE it is reality.

Repentance is a change of mind to come in line with reality.

God is Salvation, which means *you are not salvation*—that’s the Judgment: the Word

In 2 Timothy Paul writes, “*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by... (or “with”) his appearing and his kingdom:*

Preach **the** **Word.**”

“Preach” means to announce or tell, and I think he may be calling you to tell.

So, how do we speak the Word?

How Do We Speak the Word of God?

Here are a few thoughts from Revelation 19:

How Do We Speak the Word of God?

✓ We must hear the Word for ourselves.

First, you must hear the Word to speak the Word, and it will cut you.

It's what we spoke of last time:

The Word cuts the flesh from "*all men.*"

And "*Judgment begins with the household of God.*"

When you testify that God is Creator you testify that you did not create you.

When you testify that God is Salvation you testify that you need a Savior.

When you sing, "*Amazing grace how sweet the sound,*" you also sing, "*that saved a wretch like me.*"

When you announce the Word, you'll feel like an ass, and maybe look like one too.

I mean by that, that you'll be stripped of your ego—you'll be un-dragoned.

Remember how Eustace, in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, became so fascinated with a dragon that he became a dragon, and Aslan the lion had to strip him of his dragon flesh?

Aslan had that power because he surrendered his flesh and our flesh as a sacrifice upon the Stone Table.

"The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart," says Eustace. "And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off... it is such fun to see it coming away."

Do you see? The Word of God will strip you of your fig leaves, your psyche, and your ego, until you realize someone else is speaking...

Not the person that you thought you had made...

But the person that God has made—you'll experience that person as Faith, Hope, and Love rising within you.

How Do We Speak the Word of God?

- ✓ We must hear the Word for ourselves.
- ✓ We must believe it for others as we do for ourselves.

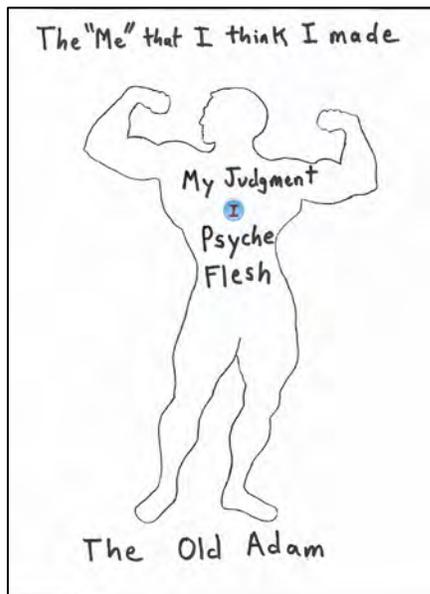
2. You must believe it for others as you do for yourself.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 Paul wrote:

... the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded (literally "judged") this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God...."

Or, I love how the NKJV translates it: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."*

If you allow yourself to be judged by God's Word, God's Word will change the way that you judge others, and that will change the meaning of all your words.



Remember that picture from last week?

Paul writes, “*We view no one according to the flesh.*”

The flesh is the person that we think *we* have made—so we view no one according to their own ego because we know that no one is their ego, their resume.

No one is their shame . . . and no one is their pride.

No one is the sum total of their own judgments.

Some one may bite, devour, and consume the good like a beast, but we know *that* is not who they truly are.

They may manipulate and use our love like a harlot, but we know:

That is not who they truly are.

They may act like an abomination, exalting themselves before men but we know:

That abomination is only a shadow of their true self.

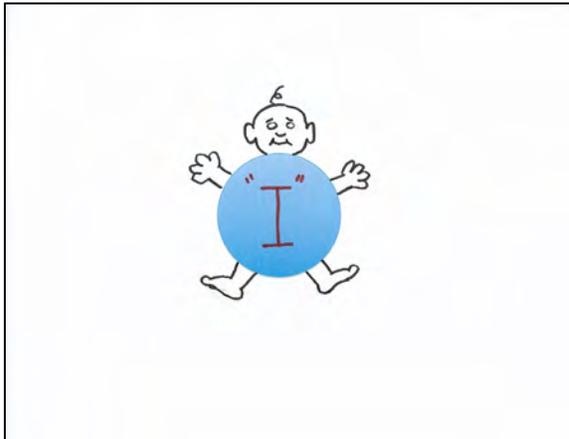
They may act like the antichrist, but we know the antichrist is a lie and Jesus Christ is the Truth—He is the Truth about them and in them.

The world judges according to the flesh; but we know that the flesh has already been judged, condemned, and destroyed. *It's not who anyone truly is.* Paul talks as if in the garden of Gethsemane and on the tree on Calvary, Jesus absorbed all of our sin in His own body of flesh and bore it to destruction.

He calls it the circumcision of Christ, and it means that all our bad judgment is exposed for what it is—and destroyed like a shadow is destroyed by Light. The flesh is destroyed.

So then, what is left?

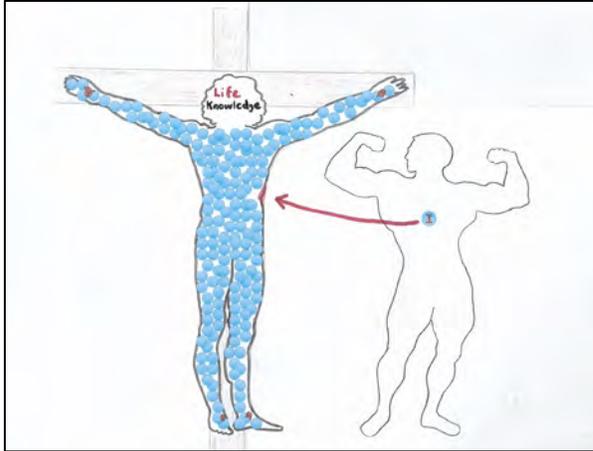
Well, just God's good judgment, the breath of “I am.”



I think that's the Spirit of God.

And *that* is more valuable than anything you can comprehend.

That Spirit will be given new flesh, which will be revealed as the Body of Christ.



So, the human psyche is more depraved than you've ever imagined . . .
But the Spirit in each of us is more glorious than you can possibly conceive.

What I'm saying is that when you speak to *the least of these* you speak to Jesus. As Mother Teresa used to say, "He is here in distressing disguise." I think that means that when you speak, you speak past a person's sin. You name it for what it is, but you don't take it as the truth about that person because it's truly not that person—it's the lie of the dragon about that person (that they have believed). You look past their shame, fear, anxiety, and despair . . . And you speak to their spirit saying, "Rise from the dead. I know who you are; You are Faith, Hope, and Love.

That's not something you can say with human words it is God's Word.

How Do We Speak the Word of God?

- ✓ We must hear the Word for ourselves.
- ✓ We must believe it for others as we do for ourselves.
- ✓ We speak the Word in Truth, when we see that the Word is speaking us.

So #1. We must hear the Word for ourselves.

#2. We must believe it for others and...

#3. We speak the word in Truth when we see that the Word is speaking us...

I know that sounds like mumbo-jumbo... but it's a critical point.

- We've demythologized the Word and turned it into something reasonable to us: like a psychology, sociology, or anthropology. We've turned it into something like a self-help book.
- We've reduced the Word to a plan of salvation and a map of the End Times,
- We've turned the Word of God to an incantation for making legs grow or getting rich.

Liberal, Evangelical or Charismatic, we've turned the Word of God into something to be used rather than a Lord to be followed.

We've treated the Word of God as if it were a thing . . .

As if it were dead, and we were alive.

We've judged the Word of God so we wouldn't be judged by the Word of God.

We've crucified the Word of God . . .

But we were dead, and the Word of God is The Life; He is alive.

See? It's the Word that is "*living and active...*"

In Revelation 19 John sees the armies of Heaven, which is the 144,000, which is the Bride having made herself ready, which is the Church.

The Church is not *applying* the Word... the Church is *following* the Word.

Have you ever had this experience?

You're telling someone about Jesus and realized:

"Jesus was speaking and I was just along for the ride."

It happens to people with the gift of tongues or when delivering people of demons...

It happens at times when people are healed or a word of knowledge is just perfect for the moment...

Actually, it happens *anytime you love*.

"He who loves is born of God and knows God. God is Love," wrote John.

When you love, God is speaking you and speaking through you...

Whether you know it or not, and whether you use words or not...

Jesus is the Word of our testimony, and we are His testimony, His Body through whom God loves. Love God and you will be speaking His Word!

#4. We speak the word in faith when we trust that the Word *is* the Judgment of God and so we entrust all judgment to the Word.

How Do We Speak the Word of God?

- ✓ We must hear the Word for ourselves.
- ✓ We must believe it for others as we do for ourselves.
- ✓ We speak the Word in Truth, when we see that the Word is speaking us.
- ✓ We speak the Word in Faith, when we trust that the Word is the Judgment of God.

“The Word of God is living and active sharper than any two edged sword piercing to the division... of soul and spirit, psyche and pneuma, that old Adam and the breath of God, the old self and Christ’s self, the self we have made, and the self that God has made... The Word of God is piercing to the division... NOT US.

In John 12:47-48 Jesus says something utterly mind-bending:

If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words [rhema] has a judge; the word [logos] that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

The last day is the day you wake from the illusion of your own control . . .

It’s the day you wake from the dream that you created you . . .

And see that you are God’s creation.

It’s the day you wake from faith in “me is salvation,” and meet “God is Salvation.”

It’s the day you surrender your Judgment to the Judgment of God.

You see? The Judgment of God *is* reality.

It’s just the way things are, and everything else is lies, shadows, and illusions. The Judgment of God is not dependent on you, but you are utterly dependent upon the Judgment of God.

In John 12 in His human flesh, I think Jesus is saying something like, “Look I’m not interested in judging you, but one day you will have to wake up to the Judgment of God. I am the Judgment of God. I am reality.”

Jesus continues (John 12:49):

For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life.

What do you think the punishment is for breaking that commandment?
Would it be that you get to stay dead in your trespasses and sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh? I don't think so... Death must die and you must live.
God's Commandment is Life, for His Judgment is Life; God's Judgment is Jesus—"The Life".

Well, my point is that we don't judge, but we're called to speak the Word that is the Judgment: "God is Salvation," Yahweh, Yasha, Yehoshua, Jesus.
And that's not just a human word...

- It's the idea that upholds all creation.
- It's the Word that became flesh in Jesus the Christ.
- He's the person people come to know through His Story in Scripture.
- And the person people come to know through His Story that is you...

We've been called to testify to be a witness to Jesus.
No one likes a "creative" witness—that is a witness that creates truth.

What is a good witness?
It's a person that has been created *by* the Truth; the Truth creates witness.

Your job is not to judge, but to just tell the story, tell your story of "*God is Salvation*" in the hopes that the Truth will judge.

You are to testify, and when you do you'll probably feel like an ass because you're not testifying to how great you are, but how great *He* is for saving someone like you.

We've been called to testify to "God is Salvation."
And "God is Salvation" will judge the lie that "we are salvation."
God's Judgment will expose our bad judgment and cause us to love God's Good Judgment. And that truth will begin to separate the wheat from the tares. We can't do that but the Judgment can.

That fire will begin to expose the dross and refine the gold.
That knife will cut to the division of *psyche* and *pneuma*, soul and spirit.

We've been called to testify to the Word of God, which is living and active.

You can't comprehend the Word of God, but the Word of God comprehends you.
You can't understand the Word, but you can testify to the Word.
You can't make the Word work, but the Word makes you work.

If you think you have to judge, and manipulate, and use the Word to save your neighbor, you're not testifying to the Word.

If you testify with fear and anxiety as if it depended on you or them, you're not testifying to God is Salvation —"Jesus"; you're testifying that God is *not* salvation and *we* are; you're testifying to the flesh and the lie from Hell.

You see? The question is not whether or not God will be salvation.
The question is, whether or not, you want to help God save.
The question is whether or not you want to announce His Judgment:
God is Salvation; You're sins are forgiven you.

If you don't like that Judgment...
If you don't want to help Him save... you need to ask,
"Am I saved or do I even know what that means?"

Jesus saves us from our own judgment, which is sin. For we fall in love with God's Judgment, which is Grace. To be saved is to love God's Judgment, who is Jesus. God's Judgment is reality and so to hate God's Judgment is to be utterly alone in the outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth.

No one will remain there, forever without end, for Jesus is the end.
But when you testify to Jesus, you and Jesus storm the gates of Hell.
Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world...
Greater is He that is in you . . . that is, He that is riding on your tongue . . .

You don't judge, but the Word you speak is the Judgment of this world.
Even if—especially if—you feel like an ass.

Once upon a time, there was a little donkey. One particular day, he came home, thrilled to death. He said to his mother, "I had the most amazing day! I went into Jerusalem this morning, and when I did, people lined up on the side of the road, cheering and waving palm branches. Mom, it was a great day for me!" The old, wise she-donkey looked at her little ass and said, "Sweetie, I'm sorry, but that wasn't about you; that was about the One you were carrying."

In this world, you may feel like an ass, 'cause there's a good chance you look like an ass.

- But from the perspective of Heaven, your not an ass, you're a warhorse.
- You're an army dressed in fine linen storming the gates of Hell.
- You're the Body of the Lion who conquers all space and all time.
- You're the Church, and there is no empire that can stand against you—because of the One you carry (not on your back but in the temple of your soul).

We conquer "by the blood of the lamb and the word of our Testimony" (Rev. 12:11)
Jesus is the *Word* of our testimony.

In 70 AD, it looked as if nothing could conquer Rome. The believers in the seven little churches in Asia Minor were being threatened with losing their livelihoods, and even their lives if they refused to worship Caesar the beast.

- Brothers in the synagogues were even handing them over to the Beast
- In Smyrna, many would soon die.
- In Rome, a multitude had already been slaughtered in the arena.
- Peter and Paul had also been martyred in Rome.
- John was exiled by Rome.

The Word must've seemed terribly weak and inconsequential...
They must've felt like fools, and yet . . . they spoke the Word.

Devoid of earthly power, the Church grew as it never has since that time. By the fourth century, the empire itself was at least nominally Christian... And yet, the crowds still came to the Coliseum to watch the Gladiator Games.

At the end of the fourth century, (according to Theodoret—Bishop of Syria and Foxe's book of Martyrs) there was a Syrian monk who traveled to Rome on a pilgrimage. He arrived at the time of the Roman circus when the city was celebrating their recent victory over the Goths. He followed the crowds to the Coliseum, where people had worshipped the Beast, and the Harlot had drunk the blood of the saints for 200 years.

He watched as gladiators saluted the Emperor and cried, "Hail Caesar, we who are about to die salute you." He watched as men became like beasts and devoured each other's lives. But Telemachus didn't see beasts; he saw children of God. Compelled by love, he jumped the perimeter wall and ran between two gladiators attempting to stop their blows. He cried, "Don't repay God's Mercy, by taking each other's lives." He looked like _____ an _____ ass.

When the crowd saw him interfere, they began to jeer and to chant, "Run him through, run him through." And then one of those gladiators did... the crowd even joined in, hurling stones. But with his dying breath he preached the word: "*In the name of Christ, stop.*" As his blood spilled onto the stadium floor the crowd grew silent. Then one after another . . . everyone left. They had been conquered with a Word.

Supposedly, that was the last gladiator contest in the Roman Empire.
And Telemachus was the last Gladiator.ⁱⁱ

Well, Jesus is the last Adam, the ultimate Adam, Man in the image of God.
He looks weak, and yet He is the Word that upholds *all things*.
He speaks a few words, and everything is made new.
He speaks "Father forgive; it is finished, and into your hands, I commit my spirit."
It's the Judgment of God and when you announce the forgiveness of sins, He is the Word that rides out on your tongue.

The Word of God conquers all things, but it first appears to us in this world as a cold and broken Alleluia—that means “*Praise God.*”

God is Love and His Judgment is His Word.

His Word does not return void but accomplishes that for which it was sent.

And so, soon, you will hear every creature in heaven and on earth . . . singing “Alleluia.”

And you will be so very *NOT ALONE.*

Communion

The Word took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you.”

And He took a cup saying, “This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.”

[Movie clips shown from *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Passion* set to the song “A Broken Hallelujah]

[The clip starts with Jesus’ view while riding a donkey through crowds waving palm branches in the streets of Jerusalem. The scene quickly shifts to a beaten and bloodied Jesus carrying His cross through crowds chanting, “Crucify!” The scene then changes to Aslan approaching the Stone Table under the cover of darkness. The scene then transitions back to Jesus struggling under the weight of His cross, then back to the White Witch given the nod approving Aslan’s death; then it shifts back to Jesus being tied to the cross by a Roman soldier, then to Aslan being tied and placed on the Stone Table, then nails are driven into the hands of Jesus and then the White Witch slays Aslan. Jesus breathes His last breath, and then the stone is rolled away from the tomb. The clip ends with a risen Aslan surrounded with the morning sun.]

Benediction

Please don’t feel sorry for Telemachus... because in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, his flesh was cut away. Suddenly, he heard all the works of God worshiping God on the throne. And all the works that were not of God were revealed as just an illusion. Telemachus’ eyes were opened for his darkness had been cut away, and suddenly, he found himself at the edge of the New Jerusalem.

It wasn’t like he had not been there before. But now he could see it and look down into the Valley of *Gehenna*. According to Isaiah 66, he could see his old body of flesh being consumed by Eternal Fire and the Worm that does not die. Then, he would look down and see himself in new flesh, but new flesh that felt other people’s pain and other people’s sorrow, but there is no sorrow there! It’s all pleasure.

Then, he would turn around and join a great banquet that is a constant communion of Life and Love that is the Life and Love that is at the very heart of the Trinity. Behold! God was bringing him into His very self. That’s what He’s doing with you because the Word of God does not return void; it descends into the void and accomplishes that for which it was sent!

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.

ⁱ Scripture often uses the Greek Word *parousia* to refer to Christ's coming. Peter uses the word to refer to the transfiguration (2 Peter 1:16).

Parousia means something like "effective presence."

Jesus was with the disciples all along, but on the Mount of Transfiguration His true nature was revealed and the disciples couldn't bear the glory. It was the *parousia*, the coming of the Lord.

Will there never be an end of all our ceaseless talk about the delay of the Parousia? How can the coming of that which doth not enter in ever be delayed? The End of which the New Testament speaks is no temporal event. . . . What delays its coming is not the Parousia, but our awakening.

--Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, page 500

If we find in the coming of the Resurrected, His coming in the Holy spirit, and His coming at the end of the age three forms of His one new coming for all their significant differences, there need be no artificiality in explaining that these passages refer to the first and immediate form in which His coming did really begin in that generation as the Easter event and in which the two remaining forms are plainly delineated and intimated. . . .

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is also the parousia. In this it has not only taken place but is still taking place to-day. And as it has taken place in the resurrection and is taking place to-day in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it is also true that it will take place at the end of the days in the conclusion of the self-revelation of Jesus Christ.

--Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, A Selection (Gollwitzer), p. 242-243

The King says not that the sheep have compiled a splendid moral record, but that they had a relationship with himself: "Amen, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." Or to put it even more precisely, they are praised at his final parousia for what they did in his parousia throughout their lives.

--Robert Capon, Kingdom Grace Judgment, pp. 509-510

ⁱⁱ Emperor Honorius, moved by the death of Telemachus, outlawed the games in 404 AD.

37

Don't Miss the Millennium

Don't Miss the Millennium

Rev. 20:1-10

#37 in our series "The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation"

Peter Hiatt

October 28, 2018

Prayer

Lord God, we ask that you would help us to preach. And I pray for those who haven't been a part of our Revelation so far, I pray that you would miraculously minister to their brains. Help us, through the power of your Holy Spirit, to see you. We surrender our darkness, our selfishness, our flesh to you, and we ask that you would reveal yourself to us, in the name of Jesus and through the power of your Spirit, Amen.

Message

In Revelation 19, we saw the Word of God cut the flesh from "all people" as He rides a white horse across the face of the earth. This happens at the opening of the seventh seal, the blast of the seventh trumpet, as the seventh bowl of wrath is poured out upon the earth and the voice from the throne in the temple says, "It is done," "It is finished." The Word of God is The Judgment of God who is Jesus and the End of all things.

Revelation 20:1-4

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

That's called the Millennium.¹

For two thousand years people have wondered, "What and when is that?
That sounds fun, what and when is that?"

There have been four primary views... so far: Pre-millennial, Post-millennial, A-millennial, and Dispensational Pre-Millennial.

The Four Millennial Views

1. Pre-millennialism
2. Post-millennialism
3. A-millennialism
4. Dispensational Pre-millennialism

Some of the early church fathers believed that after the bodily return of Christ, believers who had died would be resurrected to reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years. And then all people would be raised and finally judged. That's called pre-millennialism; Christ returns before the millennium

Postmillennialism is the belief that Christ will return after the Millennium. And that the Millennium will begin through what is often called "the ordinary means of grace." In other words, through the preaching of the Gospel, a time will come when Christ rules the world through His Body the Church.ⁱⁱ and after a thousand years, he will return to judge the dead in the final judgment.

Postmillennialism was the dominant view in America in the 19th century. It gave rise to abolition, temperance, the great missionary movements of the 19th century, as well as the Great Awakening and Second Great Awakening.ⁱⁱⁱ

Amillennialism has been the dominant view of the church for most of history, if not all of history . . . It was the view of most of the early church fathers, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, the Orthodox Church, and as always, the Roman Catholic Church.

I'm not sure that "Amillennialism" is an accurate name for this bunch... Technically, the word "a-millennial" means "non-millennial," which implies belief in no millennium. But I think most Amillennialists would argue, *"We do believe in the millennium; we think it started the day Christ died and will end on the day he returns; we think the millennium is now, even if it doesn't last a thousand years according to our perception of space and time."*

The fourth view is the dominant view in America today, and yet it is a view that no one had even heard of before the middle of the 19th century.

It's Dispensational Premillennialism. It's a bit like historic Premillennialism except for the introduction of an idea that changes the character of the whole Bible—that idea is the pre-tribulation rapture.

It's the idea that before Christ returns and inaugurates His millennial reign on earth, God will rapture His faithful Church to Heaven so that she won't experience tribulation.

The idea that Jesus would be telling us, "*In this world you will **NOT** have great tribulation*" is weird enough . . . but what this view does to all of Scripture and our picture of Jesus is weirder still.

The Dispensational scheme means that most of the Revelation and most of the Bible isn't about us, but about Israel, who is not us. Up until the 20th century, almost every believer taught that the Church didn't replace Israel, but was faithful Israel; the Church taught that the twelve Jewish disciples were like the twelve patriarchs and that together we were all the New Jerusalem coming down. But this new scheme teaches that most of the Revelation isn't about us, but Israel—who is not us.

That's why this crowd got so excited about the creation of the new nation-state named Israel in 1943. There are lots of reasons to get excited about a homeland for a persecuted group of people, but this was their reason:

A nation named Israel & a stone temple are necessary precursors to getting raptured, at which time the antichrist will be revealed and start tribulating folks...

In the "Left Behind" series, he's a Romanian dictator named Nicolai Carpathia, which makes sense, for at the time the books were conceived Nicolai Ceausescu was the evil dictator of Romania.

Romania gets its very name from ancient Rome. And at that time it looked like Romania might join the ten-nation European Confederacy, like the ten horns and ten toes on the beast in the Revelation and in the ancient book of Daniel.

Romania was in the north and connected to the Soviet Union, which clearly represented Gog and Magog that would cross the Euphrates and attack Jerusalem in Israel . . . just before Jesus returned with all of us riding in His train. We would then rule the earth from Old Jerusalem!

Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise." Well, being some sort of government official in Palestine doesn't sound like paradise to me. If that's the Millennium, I would rather just skip it.

[Image of a descriptive chart of the Millenium Falcon is shown.]

There is a fifth view called the “Millennium Falcon,” but it’s far too complicated to explain right here and now.

So anyway, which view is right? What and when is the Millennium?

This week, I asked myself, “What would it be like, Peter Hiett, for you to reign and rule on the earth?” I pictured a cigar in my mouth, a glass of whiskey in my hand, my toes in the sand, a beautiful woman in a bikini lying next to me, and immediately... I heard this song:

[Sound Clip of part of “Beautiful Girls” by Van Halen]

Now, I'm a seaside sittin', just a smokin' and a drinkin'
I'm ringside, on top of the world (top of the world)
I got a drink in my hand I got my toes in the sand
All I need is a beautiful girl (beautiful girl)
Here I am, ain't no man of the world, no



[While the song is playing, Peter plays the role.]

All I need is a beautiful girl
Ah, yeah beautiful girls (I ain't lyin' to you nothin' else I need)
Ah, yeah beautiful girls sit yourself on down
Ah, yeah beautiful girls
Ah, yeah beautiful girls

Now, I'm a seaside sittin', just a smokin' and a drinkin'
I'm ringside, on top of the world (top of the world)
I got a drink in my hand I got my toes in the sand
All I need is a beautiful girl (beautiful girl)
Here I am, ain't no man of the world, no

All I need is a beautiful girl
Ah, yeah beautiful girls (I ain't lyin' to you nothin' else I need)
Ah, yeah beautiful girls sit yourself on down
Ah, yeah beautiful girls
Ah, yeah beautiful girls

If the Millennium is reigning and ruling on the earth, that’s my idea of the Millennium . . . except for maybe one other thing. There have been a lot of people that have hurt me over the years. On my good days, I’d just like an apology, but there’s also something in me that would like to see my enemies suffer.

That’s my idea of the Millennium . . .

I think it’s probably a rather popular idea of the Millennium . . .

It's not too different from the idea in the minds of young male Islamic Jihadists (minus the whiskey and substituting a hookah for the Cuban cigar.) It's not too different from the idea in the minds of most: Jews or Christians.

It's what I wan, but if I got what I want would I want what I got?

King Solomon got it; remember? We studied his book Ecclesiastes all of last year. He ruled and reigned over the nation-state of Israel at its greatest extent . . . He didn't have access to Cuban cigars, but in Ecclesiastes 2, He writes, "*I searched my heart how to cheer my body with wine... I made great works... I had great possessions... I got many concubines, the delight of the sons of Adam*" (Ecc. 2:3-8). Then he writes, over and over, "*Vanity of vanity. All is vanity and striving after the wind.*"

King Solomon was the son of David who conquered his enemies and built the stone temple. Jesus was also the son of David, who conquered his enemies and claimed to build a temple, but He wasn't like Solomon, and so we crucified Him.

Well anyway, what would it mean to, "live and reign with Christ a thousand years?"

Revelation 20:1-3

Then I saw an angel [angelos: a messenger. That could refer to a spirit, a person, or Jesus] coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key [Jesus already told John, I have the keys of death and hades (1:8)]... to the bottomless pit [abyssos: abyss] and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil (diabolos: the false accuser) and Satan (satanas: the adversary), and bound him for a thousand years and threw him into the pit [abyss], and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer...

That raises an interesting question: "What nations?" and "What longer?" In the last chapter, we saw "the Word of God," cut the flesh from all men—not some—all. That's the end of the nations and Jesus said it would happen on the last day.^{iv}

Understand? In verse 1 John wrote, "*then I saw,*" not "*then happened.*" John must be seeing the same events in space and time from several different perspectives.

Well, the messenger seizes the dragon and throws him in the abyss... "*so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until [or achri: unto, as far as] the thousand years were ended, [finished, telesthe... Remember, Jesus is the telos, the end]. After [or meta: literally "with"]^v that he must be released a little while [chronos: time]."*

It's a crazy sentence "*that he might not still deceive the nations as far as the thousand years were ended. With this [this binding] he must be released a small time.*"

In Luke 10, Jesus says that He saw satan fall from Heaven.
In Colossians Paul argues that he was disarmed at the cross.
In Hebrews 2:14 we read that Jesus died to destroy (literally “render ineffective,” *katargeo*) him who has the power of death, the devil.”

It would seem that satan is already bound . . .
And yet, Peter (1 Peter 5:8) writes that satan still prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Paul actually talks about delivering a man—who won’t stop having sex with his mother-in-law—to satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that he might be saved on the Day of the Lord. It’s like satan is bound, but that chain is a leash, and God is using him to save us from ourselves in time.

That may all sound abstract to you, but it’s no longer abstract to me. About twenty years ago I began praying with a woman who was raised in a coven and ritually wed to satan. For seven years we worked through layers of demonic oppression and then this thing showed up that called itself satan. In visions, Jesus also called it satan.

I’m not saying you have to believe, but I think I’m supposed to testify:
Satan has no power except the power we give him.
We give him power by believing his lies.
And all his lies are based on one lie and that is that “God is not salvation,” that God does not love you, or God cannot save you.^{vi}

One night, very late, Susan and I were praying for our friend, and in the name of Jesus we had renounced lies, bound satan, and placed him in an iron box... Susan and my friend saw Jesus, in this vision, standing by the box...^{vii} In some amazing ways, He answered some questions I had. Susan said to me, “Peter there was a name printed on the inside of this box: The Abyss.”

In the beginning, the earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the abyss (*tehowm* in Hebrew, *abyssos* in Greek). God spoke a word, His Word, into the abyss and creation happened.

In 395 A.D. Gregory of Nyssa wrote, “*Christ’s divinity was hidden under His humanity like a fish hook under bait, and Satan, like a ravenous fish, gulped it down.*”

On the cross, darkness swallowed the light of the world; death swallowed life; the liar swallowed the Truth; I am not swallowed I am, and creation happened—Adam was made in the image of God and “It is finished.”

Recently, praying for another friend I said, “Satan, in Jesus’ name I send you to the void” and I heard him say, “I am the void.” I think he might be right on that one. Well, Jesus bound the void, and you have authority over the void. That authority is Christ in you; it’s faith having descended into your void. He is with you there.

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed...^{viii}

We just preached two sermons on how the Word we preach is the Judgment of this world. And on Judgment Day, according to Jesus, He will say, *“whatever you did to the least of these you did to me...”* That’s the Judgment.

So, some of you may have been abused, and you thought you were alone. You are not; Jesus has always been with you, even in the abyss, especially in the abyss. You are experiencing His sufferings, and He is giving you faith, which is Himself, so you would rebuke the dragon and he would spit you both out of the abyss and onto the land, just as the whale coughed Jonah up onto the beach.

Revelation 20:4-5

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls [psyches] of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus...

Do you think the souls (the psyches) of martyrs still shape the world after their body is gone? I don’t know if that’s what John sees but like the saying goes, *“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”* John sees the souls of disembodied witnesses (*marturos* in Greek), but not just them, all of us to whom judgment is committed...

...I saw the souls [psyches] of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands...

In chapter 13 we discovered that everyone who dwelt on the earth worshiped the beast and was therefore marked.^{ix} It seems, that this is all people born of flesh in this fallen world... Well, are there people, born of something else, as if born from above?

...And those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life [literally, “they lived”] and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life [literally, “did not live.”]

John is talking as if everyone on earth is dead and only these people “born from above” are truly alive.

*The rest of the dead did not [live] until the thousand years were ended. **This is the first resurrection.***

I love that... it’s as if John knows this is a stretch for the human brain, and so he says, *“Guys this is the first resurrection,”* as if, the folks he’s sending this to would suddenly know what he’s talking about.

He's sending it to the seven churches in Asia Minor, all who had been disciplined by Paul when he taught in the Hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus for three years (you can read about that in the book of Acts), and he had sent them several letters, two of which we still have—Colossians and Ephesians.

Now, remember: Paul worked with the Jewish authorities and with Rome to kill Christians. I mean if anybody worshipped the beast it would have been Paul.

In Ephesians 2:5-6 Paul writes, "...*When we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...*"

In Col. 2 and 3 Paul writes that although we were dead, God made us alive *in Christ*, by triumphing over the devil on the cross (where our flesh was cut away).^x Then he writes, "*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*" (Col. 2:15-16, 3:1)

Paul had taught them and John was teaching them the first resurrection.

In John 5, John records Jesus saying, "²⁴*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life...*"

In John 11, Jesus says, "*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.*"

"...Never die!" That means the second death won't hurt them and they have eternal life—*aiōnios* life. The word *aiōn* means age, and the word *aiōnios* means something like "*of the age*" and usually refers to God's age, where life is immortal and imperishable, and undying, but I think you do lose your life and then find it somehow.

"*Eternal life*" refers to "*the life of the age to come.*"^{xi}

But in the gospel of John, over and over, Jesus talks about having it now, when we believe.

So you see, "*faith, hope, and love*" in us, is not *of us*.

That life is not our life but descends from above.

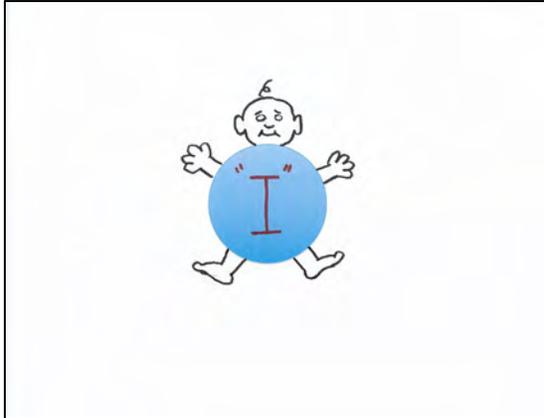
It's not of our own creation; it's God's creation in us, begotten in us, by Him.

So, in John 3, to Nicodemus the Pharisee, Jesus says, "*Truly truly, you must be begotten from above...*" And when Nicodemus says, "What the heck . . . ?" Jesus says, "*Are you a teacher of Israel and you don't understand these things?*"

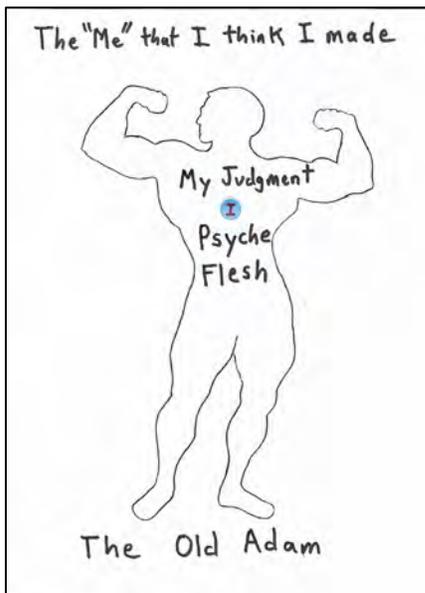
You see, the whole Old Testament reveals that each of us needs a new heart, and a new psyche, and even a new body of spiritual flesh. And that's an operation that none of us can pull off.

In I John 3:14 John writes, ^{xiii}“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.” When I don't love it means that I am abiding in death!

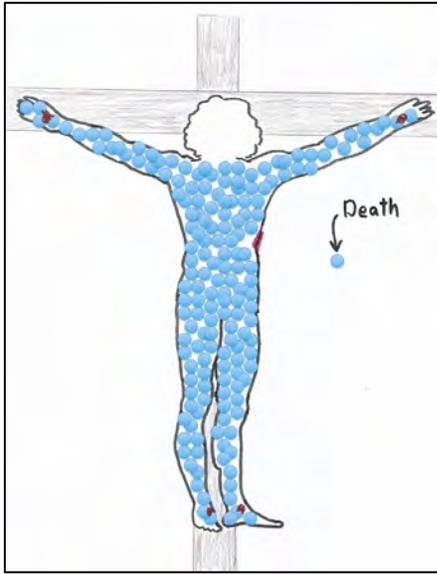
Remember what we've been learning?



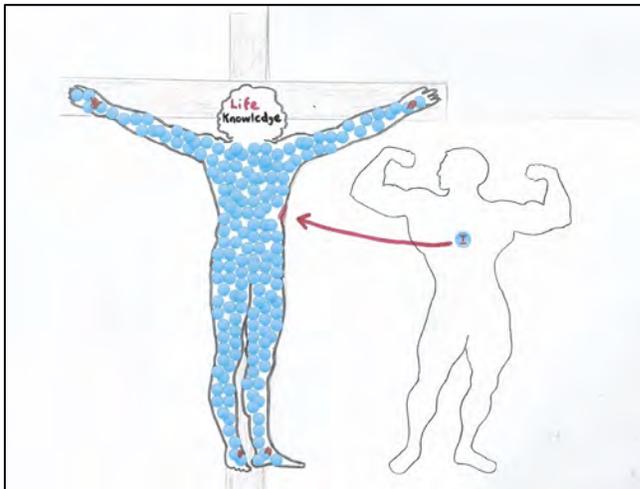
I am the breath of God...



Imprisoned in the “me” that I think I make . . . my old psyche, my ego. It is why I am alone, separated from God and my neighbor.



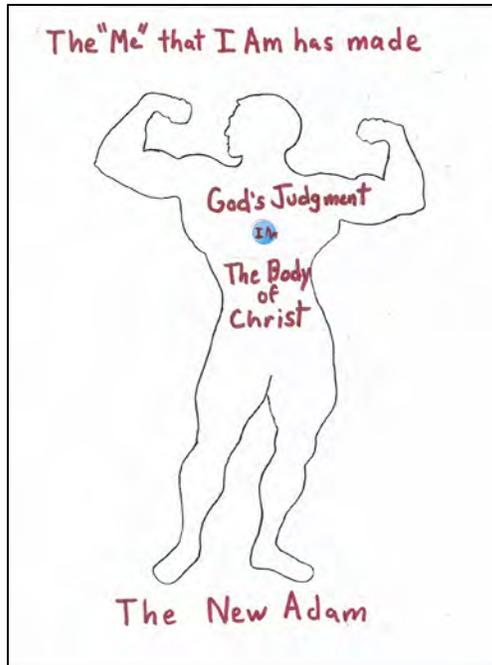
To be alone is death, we died the day we took the life from the tree and called it our own; it's the day we grew an ego and began to hide.



At the cross, God cuts away our flesh; at the cross we "lose our psyche and find it in Christ. We become the Body of Christ.

It's the death of death, the second death, which is the Life.

Life is in Him, and He is the Life in me, flowing through me like blood.



You see? He is God's Judgment in me . . . and expressed as the new "me."
...But you know, I think maybe He was there all along . . .

This is a profound mystery, but Scripture says that we are His temple . . .
That means in the inner sanctuary of each soul, within each person, there is a throne . . .
And maybe the Judgment of God is upon that throne all along . . .
But hidden behind a drawn curtain . . . for a time.
But when Christ died that curtain was torn . . . and the Judgment of God began to
invade your temple . . . from the inside out . . . like a spring of living water.

When He fully saturates your temple, Love will no longer be a law, Love will literally be
your Life. Love will not be the distant voice of conscience that haunts the depths of your
soul . . . or constrains you from outside your soul like some commandment in an old
book. Love will be the desire, and decision, that animates your whole body— all the time.

In other words, God's Will will be your will, and your will will be God's Will.
In other words, you will will what you want, and want what you will.
Your will will be entirely free, and you will will creation itself.

You will turn water into wine whenever you'd like a drink.
You will walk on the sea as if it were boring.
You will move mountains just because you want to.
You and Jesus together, on the throne in the sanctuary of your soul, will rule reality itself.

We'll talk more about that later, but Jesus, John, and Paul talk as if we can and are beginning to rule right now. They talk as if we're princes and princesses whose Father is absolute Love and absolute power—princes and princesses who are still in need of discipline, but right now inheriting all things.

Luke 10, Jesus says, *"I saw satan fall... and look I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall harm you..."*

All the disciples were tortured, and imprisoned or murdered . . . and yet Jesus said, *"nothing shall harm you."* You might think that stuff harms you, but all of it—beatings, imprisonment must *help* you, like discipline.

In the Gospel of John Jesus says to His disciples, *"If you ask anything in my name, I will do it..."* Then a little later He says, *"So far—after years—you have asked nothing in my name."*

His name means *"God is Salvation,"* and it's the definition of Love...
I think they were just beginning to learn to love Love . . . and so are we.
Jesus said, *"It's better to give than receive."*
It's as if He enjoyed sacrificial love...
Well, to rule and reign with Jesus is to love like Jesus.

In Revelation 1:5, John wrote, *"Jesus is the ruler of the kings on earth..."* and ***has made us kings and priests.***" (Rev. 1:5-6 ESV and NKJV) John thinks that we are ruling right now . . . And priesting right now . . . (whatever that means?)

Revelation 20:5-10

*... **This is the first resurrection.** Blessed (that means, "happy") and holy (that means "strange") is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*

"Beloved, do not overlook this one fact," writes Peter, and then he quotes the Psalms, *"with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day." NOT equal to a day, as a day...*^{xiii}

Verse 7

...And when^{xiv} [literally: whenever] *the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison*⁸ *and will come out to deceive the nations [ethne: the peoples] that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog,*^{xv} [we saw all of this in chapter 16] *to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched (not "will march," "did march") up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints (that's us) and the beloved city, (that's also us) but*

fire came down from heaven and consumed them and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur [theion: divinity, sulfur] where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. [literally: “for eons and eons,” “ages and ages”].

Years ago, praying for our friend, I discovered that calling down the Fire of God, Glory of God, or Love of God all seemed to have the same effect on the evil one; it would burn him. I began to realize that the Fire of God and the Life of love are the same thing. And that thing—who is God—has absolute power over evil...

And yet praying for people in those situations is usually an incredible battle. So I used to really wonder, God why is this so hard? I've come to realize that conquering satan really isn't hard—because he's already been conquered. What's hard is romancing the human heart.

Christ has utter power and authority over the evil one. And yet . . . Christ is *romancing* the human heart—the heart of His Bride. “When I am lifted up I will romance all people to myself.”

Well, this battle is the very same battle that each of us is called to every day. It is believing for ourselves and helping others to believe that God is Love and His Word is salvation, and He loves you absolutely.

Well years ago, early one morning after hours of struggle...
And after hours of speaking Light into darkness, and Truth into lies...
After seeing satan go, and while Jesus was talking to my friend in a vision...
I said to my friend, “Hey ask Jesus this question: Why don't you just throw satan in the lake of fire?”

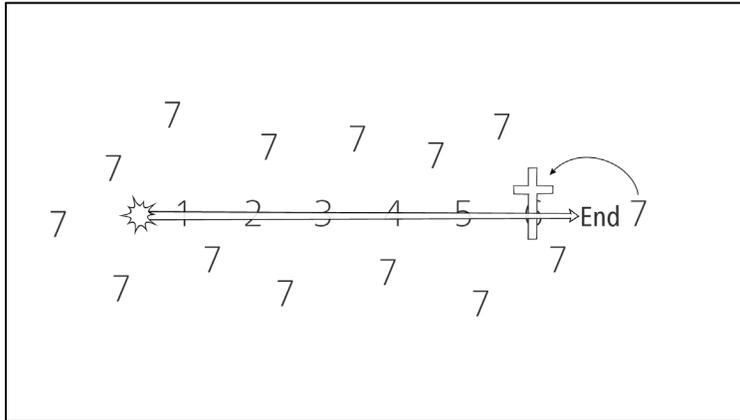
She did: “Jesus why don't you just throw satan in the lake of fire?”
She was quiet for a moment and then she said, “I just heard him say, ‘I am, all the time.’”

I suddenly realized that by loving our friend, we had been throwing satan into the lake of fire . . . all the time.

That's why Paul tells us to be kind to our enemies, for in so doing we heap burning coals on the head of the enemy. You see? The Fire of Love destroys the real enemy—literally casts satan into the lake of fire—and turns our enemies into friends, and more than friends, the Bride of Christ.

He said, “I am... all the time.” And I think He is.
Let me remind you of this timeline I've been showing you . . .

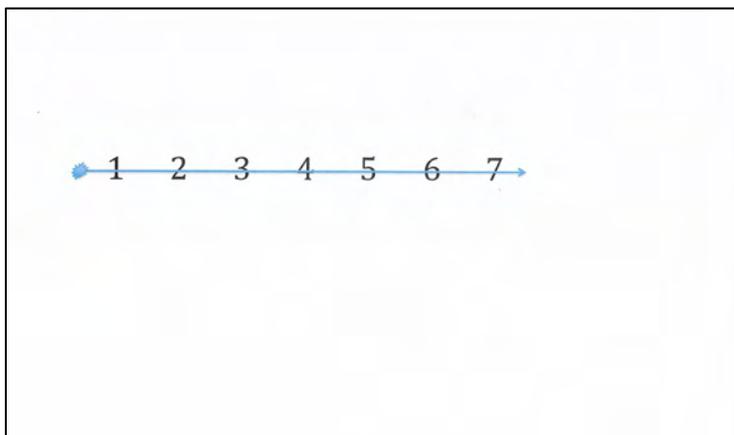
I'm trying to express this biblical idea that was prominent in the early church. It was also prominent in Judaism at the time, and still is in some circles today.^{xvi}



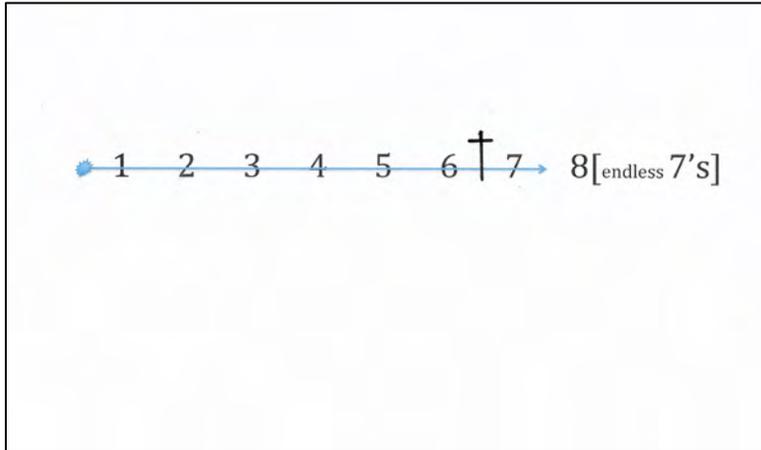
It's the idea that chronological time is represented by these seven days or ages, *aions*. They exist in the reality of God's eternity, God's age, God's Rest.^{xvii} All time exists in "I AM" and "I AM" is at rest.

God's Rest is expressed in time each week in the form of our rest on the Sabbath Day—the Seventh Day. It's then that we remember God's Rest, when "It is finished and everything is good."

So every week looks like this:

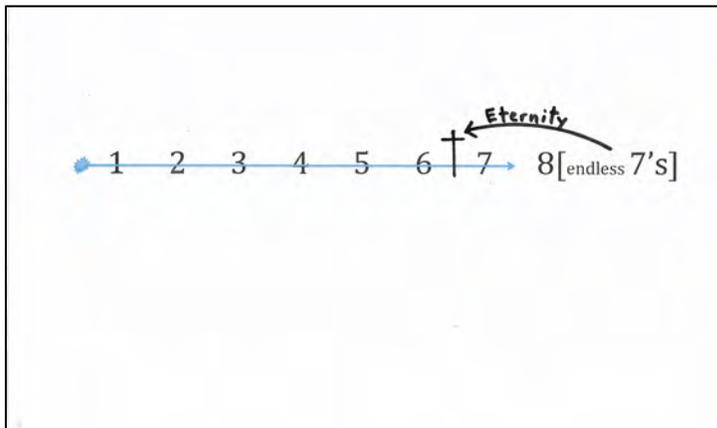


Once a year, the Jews were commanded to observe an eighth day, that was seen as and endless seventh day, that is, an eternal Sabbath...
Jesus was crucified at the end of the sixth day and rose on the eighth day.

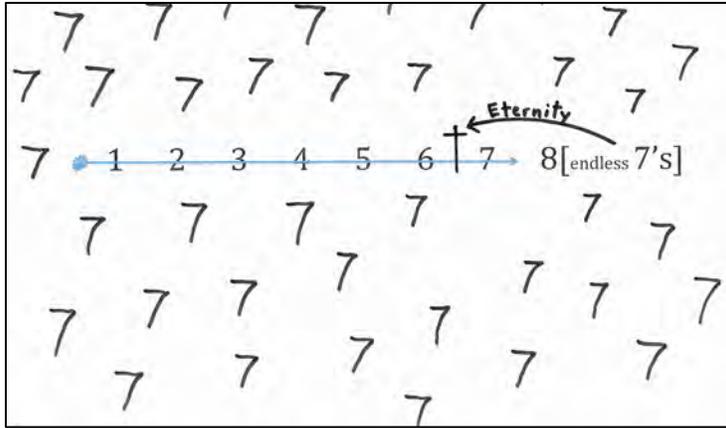


Scripture claims that Christ's sacrifice was the end of the ages, that is, the end of chronological time.^{xviii}

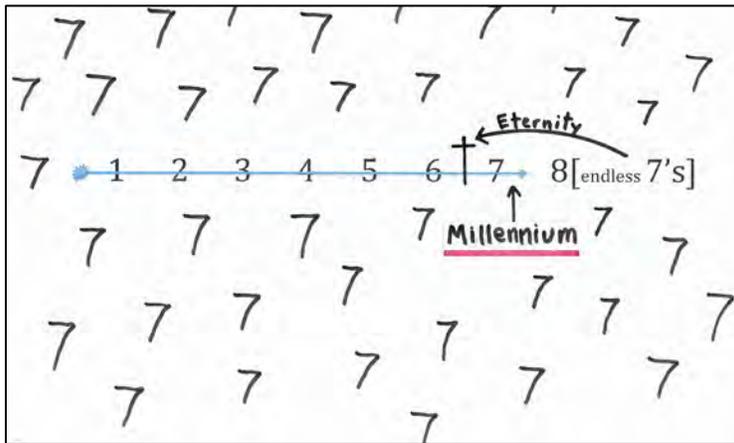
So, at the cross, God's eternity invaded our temporality, and has been invading ever since Good Friday.



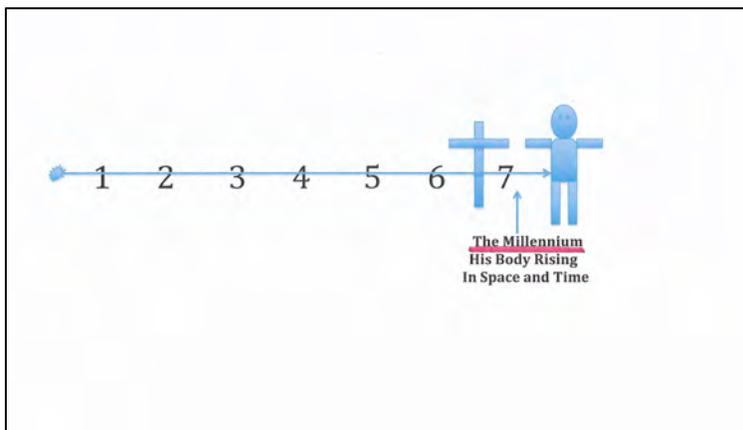
Or maybe people have just become aware of it ever since Good Friday.



Whatever the case, I think the seventh age, which is the seventh millennium, is represented by the Seventh Day in time, when we walk in the finished work of the cross, when we walk in newness of life—eternal life.



It is the age in which Christ's Body is rising in space and time.



We'll need to say more... but do you see? I think that makes me . . . a Pre-Post-A-Millennialist. It means that this *is* the Millennium and Christ is coming . . . *all the time*. Satan is bound and being cast into the Fire . . . *all the time*. And we reign and rule whenever we walk by faith in Love . . . and maybe, even when we don't.

So anyway, "What would it mean to reign and rule" on the earth?

[A brief sound bit of "Beautiful Girls" by Van Halen is played]

Maybe not...well, not quite...

I once read about a man that spoke to an emissary from another kingdom. He asked, "What miracles has your lord worked?" And the emissary replied, "Well there are miracles and there are miracles. In your land, it is regarded as a miracle, if God does someone's will. In our land, it is regarded as a miracle, if someone does the will of God."

You know, if I were to reign and rule on earth, it would mean that either I got God to agree with my will, or God got me to agree with His Will.

If God did my will I think I'd create hell for myself, and maybe already have... like Solomon, I'd moan over and over again, "*Vanity of vanities all is vanity...*"

But if my will became God's Will, if I really willed God's will, this moment... what would change?

Well, I think everything would be just the same: I mean God already does His will. Right? Solomon goes on to say, that God does everything that's anything (Ecc. 3:14-15). Paul writes, "*he accomplishes all things according to his will...*" (Eph. 1:11) "All things." And Scripture reveals that evil is not truly a thing but a nothing... It's a void that God is filling with His Word, who is His Will. And He's even got satan on a leash... to be used for His purpose.

Paul writes, "*If God is for us, who can be against us... in all these things we are hypernikao—super-conquerors—through him who loved us...*" "*He works all things together for good with those who love him and are called according to his purpose...*"

To be saved is to learn that you have always been loved and called according to His purpose, which is to make each of us in His image in order that we might share His joy.

"*These slight momentary afflictions prepare us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all compare,*" writes Paul. So, by faith, at any moment you can surrender all your moments to Jesus, and in that moment know that every moment is exactly as it should be and could not be better than it is, right now.^{xix}

If this moment, I willed what God wills, absolutely nothing would change, except me; I'd be happy. I'd know that I am infinitely loved and so I'd long to love, and so I *would* love, but instantly I'd be insanely happy.

And then, do you see that God's will would actually be my will, and I would will all things in absolute freedom. God and I would rule the universe from the throne in the sanctuary of my soul.

Well, has any man ever constantly willed God's Will? ...Yes! Absolutely! He changed water to wine, walked on the sea, moved mountains, and did all sorts of miracles . . .

But He didn't hate those that hated Him . . . In fact, He let them torture Him and nail Him to a tree; that's how He conquered His enemies and that's the greatest miracle—the day He did no miracle. It's not the day God did man's will, but the day a Man did God's Will. He didn't hate His enemies... He died for His enemies, for He believed that His enemies were His Bride; it's how He gets the girls: [Peter sings] "*Oh yeah beautiful girls...*"

In the next chapter, a New Jerusalem descends from Heaven adorned as a bride, and He is romancing you right now. You are that beautiful Bride.

You are His Bride, His Body, His Temple.

And when you trust in Him, you experience the blessings of the Millennium; you begin to reign over all creation as a king, and you begin to love like the high priest . . . Actually, you are the Body of the High Priest who offered Himself for *all*.

In 1990, about the time Tim Lahaye and Jerry Jenkins must've started working on "Left Behind," I was sent on a trip to Romania to train newly liberated pastors how to "do church..." and they trained me how to be a Christian.

For forty-five years, under Nicolai Ceausescu, Christianity had been illegal.

Some of the pastors I met had scars on their bodies from attempts made on their life; some had friends and family that had been murdered for their faith . . .

But only ten months earlier, they had toppled the government of Romania, just as Telemachus toppled Rome by announcing—proclaiming—the Word.^{xx}

I told you the story of how they gathered around the house of one persecuted pastor a few weeks before Christmas, and literally wouldn't stop singing until thousands had been gunned down by the secret police in the central square, and the dictator was deposed by the people—people who wouldn't stop singing about Jesus.

I think it's the greatest revolution of the 20th century, because of the revolution in the hearts of the people, particularly a few people—people that looked just like Jesus.

One of them was my friend Cornell. I haven't talked to him in years, but I met him. He took me all around his city, and everywhere we went, he was just genuinely happy. He seemed to love everyone, knowing that he was thoroughly loved.

One night, we ate dinner at his house. After supper, he pulled a box down from a shelf in the living room. The box was like a shrine filled with pictures of his wife. His face glowed as he spoke of her. You could make out her features in the face of Cornell's six-year-old daughter, who came in to say goodnight.

A few years earlier, Cornell's wife had been diagnosed with cancer. He prayed fervently for a miracle, and he read medical books trying to find a cure. Finally, through Christians in Great Britain, a bone marrow transplant was arranged and paid for. All they needed was an exit visa.

The authorities told Cornell, "*We will grant the Visa, but only if you renounce your faith and inform on the other pastors in your underground church.*" Cornell told me how he struggled; he'd been spied on, persecuted, interrogated, even radiated. He lived in a house where the secret police had electrocuted the former pastor by putting power lines onto the drain pipes.

Well, Cornell and his wife decided what to do. He said, "Brother Peter it was the hardest day of my life." That was the day, shortly after the revolution, when he held his thirty-year-old wife in his arms as she slowly passed from this world, leaving Cornell and their daughter behind—"left behind."

When he told the story to my friend Steve, as Cornell showed Steve the box of pictures, Steve started to cry. Cornell looked at Steve with great compassion and said, "Brother Steve, don't cry. It is a privilege to suffer for Jesus!"

Cornell will get his bride back and all things with her... He will inherit all things, but for now, he's ruling and reigning in the Millennium.

This *is* the Millennium. Don't miss it.

Communion

He took the bread and broke saying this is my body, which is given to you; take and eat. And He took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood and in my Bride; drink of it all of you."

You see?

This is the Judgment of God

This is the will of God; in *this* is Love... Have faith in Love you begin to rule and reign.

When this Will becomes your will, you will rule and reign...^{xxi}

And you will be happy and wonderfully strange.

This world will no longer shape you and Christ in you will transform the world.

In Jesus' name believe the Gospel.

Prayer

... Come Holy Spirit, Faith, Hope, and Love rise in your temple, occupy your temple, and be glorified in us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

John sends the Revelation to these seven little churches. They're occupied, they think they are about to be utterly crushed, some are dying, some think they're doing relatively well—they think—but they're rich and they're dead. Some, their love has grown weak. He sends a letter to all of these.

What's the point of the letter to these haggard, weak Christians? I think this is the point: (you don't think it's true, but it is true) you reign and you rule. And now, from two-thousand years later, we can look back and say, "I my gosh! It's true! Not just in some age by and by that we can't access now, but right in history. Study history! Those people are the reason you are here this morning. They change the world.

Paul said there is an "immeasurable greatness of power in those who believe." If you've ever experienced a miracle...you know God has all power... I think there is a power that He [God] wants to show us. It's a power that is greater than any other power because it's Himself. That is the power to love in freedom. That means that it is your desire no matter whether this entire world turns against you. It means you keep loving because you love Love. That's what happened on the cross...and that power is the power of romance; it's how He gets the girl, which is us. So, may you believe the Gospel and love in freedom. That's the doorway to being eternally happy and strange.

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.

ⁱ Mille is *latin* for the Greek *chilio*, which means "thousand." Thousand is the largest numeric denomination in Scripture in both Greek and Hebrew—so even if your English Bible has the word "million," in Greek or Hebrew, it's a thousand thousands.

ⁱⁱ This will be a time when the whole world prospers due to the faithful rule of the Church. And after that thousand-year period of prosperity, and perhaps a short period of rebellion, Christ will return in His resurrection body for the final judgment.

iii Both Charles Finney and the Puritan Jonathan Edwards were avid Postmillennialists. But over time much of Postmillennialism devolved into optimistic Liberalism, the belief in utopia by human energy.

iv *“The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day”* (John 12:48).

v *Meta* is translated as “with” 345 times in the KJV and as “after” 88 times in the KJV.

vi If he were to manifest outright, in this room, there’d be no reason to fear...

But renouncing his lies takes a lifetime of growing in faith...

When you refuse to love yourself, forgive yourself, and accept your sorry self—you put flesh on the evil one. He is disarmed, but with fear and un-forgiveness we give him arms, even our own. Arms.

vii And he even answered questions after it was over.

viii Jesus said, “You who follow me will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.” We even learn that we are to judge the angels (1 Cor. 6:3).

ix That would certainly include men like Saul of Tarsus employed by religious authorities in service to Rome and sent out to persecute Christians... Wouldn’t it also include Peter who denied Jesus in fear of the beast?

x *“...And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.... If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”* (Col. 2:13-16, 3:1)

xi The biblical writers thought of these ages (these *aions* in chronological time) and an age to come (that which is *aionios*, of the age, eternal). But the age things—in the age to come—were not like things of this current age. In 1 Cor. 15 Paul speaks of getting bodies in the age to come—bodies that are not temporal and perishing, but immortal and imperishable. They are bodies of the coming age, in that age, according to Jesus (Mark 10:30) we will have *aionios* life, that’s life of the age to come, eternal life.

xii Eternal life is now. We’re surrounded by it, like the fish in the ocean, but we have no notion about it at all. - Anthony De Mello, *Awareness* (New York, NY: Image Books, Doubleday, 1990),p. 137

xiii In chapter 13 John points out a “human number” and invites us to calculate and we did. It implies that the other numbers aren’t merely human, but 1000 is the number which is expressly pointed out as not merely human by Scripture—a number we can’t simply calculate.

xiv (*hote* is the normal word for when, *hotan* means something like “when if” that is “whenever.”)

xv This is a group mentioned in Ezekiel that, along with all nations and people, turns into the sacrificial feast we read about in the last chapter. It’s the same crowd that goes to war with God and nails Jesus to the tree at the end of the sixth bowl and beginning of the seventh.

^{xvi} Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, "He finished in six days." This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years. And He Himself testifieth, saying, "Behold, to-day will be as a thousand years." Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished. "And He rested on the seventh day... Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead. And when He had manifested Himself, He ascended into the heavens. -Epistle of Barnabbas ~ 70-130 AD

^{xvii} Time does not exist, Barth concludes, apart from eternity's embrace. Eternity embraces time on all sides, preceding, accompanying, and fulfilling it. To say that God is eternal means that God is "the One who is and rules before time, in time, and again after time, the One who is not conditioned by time, but conditions it absolutely in his freedom" (II/1, p. 619). . . . God's eternity is so to speak the companion of time, or rather it is itself accompanied by time in such a way that in this occurrence time acquires its hidden center, and therefore both backwards and forwards its significance, its content, its source and its goal, but also continually its significant present. Because, in this occurrence, eternity assumes the form of a temporal present, all time, without ceasing to be time, is no more empty time, or without eternity. It has become new. This means that in and with this present, eternity creates in time real past and real future, distinguishes between them, and is itself the bridge and way from the one to the other. Jesus Christ is the way." (II/1, p. 627)

The real future that eternity creates in time is the future of eternal life in communion with God. The real past, in turn, is the past of sin and death as abolished in the cross of Christ. This old reality of sin and death is "continually opposed" by the new reality of eternal life, even as the new reality "comes breaking in triumphantly" again and again (II/1, p. 628). Jesus Christ stands between the old reality and the new. "In him the equilibrium between them has been upset and ended. He is the way from the one to the other and the way is irreversible. He is the turning" (II/1, p. 628).

—George Hunsinger, Disruptive Grace, p. 205, 207

^{xviii} [Rev. 10:6 "*Chronos will be no more*"]

^{xix} You must utterly believe that the circumstances of your life, that is, every minute of your life, as well as the whole course of your life—anything, yes, everything that happens—have all come to you by His will and by His permission. You must utterly believe that everything that has happened to you is from God and is exactly what you need. . . .

—Jeanne Guyon, Experiencing the Depths of Jesus, p. 32

^{xx} But as long as this world lasts and Christ's Church is in it, it is to be a militant Church. Although it has the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, woe to the Christian Church when it is triumphant in this world, for then it is not the Church that has triumphed but the world. . . . Did he not come into the world in order to suffer; is not that what he called being triumphant?—Soren Kierkegaard

^{xxi} Remember this is God's original job description for Adam; we are the body of the *Eschatos* Adam.

38

**Thank God for “Me”
(The Glorious Appearing...
and Disappearing)**

Thank God for “Me” (The Glorious Appearing . . . and Disappearing)

Revelation 20:4-15

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

Peter Hiatt

November 18, 2018

Prayer

Father, we ask that you would help us to preach. I pray for those that are new that when things are confusing that they would hang in there and realize that it will make some sense at some point. For those who have been here for every sermon through our Revelation series, I pray that you would help them connect the dots and not to think to themselves, “*Oh I’ve heard this before*” but that they would be able to see you in a new way.

The picture that unfolds in Scripture of who you is overwhelmingly stunning to me; sometimes I just despair that there is no possible way I could even talk about it and I guess that’s the truth. But Holy Spirit, you know how to talk about it; you reveal the Father and you reveal the Son so would you do that this morning as we preach? In Jesus’ name, we ask it, Amen.

Message

One particular day along about 1967 (I was about seven), my friend Tim found something utterly amazing in a field. He took me into his room pulled it out from under the bed. And I gazed in absolute wonder at his treasure—I saw things I’d never seen before; it was a Playboy magazine.

That night at dinner, I couldn’t sit still; I longed to run and hide. I was being tormented. The torment came from my father’s (and my Heavenly Father’s) presence—not because my father was bad, but because he was good; and not because he had taught me that naked ladies were bad. Actually, he taught me that they were more than just good; they were holy. Even at seven, I knew that the problem wasn’t with naked ladies but how I had taken knowledge of them in Tim’s room.

My dad rarely spanked, but he would speak, and the Word would burn. I remember thinking at times, “*Dad just hit me or ground me, but stop talking—no more words!*”

Well that night, I wanted to run and hide, for his presence was torment to my soul. And yet, I didn’t want to hide, for the outer darkness was even worse. And so I cracked... I said, “Dad, can I talk to you?”

We went up to my room; we sat next to each other on my bed . . . Actually, I remember lying on my back pressing my feet against the underside of the top bunk, and through tears, just spilling my soul.

When I finished my confession . . . I didn't hear a word of condemnation. I think he kissed me; he was always giving me kisses. And then, he looked me in the face, and with a voice of deepest compassion, he said, "Peter are you going to be OK?" And then I think he said, "I love you," and "I'm proud of you." And then he left the room.

My dad died about fourteen years ago . . . And what felt like the worst torment, for about an hour one night long ago in 1967, has now become, and actually always was, my deepest desire . . . that is simply to be with my Dad, my Abba, my Father. I was the apple of His eye... I discovered who I am by looking at the image reflected in the pupils of His eyes.

I can't say that I never looked at another Playboy magazine. But I have enjoyed a wonderfully passionate marriage for thirty-five years, largely because of that night. I've thoroughly enjoyed a holy communion in the sacrament of our covenant of marriage . . . and, like my dad, I became a pastor—not because I thought I should, but more like I just realized this is who I am. Now, I had all sorts of other motives that God would burn away in time. But somewhere in the depths of my being I just identified with my dad. I am his beloved.

I had a good dad, and you have a good Dad, the very best Dad, even though you've been listening to a snakey dragon that's been telling you otherwise.

Revelation 20:4-10 John writes,

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed (literally, "to whom judgment was committed"). And that's weird for it's John who records Jesus as saying, "The Father... has committed all judgment to the son" (John 5:22 NKJV).

- That means that these people are Jesus . . . or at least the Body of Jesus.

Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God (Jesus is the "word of our testimony"), and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life (literally it reads, "They lived") and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead...

- So the living were dead, but now they're alive...¹

¹ John records Jesus as saying, "He who lives and believes in me will never die." See that person has already been judged, and has become the body of the Judge, the body of Eternal life in space and time.

The rest of the dead did not come to life until (so they also come to life) the thousand years were ended (finished, teleo). This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power...

- It's like they have eternal life so for them death has died...

but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

- John already told them that they were kings and priests (Rev. 1:6)
- In the words of Peter, “A chosen race, a royal priesthood . . . to proclaim God’s wonderful deeds . . . once you were no people, but now you are God’s people, (1 Peter 2:9)”.... He also wrote, “Don’t forget this fact, with the Lord a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day” (2 Peter 3:9).

And when the thousand years are ended (literally, “whenever the thousand years are finished—teleo”), Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

- Now, we already read about this at the end of the sixth seal, sixth trumpet and sixth bowl.
- And at the seventh seal, seventh trumpet and seventh bowl; we heard a voice cry from the throne, “It is finished (16:17), “The kingdoms of the world became the kingdom of our Lord” (11:15), and the sky rolled up like a scroll (6:14).

For John the end invaded space and time and conquered all things the moment Jesus cried, “It is finished” on the tree in the Garden just outside the walls of Jerusalem; it was then that the blood began to flow, and the life in the blood began to burn all that opposed the kingdom of our God.

And they [people at war with the Lamb] marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur (theion from theos—also translated “divine being”) where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (“ages and ages,” aions and aions)

That’s what we preached on last time. Next verse:

Revelation 20:11-15

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence (literally, “His face”) earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books (plural) were opened. Then another book (singular) was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books (plural), according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

I went to seminary in the 1980’s and at that time everything was about church growth. Traditionally, a good Protestant, Reformed worship service always included the Proclamation of the Word (that’s what the sermon was called), the confession of sins and the assurance of pardon, and that was worship. By the 1980’s the sermon was more like a sales pitch, followed by a call to make a decision and a commitment—what Scripture calls a covenant.

So, a modern preacher didn’t proclaim the eternal covenant of God, which is God’s Judgment and His Word. A modern preacher made a pitch, asked people to judge the Word and then make a covenant.

So, a modern preacher would preach the “Judgment of the Great White Throne” by saying something like this:

Wouldn’t you like to live and reign with Jesus in His kingdom?
And wouldn’t you hate to be endlessly burned by eternal fire?
So, choose Jesus (by supporting the budget, or whatever)...
Choose Jesus so God doesn’t judge you and cast you into Hell.

It’s an effective shtick for building institutions, but not so much for getting folks to fall in love with God, and even more it’s just terrible exegesis of the text.

Here’s the problem:

For one:

The Great White Throne Judgment is not a threat of endless death in Hell.
The Great White Throne Judgment is the end of Hell and the death of death.

We just read, “Death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire.”
In just five verses, the voice from the throne will say, “Death will be no more.”

Hell cannot be a place of endless death if death and hades come to an end in the Lake of Fire. Hades is the Greek word most often translated as Hell in English New Testaments (Ten times it's translated as Hell in the King James and once as the Grave... It's the realm of the dead... lie Sheol in the Old Testament)

Gehenna is the other word often translated as Hell in English New Testaments (The King James translates it as "Hell" nine times and "Hellfire" three times)

Gehenna was the valley that surrounded Jerusalem on two sides. To enter the city, from the outer darkness, you often passed through Gehenna.

Gehenna was also called Tophet, which means "place of fire."

And according to Isaiah, it was the breath of God that set it ablaze...

"The breath of Yahweh, like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it..." writes Isaiah (30:33) . . . breath of God.

Wasn't it the breath of God, breathed into a ball of dust that made you in the first place?

And doesn't the Word of God ride on the Breath of God? The Word of God is the Judgment of God.

God is One. God is Love. And God is a Consuming Fire. We're talking about "the Lake of Fire and *theion*" or "fire that *is theion*." *Theion* comes from *theos* and means brimstone or Divinity. So, it can be translated sulfur or Divinity. You can look at the etymology of sulfur, and it comes from that idea; it is like the breath of God that sets things ablaze.

The Lake of Fire is the death of death; it swallows up death forever. And that can only be God.

Isaiah 25:6 *"On this mountain [Mt. Zion, surrounded by Gehenna] the Lord of hosts will make a feast... and destroy the veil that covers all people... and He, God, will swallow up death forever."*

The Lake of Fire, that is Divinity, is the death of death, who *is* Eternal Life.

In the End, death is swallowed by Life, and death is no more.

Temporality is swallowed by Eternity and makes all things become new.

Outer darkness comes to an End that is the lake of Light.

Lost-ness comes to an End in the lake of "foundness," that is "the way."

Lies come to an End in the lake of truth—*the* Truth.

Death comes to an End in the lake of Light, Way, Truth, and Life.

And the Life is in the blood, that was shed on the tree in the Garden at the end of the sixth day of creation, the sixth day of the week, at the sixth hour. It was then, that eternity invaded time, and it's there, that all things are made new; it is the judgment of God. "I am not" comes to an end in the Lake of "I Am."

Well anyway, that's one problem with the way we've preached this text:

1. The Great White Throne Judgment is not the beginning of some endless Hell. The Great White Throne Judgment is the end of temporal Hell and the presence of Eternal Way, Truth, Life, and Light.
2. Another problem with the way this has been preached is that although this is the final Judgment, it's already happened... is happening... and will happen.

For John there's only one Judgment:

- John 3, Jesus says this is the Judgment (one Judgment), "*The light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light.*"
- John 12, Jesus says, "*Now is the judgment of this world; now is the ruler of this world cast out.*"
- The New Testament (1 Cor. 10:11, Heb. 9:26) refers to Christ's sacrifice on the tree as the end of the *aions*, the ages. That would be the Last Judgment.
- Revelation 21:6 and 22:13 Jesus says, "*I am... the end.*" "*I am the beginning and the end, the first and last, the Alpha and the Omega*"

Paul refers to the mere appearing of Jesus as the Judgment.

- In 2 Thessalonians, he calls it the Epiphany of His appearing, the *epihanao* of His *parousia*, that is the manifestation of His *parousia*.
- *Parousia* is the Greek word often translated coming, but according to scholars like Karl Barth it means something like "effective presence."

You might remember when Jesus appeared to the disciples on the mount of transfiguration, and when He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, and when He appeared to John at the start of the Revelation, and when He appeared as the rider on the white horse, He appeared as a man filled with fire and shining as the sun—that's effective presence, His *parousia*, His glorious appearing—and it's all "the Judgment."

Maybe we should stop thinking *chronologically*, and start thinking *theologically* ...that is *Logically*...that is according to the *Logos*—the Word.

Maybe space and time are relative, and the Word is not.

Maybe all things are relative to the Word, who is the Light, who is the Judgment...and like the angel said, "*Chronos will be no more.*" (10:6)

Well anyway, there are some problems with the way we've been reading Rev. 20

1. It's not the beginning of Hell, but the end of Hell.
2. It's not just final judgment, but every judgment... it's the Judgment &
3. It's not the Judgment of the living and the dead... but just the *dead*.

Check it out: it's not the living standing before the throne, v.12, it's the dead—it's a pack of zombies. Churches often confess, "*We believe in the judgment of the living and the dead,*" **but** this is the judgment of *the dead*... Actually, in John (and maybe all the New Testament), everyone is dead until they've been judged by the Living One... (He's in the last and least of these) AND THEN, once they live, they're no longer judged.

The living aren't judged; they've *been* judged. Listen to Jesus in John 5:24 "*Truly, truly I say to you... whoever believes has eternal life. He does not come into Judgment but has passed from death to life.*" Actually, Jesus describes all of Revelation 20 in John chapter 5.

Well anyway, there are some problems with the way we've been reading...

And perhaps the solution is simply to believe the Word...

And yet, that does raise a fascinating question:

Who are the dead?... and who, when and where are the living?

Well, we just read about the living in the last paragraph...

"They live and reign with Christ" for a thousand years...

OK, so when and where is that thousand years?

Remember what we've been talking about all along:



The seven-sealed scroll in the right hand of God reminded us of . . .

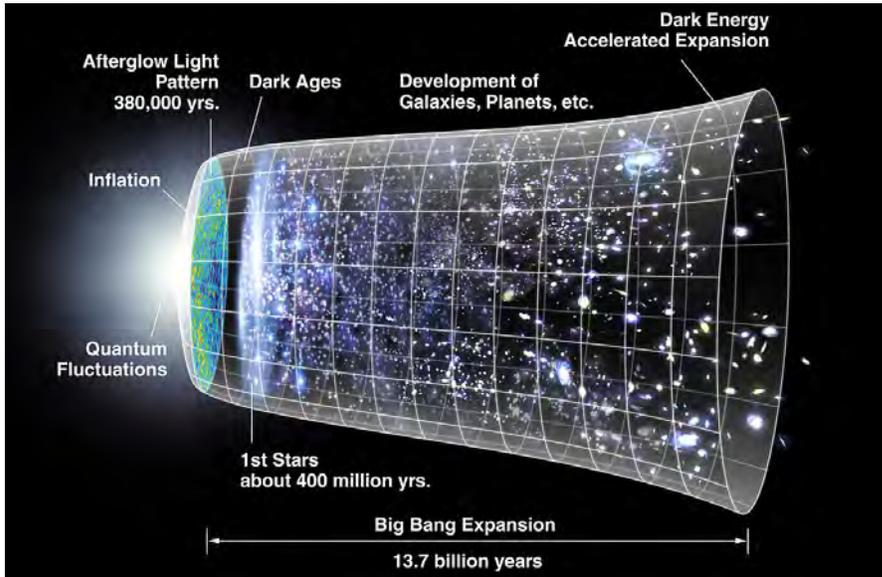
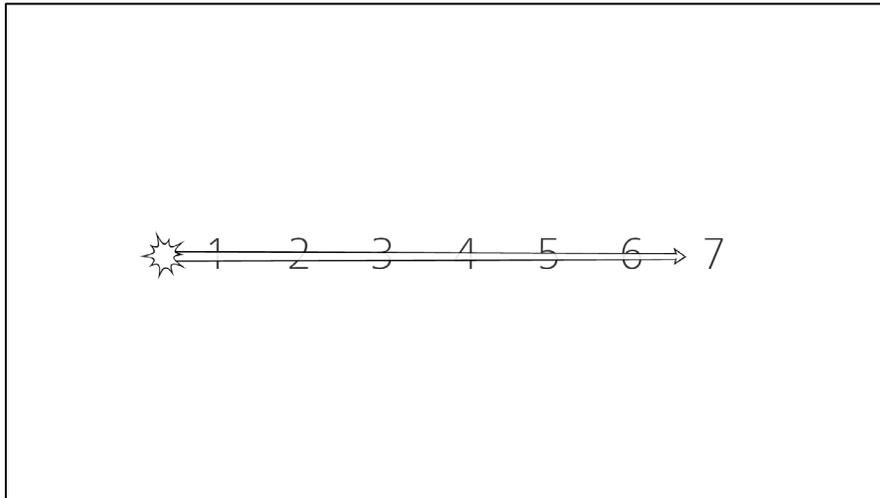


Figure 1 Image credit: NASA / WMAP science team
All the ages of space and time... the Cosmos.

Peter begins singing: “He’s got the whole Cosmos in his hands; He’s got the whole world in his hands.”



It reminded us of the entire Cosmos, for in Genesis, the entire Cosmos is created in seven days... and on the Seventh Day everything is good, and "it is finished," and God rests.

Well, because Genesis is written this way...

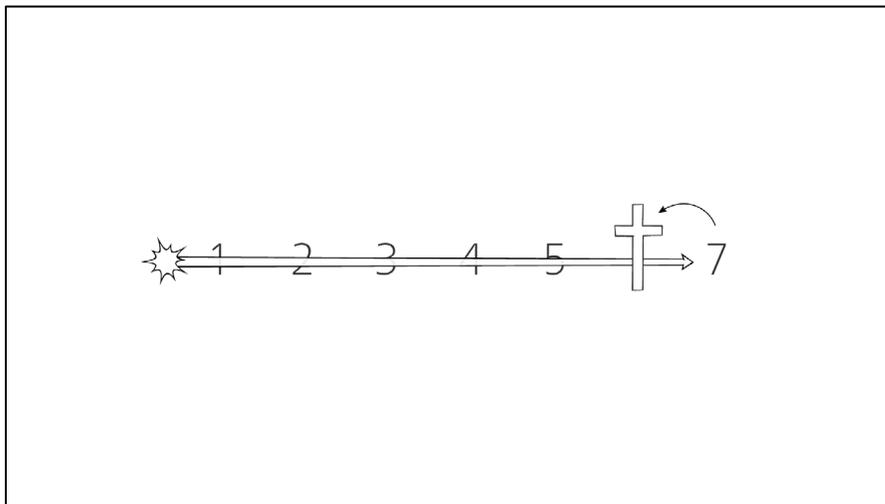
And because all is not yet good...

And because man doesn't yet appear to be finished in the image of God...

And because with God "a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day..." (not *is* a day but *as* a day)

Well, many Jews thought and still think that the creation is not finished, but will be finished when the Messiah comes 6000 years from the moment of creation and inaugurates the messianic kingdom on earth.

Using this formula, they calculated that He must come by nightfall on the 16th of September 2240...

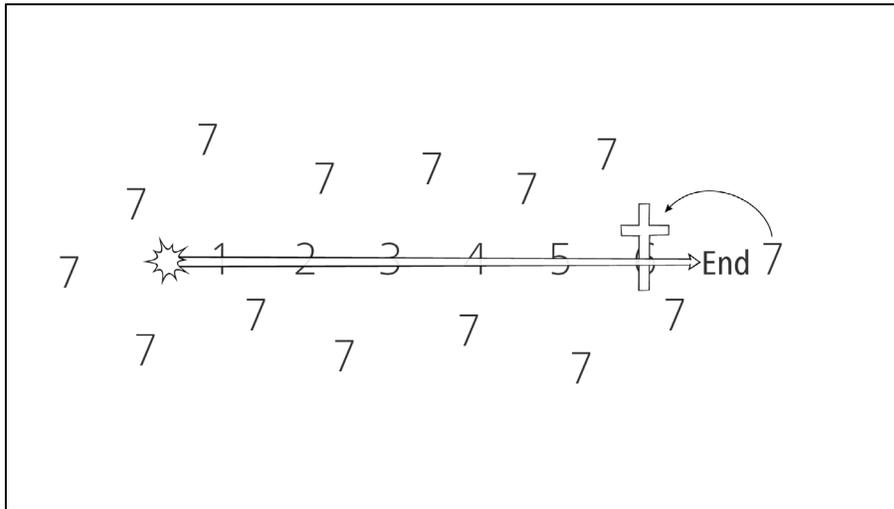


Well, Christians believe that He's already come, and many in John's day believed that the Messianic Kingdom began when Jesus cried, "*It is finished*" in the Garden on the Tree on the Mountain next to Jerusalem at the end of the sixth day.

At the cross, God's promised rest invaded space and time.

Or you could say the Lord of the Sabbath was revealed in space and time.

So, the biblical view of time is something like this [See the next page]:



God creates all things in six, days, *yoms*, *aions* or ages...

And on the Seventh Day, “it is finished” and everything is good.

The Seventh Day is God’s promised rest.

The Seventh Day is a different kind of day; it’s eternal; it’s *aionios*; it’s God’s age, and you see God is not bound by space and time. He *made* space and time.

God is the beginning and the end and He doesn’t change—that’s eternal.

Jesus is also the beginning and the end and He doesn’t change, says Scripture.

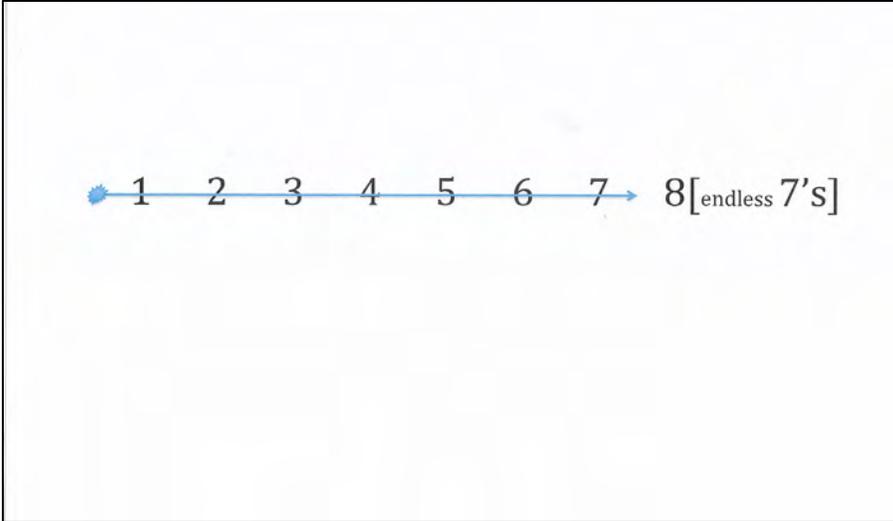
He is eternal, and like He said, “His Kingdom is at hand.”ⁱ

So God is always present, even though we are usually unaware.ⁱⁱ

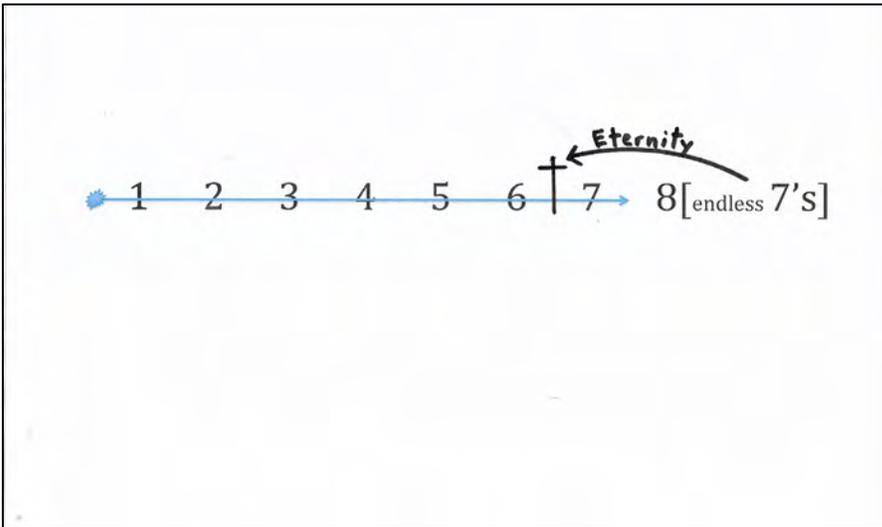
But through His death and resurrection, His Glory is revealed in space and time

And we see that God is Love, and Love conquers all—even “me.”

This is why we work six days and rest on the Seventh—to remember eternity.



Once a year at the end of the feast of ingathering or tabernacles, the Jews were also commanded to celebrate an Eighth Day as an endless Seventh Day—an eternal Sabbath, the *shemini atzeret*.

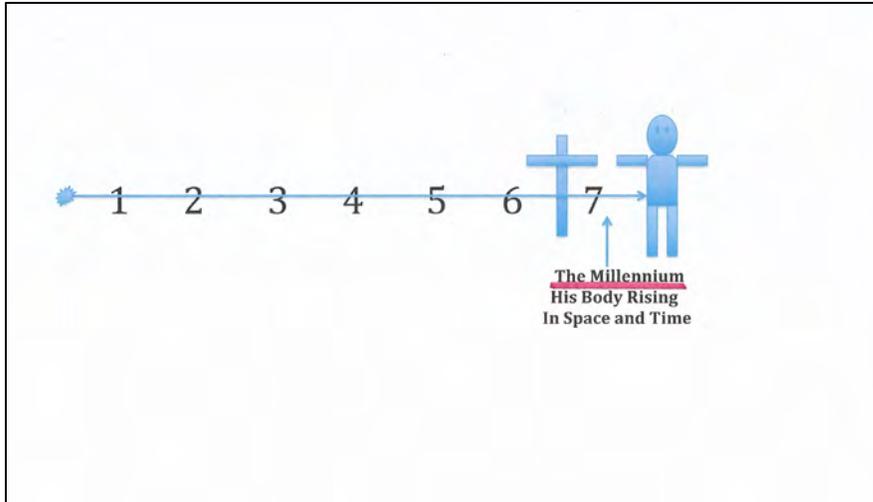


Jesus was crucified at the end of the sixth day and rose on the Eighth Day.

So who, when, and where are the living?

Maybe they're, right now, right here.

Maybe they're us; that's what we preached last time.



I think this is the Millennium.

We are the Body of Christ is Rising in space and time . . .

The Eternal rising in temporality.ⁱⁱⁱ

So who, when and where are the living? You know, I think we saw them following the Word of God and conquering with Him... they appeared with Him, dressed as Him and riding white horses.

- And we read that “the lamb conquers and those with him.”
- They conquer “by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony.”
- We read that the one who conquers will eat from the tree of life, not be hurt by the second death, have his name in the book of life, sit on the throne of God, with God and rule over the nations. “The one who conquers”
- In 1st John, John writes, *“Everyone born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world [the Cosmos]—our faith.”*

Jesus said, *“All things are possible to him who believes.”*

He is the Lion that looks like a lamb but conquers all things.

One could argue that the most influential person of the 17th century wasn’t a king or a pope but a peasant named Lawrence. As a young man God seemed to speak to him, one day, as he simply meditated on a tree and thought of death comes to life like a tree in spring.

He joined a monastery and served as a cook and fixer of sandals until he died in relative obscurity at eighty years of age. Because he was known for such kindness, and relentless joy, Lawrence was interviewed by the servant of a French cardinal, named Abbe de Beaufort.

Those interviews, along with a few notes from Lawrence himself, were preserved in a little book titled, *The practice of the Presence of God*. And that's all it is, just a few thoughts on practicing the constant awareness of the presence of God . . . **And yet**, it's been read by millions and Larry has changed the world.

Brother Lawrence writes, "*All things are possible to him who believes; still more to him who hopes; still more to him who loves; and most of all to him who does all three.*" Faith Hope and Love are eternal; that means *you can't* make them, but *they* make you—the new and Eternal You. They're not *your* choice, but *God's* choice rising in you.

So, who are the Living?

Well, in Revelation 20, they are those that have their names written in *the Lamb's Book of Life*—and you see, that's not their choice that's the Lamb's choice; that's the Judgment of God.

And who are the Dead?

Well, in Revelation 20, they are those who are judged according to the things written in *the books, according to what they'd done*. And what they've done is their choice; it is *their* judgment.

On the sixth day of creation, the snake tempted each of us to take from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil to make ourselves in the image of God. The knowledge of Good and evil is called the Law. And the energy with which we try to fulfill the law to make ourselves in the image is called the flesh. So, in the words of Paul, the enemy tempted each of us to justify ourselves by works of the law in the power of our own flesh.

I hope you noticed (in Revelation 20) that "the dead," ("great and small") are judged by their deeds. And none are justified by their deeds; indeed all of them are *already* dead; it's like they died the day that they took the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil from the tree! So now, even their good deeds are like filthy rags.

"A man must fail miserably," wrote George MacDonald, "or succeed even more miserably."

We'll talk about this more next week, but when we try to justify ourselves . . .

We don't create ourselves but desecrate ourselves.

We turn into beasts that consume life, trying to make ourselves alive.

We turn into harlots that use Love and end up crucifying Love.

We become the antichrist, which means imitation Christ.

We put our faith in "me is Salvation" and crucify "God is Salvation," Jesus.

We exalt ourselves and Jesus called that the abomination of desolation.

Believing the lie of the devil, we crucify Christ and put our flesh on the devil.

As Jesus said to the Pharisees, who tried to justify themselves before men:

*"You are of your father the devil."
"The day you eat of it you will die."*



Scripture says that they crucified Jesus because they were jealous of Jesus. They wanted to be Jesus—who is the perfect image of the invisible God.

And yet, this is God's Judgment: "Let us make them in our own image."
But this is the evil one's lie: "You should make yourself in God's image."

"The dead" try to make themselves in the image, and that's why they're judged by the deeds in the books; they want to be judged by their deeds recorded in the books; they want to be judged by their resume. In other words, the dead think that they are their ego.

"The day you eat of it you will die," that wasn't *a* sin . . . that was *all* sin.
So the moment we took knowledge of the Good from the tree, the Life died and we die, and all our subsequent "good deeds" are just an illusion. God said to Moses, "*Whosoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.*"

And yet, even as He said it, He was teaching Moses about the Slaughtered Lamb. The Lion is a Lamb and He has a book, the names in the book are written in blood. He gives His Life to whom He chooses. And that's why we believe, and that's how we are finished in the image and likeness of God.

To *take* knowledge of the Good from the tree is to justify your self.



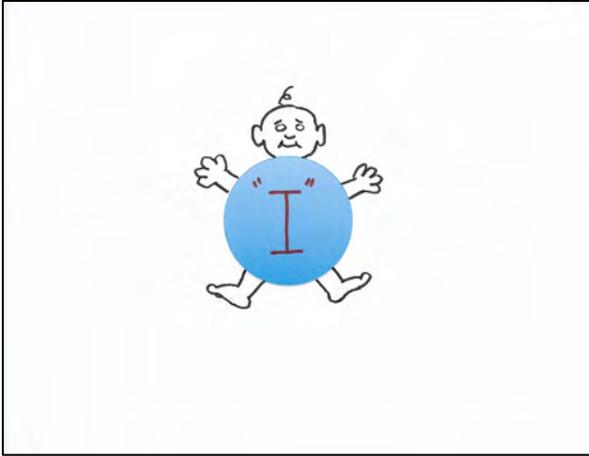
To *receive* knowledge of the Good from the tree is to be justified... by body broken and blood shed.

The dead try to make themselves in the image of God, who is the Good.
And the Living believe they are the image of God because the Lamb of God has written their name in His book of Life... and that's the Good... He is the Good and the Life—
Yahweh is Salvation, Yeshua, Jesus.

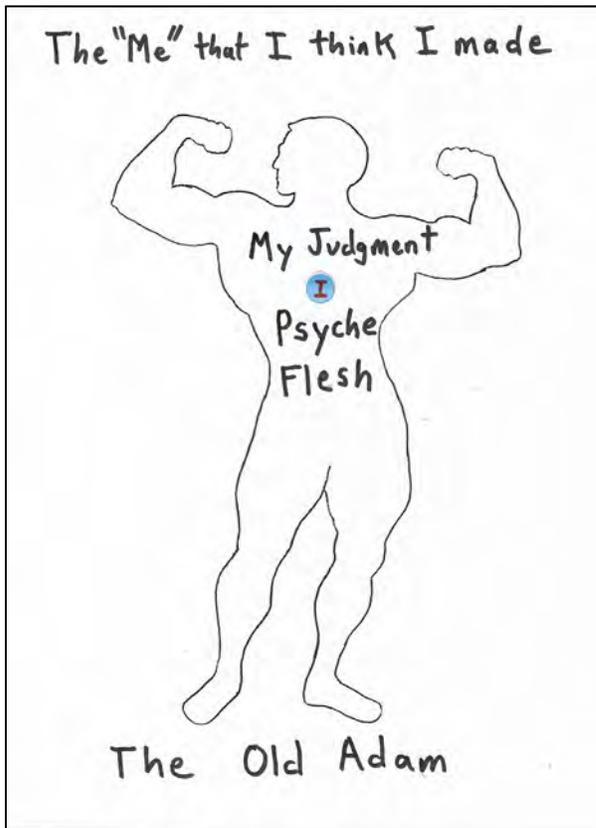
So anyway, the dead get thrown into the Lake of Eternal Fire.
And the living rule and reign with Christ, who is God.

And so, of course, we want to know, which am I?
One of the dead or one of the Living?
Well, hopefully by now, you see: You're probably both.

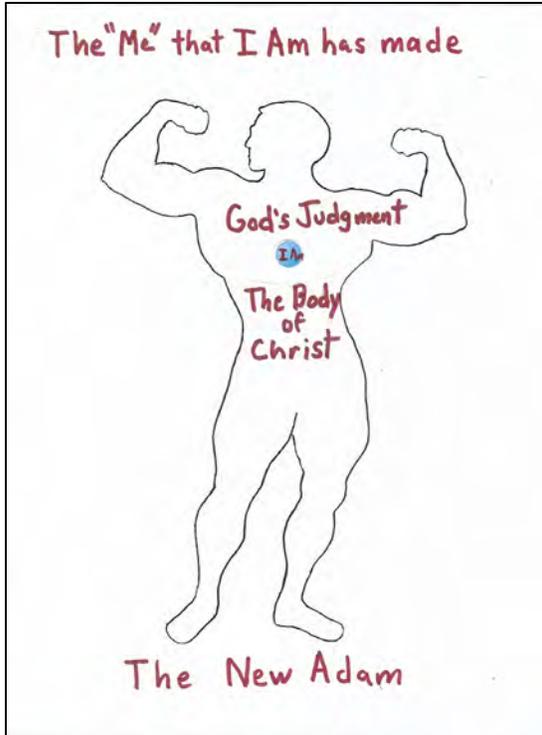
It's what we've been preaching . . .
There is a "me" that I think I make.
And there is a "me" that I AM has made.



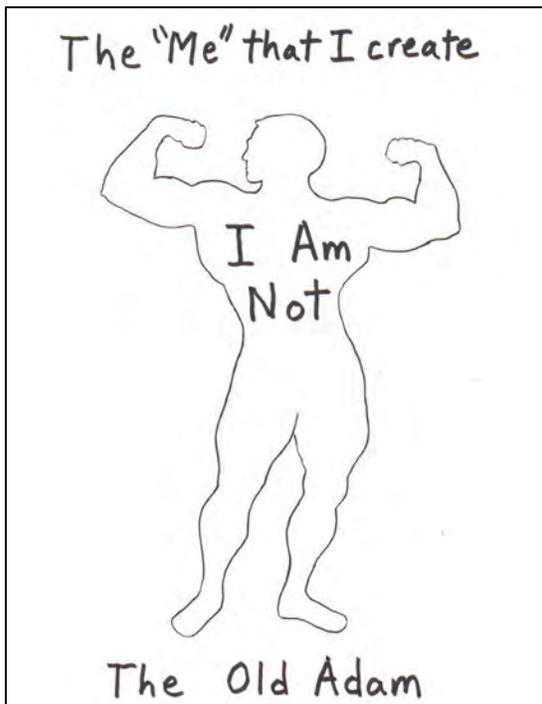
We each have a spirit that is the breath of God and God is eternal. That Spirit is who I am... I am eternal, and I observe "me" in space and time.



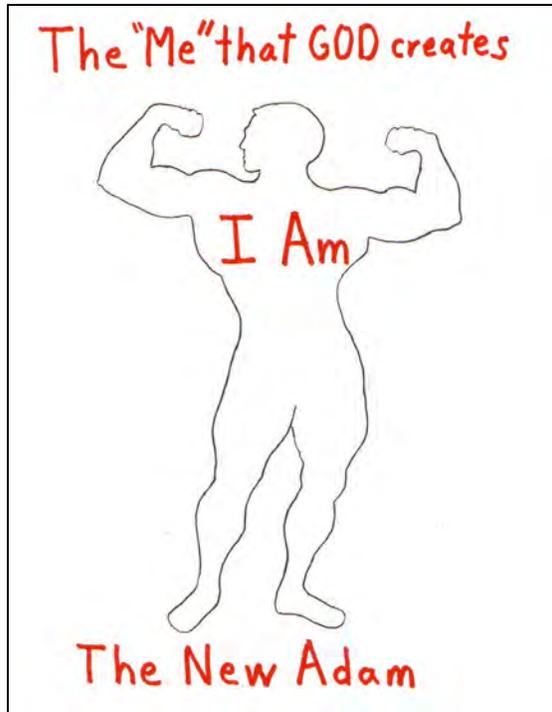
We each have a self that we think we have created in time with our choices. It's our psyche in a body of flesh; it's the "me" that I think "I" made.



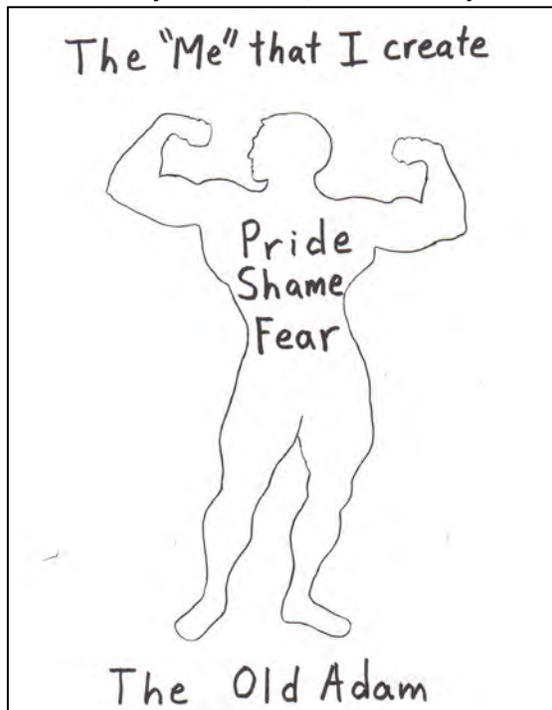
But there is a "me" that "I Am" has made.



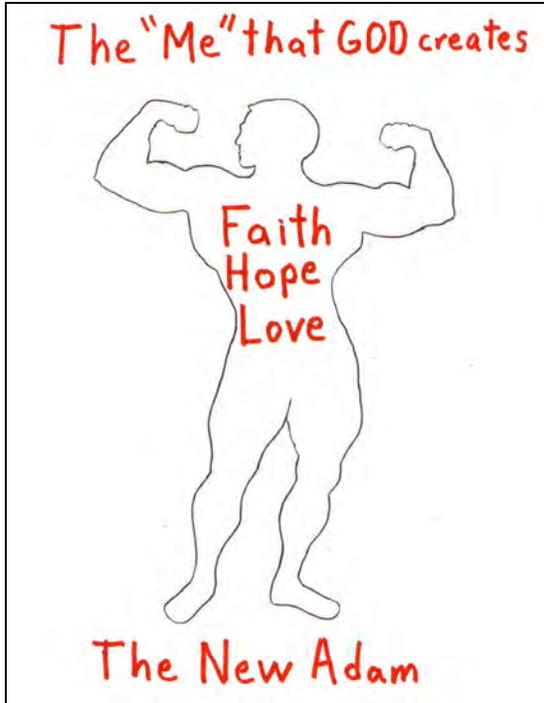
The "me" that I think "I" create, is who "I am not." It's a passing illusion.



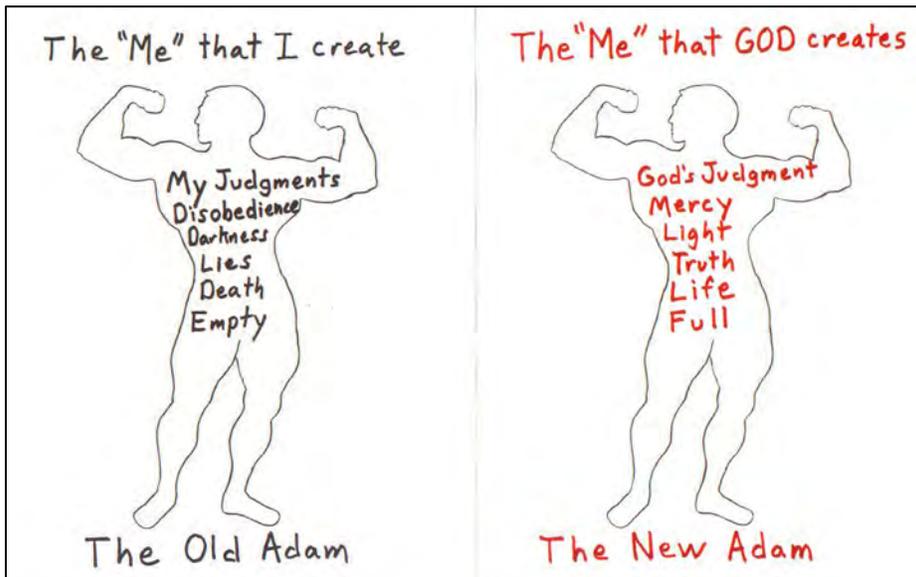
And the "me" that God has created is who I am.
I think it may be eternal; it's the Body of Christ.



The "me" that "I" create is pride, shame, and fear.



The "me" that God has created is Faith, Hope, and Love.



The "me" that "I" create is my judgments: disobedience, darkness, lies and death. It's temporal and hollow... it's empty space and time

The "me" that God creates is His Judgment: Mercy, Light, Truth and Life... it's the fullness of all my space and time.

In the words of Saint Paul, you have an old adam—an old body of death that can do nothing but sin, for it's the spawn of the devil. And you have a New Adam, who is eternal, indestructible, cannot die, and is actually incapable of sin for He is entirely free a *truly* free will.

In 1 John 3, John writes, "Whoever sins is of the devil... for this purpose the son of God appeared, to destroy the works of the devil. Whoever's been born of God does not sin... for he cannot sin."

See? You have a self that is dead and can do nothing but sin.
And a self that is alive and is incapable of sin.

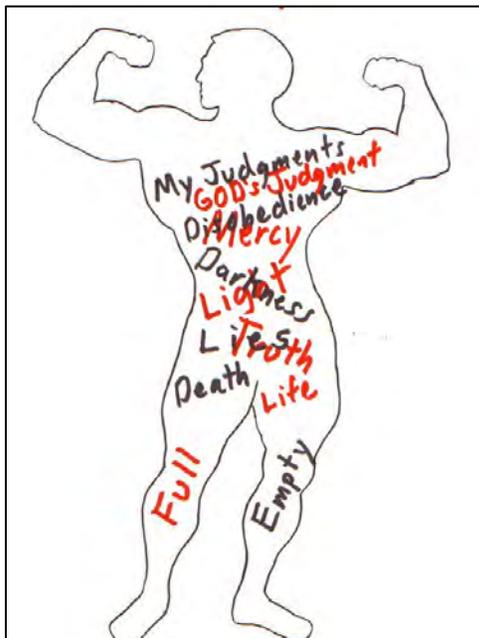
"He who loves is born of God and knows God," writes John
"And he who does not love does not know God."

I bet you love at times and don't love at other times.

- Well when you love, it's God in you that's loving; God is Love.
- And when you don't love... well; that's just the old you, the spawn of the devil.

In John's Gospel chapter 10 to a group of Jews that were about to stone him, whom he previously referred to as the spawn of the devil, Jesus says, "Is it not written in your law... you are gods."

See? Jesus acted as if eternity was buried deep in even the worst of hearts.
He acted as if every dirty field contained buried treasure.



He spoke as if each of us were a field containing wheat and tares or wheat and weeds.
As if each of us was grain and chaff.
As if each of us was sheep and goat.
As if each of us was spirit and flesh.

And here's the rub, "*That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of spirit is spirit...*" Flesh can't just decide to be spirit.

A goat can't decide to be a sheep; the chaff can't decide to be grain.

Weeds can't decide to be wheat; a heart of stone can't decide to be flesh.

A will cannot just will a new will; evil cannot decide to be Good.

Nothing... cannot decide to be something, and the dead cannot decide to live.

So we read about the Judgment, and we all panic asking how can I change?

*Give me some knowledge of Good so I can choose the good, make myself Good and save my soul. **How can "I" change "me?"***

Well listen to the Judgment of God: **You can't.**

I mean, you must lose your psyche, (that's your "me") to find it.
I mean, you must die . . . and be born again.

Now, that's a terrifying judgment . . . and then profoundly Good News.
For you see, my biggest problem, actually my only problem, is "me."
More specifically that I can't change me; all my anxiety, fear, shame and stress is due to the fact that I can't seem to change "me" . . . at least not for the better.

But if what I'm saying is true, there is no "me" to change.

- There is an old me, that only sins and can't be fixed, for it's already condemned, for in fact it's actually nothing, but an illusion.
- And there is a New Me, that can do nothing but good, and so never needs to be fixed, it's actually Christ in me, who is eternal.

So, there is a *temporal "me"* that's not me... and an *eternal me* that is who I am...
There is a "*me*" that *cannot be justified...* and there is a "*me*" that *is eternally justified...* But there is no "*me*" to *justify*, defend, promote, worry about, or hide.

There is no "*me*" to change...

God is not a God of second chances (we need to get rid of that phrase_; He is the Creator of new creations. You don't need a second chance; you need a new heart, a New "Me."

There is no “*me*” to *change*, but there is a “*me*” to *lose*, and an utterly fascinating “*Me*” to *be discovered*. See? Every good decision in me is the revelation of who I truly am. Unless, of course, I think I created those decisions in me and then those decisions in me define who I am not; I have killed them and created my ego, that is my sin so do I need to worry about that? No.

Now, listen to what Paul wrote, “*Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*” You can’t fix the old man; you can only observe that he is dead; he is nothing—he is dead. It sounds like a horrifying judgment, but it’s the *best possible news!*

For months, I’ve been fascinated by something from *Practicing the Presence of God*. Abbe de Beaufort, who interviewed Brother Lawrence, writes:

Brother Lawrence was aware of his sins and was not at all surprised by them. “*That is my nature,*” he would say, “*the only thing I know how to do.*” He simply confessed his sins to God, without pleading with Him or making excuses.

After this, he was able to peacefully resume his regular activity of love and adoration. If Brother Lawrence didn’t sin, he thanked God for it, because only God’s grace could keep him from sinning.

Saint Paul wrote, “*Rejoice always. Don’t Worry. Thank God for everything*” (Phil. 4:4).

I’ve tried to thank God for everything, but I still worry and sure don’t rejoice always. I’ve tried to thank God for everything, but I haven’t thanked him for me... Instead I’ve worried about me.

You know, it’s impossible to thank God for the old “*me*”... for the old “*me*” is the “*me*” that I thought I made so there’s no one to thank; it’s my ego. But the New “*Me*,” is the “*Me*,” I didn’t make—the *Me* that loves because it knows that it is constantly loved... because “*God is Love.*”

I can’t create love; Love creates me, by living His Life in me.

I can’t create the real *Me*; I can only discover the “*Me*” that *has been* created . . . and buried in a field like treasure . . . or that is rising from a tomb-like eternal Life.

It’s impossible to thank God for the old *me* . . . for the moment I genuinely thank God for the old “*me*,” I discover the New “*Me*” in its place.

In the very place we were called “not his people . . .”

We discover that we are the children of God.

In the very place the old Jerusalem was destroyed . . .

The New Jerusalem comes down.

It’s where sin increased . . .

Grace abounded all the more.

It’s from the tomb of the old self, that the New Self is born.

I had a friend who used to make beautiful bronze works of art. First, he'd fashion a figure out of wax and then encase the figure in clay. Then he'd fire the clay, which would harden the clay and melt the wax leaving a void in this earthen vessel^{iv} . . . and then he'd pour molten bronze into the void.

One day he said to me,

“Peter it's always a religious experience for me...

I think it's how God makes me, and you, and all his people...

My sin is like that wax that forms a void...

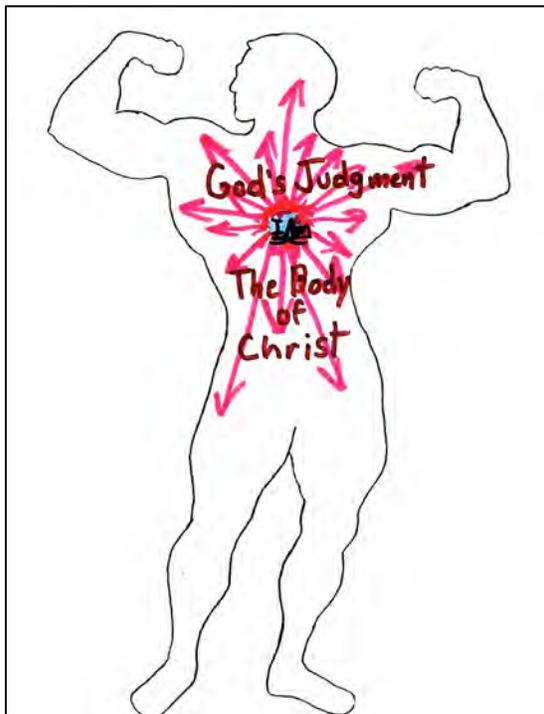
And the Grace of God is the burning hot substance of God that melts the wax and fills the void... It's faith hope and love in me and it's eternal.”

Scripture teaches that the inner Sanctuary in the temple was eternal...

And separated from the outer courts of the temple with a curtain...

You *are* that temple according to Jesus.

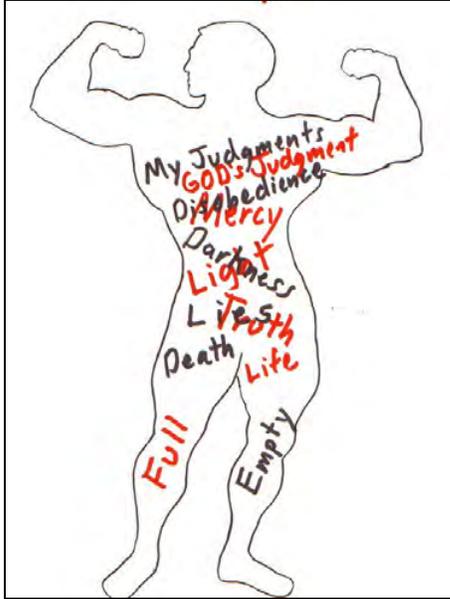
I think the great and glorious surprise may be that “I am” is hidden behind the curtain in every individual and unique temple of flesh—like breath in a ball of clay.



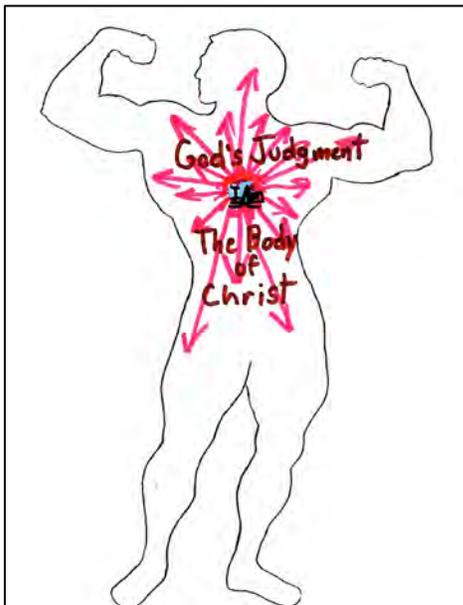
And when we see Christ die that curtain is ripped, and Love begins to fill our temple from the inside out like molten bronze that fills an earthen vessel. And so, in this way, I discover that I am the Body of Christ and image of God. And with Christ, I reign and rule from the throne in the temple of my own soul—An individual, and unique temple,

constructed by means of individual, and unique, sins that have been filled with the eternal substance of God, who is Grace.

When Jesus told the parable of the wheat and the weeds, He made it clear that we can't turn weeds into wheat, just as wax won't turn into bronze.



He also made it clear that we don't have the ability to separate one from the other, but we must wait for the Judgment.^v There will be a Judgment on the last day, but when we surrender to the ever-present presence of God, when we wait on God, we come to the Judgment of the last day here and now.



We are not cast into the Lake of Fire, but the Fire wells up from a spring in the midst of our souls and fills the temple of God with the Spirit of God.

- The Fire destroys the old man—that's the glorious disappearing.
- And the Fire reveals the New Man—the one that was buried in the prison of the old man, and the one that is revealed in the emptiness left by his passing.

And so, I discover who I am—that's a glorious appearing.

We wonder what *we* can *do*, and I wrote this down one day. . .

I can watch "me" die, and I can watch me rise from the dead.

I can lose my life and find it.

I can observe my own creation and I am made forever grateful.^{vi}

So then, how is the old man destroyed, and how is the new man revealed?

How do we live free of our anxiety, sin, shame, and despair?

How do we enter God's rest,

Become who we truly are,

And live in the perfect freedom of absolute and relentless love?

Well, with whatever faith God has already given you, you practice the presence of God. You sit on the side of the bed with your heavenly Dad, confess your sins and receive His mercy. Jesus said, "If you've seen me you've seen the Father..."

Jesus is the presence of God; remember that when He appears to John at the start of the Revelation; His eyes burn with fire and His face shines like the sun. He's covered in white, but John sees His feet; they are burnished bronze—as if refined by fire in a furnace (1:14). Read Psalm 22:14 and you'll discover that there was a moment on the cross in which Christ's body appeared to have been made of wax. And yet, here, it is burnished bronze or solid gold... and eternal. Here it is. You've been wax, and you will be solid gold.

Well, I hope you see that the Lake of Fire is the presence of God...

I think it's also, the fluid that Christ bleeds . . . even here, even now.

Communion

And so He took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body." The book of Hebrews says that His body is that curtain in the temple. And He took the cup; He took an empty earthen vessel and said, "This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins drink of it all of you."

Do you understand?

He isn't asking you to make a covenant to try harder...

He *is* the Eternal Covenant revealed in time, that you might become who it is that you truly are. ^{vii} The cup is Fire. Amen.

Come to the table!

Benediction

Clip from the movie *Lion King*

[Rafiki and Simba are on a walk alone at night. Rafiki is leading Simba somewhere. He pushes back some brush, points, and motions to Simba to come forward.]

Rafiki: Shh. Look down there.

[Simba tentatively moves forward, down an embankment and towards a pool of water. He looks into the water and sees his own reflection.]

Simba: That's not my father. That's just my reflection.

Rafiki: Nooo. Look haaarder.

[Simba looks into the water at first hesitantly but then a bit more deeply and with curiosity. Mufasa's reflection slowly appears in the water.]

Rafiki: You see? He lives in *you*.

[There is a bit of rumbling . . . like thunder, and then a deep voice . . .]

Mufasa: Simba.

Rafiki: Father?

Mufasa: (Appearing in the clouds and approaching Simba) Simba, you have forgotten me.

Simba: No. How could I?

Mufasa: You have forgotten who you are and so have forgotten me. Look inside yourself, Simba.

Mufasa: You are more than what you have become. You must take your place in the circle of life.

Simba: How can I go back? I'm not who I used to be.

Mufasa: Remember who you are. You are my son and the one true king. (Disappearing with the clouds) Remember who you are.

[Simba tries to chase after his father.]

Simba: No please. Don't leave me. Father?

Mufasa: Remember.

Simba: Don't leave me.

Mufasa: Remember.

[Rafiki approaches Simba]

Rafiki: What was that? Haha! The weather. . . very peculiar; don't you think?

Simba: Yeah. Looks like the winds are changing.

Rafiki: Aww... change is good!

Simba: Yeah. But it's not easy. I know what I have to do but going back means I have to face my past. I've been running from it for so long.

[Rafiki hits Simba on the head with a stick.]

Simba: Ow! Geez! What was that for?

Rafiki: It doesn't matter; it's in the past.

Simba: Yeah. But it still hurts.

Rafiki: Ohh yes; the past can hurt.

But the way I see it is you can either run from it or learn from it.

[Rafiki tries to hit Simba on the head again, but Simba dodges the blow]

Rafiki: Aha! See? So, what are you going to do?

Simba: First . . . I'm gonna take your stick! [Simba grabs the stick and tosses it.]

Rafiki: No no no, not the stick. [Simba runs off while Rafiki searches for the stick.]

Rafiki: Hey where are you going?

Simba: I'm going back.

Rafiki: Go on! Get out of here (laughs) Woo! Woohoo!

So, if you didn't understand the sermon, that's what I was saying: *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me."* He is the Lion of Judah.

Maybe you could take some time this week to practice the presence of God. Did you know? You can download a copy of *Practicing the Presence of God* for free. That might help. But practicing the presence of God is really just being aware of the presence of God wherever you are and whatever you're doing, and then doing those things for Him.

It's also important, every now and then, to just sit and look into your Father's eyes. You do that with the eyes of your heart. And when you're doing that, maybe you could just say, "Thank you Father . . . for me."

You see? When you say that it burns the old man; it destroys him because you acknowledge that you yourself are a gift. It burns the old man and the New Man appears who is the Life of the Father in you. Then you begin to live gratefully, worshipfully. You begin to live freely and that's the glorious appearing of Jesus in you. All I'm saying is believe the Gospel. Amen.

Disclaimer: The author has not edited this document. 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.

ⁱ We think Jesus changes, but maybe He doesn't change; we change.
We think Light is two things (a particle and a wave), but maybe it's one and we are two.
We think God is two—Judgment and Love, but maybe God is One, and we are two—faithless and faithful.

ⁱⁱ But as long as this world lasts and Christ's Church is in it, it is to be a militant Church. Although it has the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, woe to the Christian Church when it is triumphant in this world, for then it is not the Church that has triumphed but the world. . . . Did he not come into the world in order to suffer; is not that what he called being triumphant?
—Soren Kierkegaard

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew pictures this in His Gospel: *"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after [literally, "with"] his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. (28:50-53)"*

Jesus dies, the curtain rips, and the dead rise. . . . But they come out of their tombs "with Jesus" and enter the city of Jerusalem on the Eighth Day. When I surrender to Christ at the cross, I rise from the dead, but my New Man is trapped in the prison of this old body of flesh and a sinful psyche. I have eternal life, but it exists in the tomb that is this old "body of death." The day my body dies is the day I finally leave this tomb and find myself entirely free of doubt, fear, anxiety, shame, and pain. I find myself in the Eternal City.

^{iv} The word "wax" appears four times in Scripture. It's used to refer to transient things like mountains, valleys, and wickedness—all which melt in the presence of God. But in Psalm 22, which Jesus quotes on the cross, the speaker says, "My heart is melted within me like wax." On the cross, Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us. He was emptied for us that we might be filled with Him. On the cross, our old man is destroyed and our New Man is revealed.

^v Will there never be an end of all our ceaseless talk about the delay of the Parousia? How can the coming of that which doth not enter in ever be delayed? The End of which the New Testament speaks is no temporal event. . . . What delays its coming is not the Parousia, but our awakening.
—Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans

^{vi} So what can I do?
I scratched out this answer one day:
I can watch "me" die.
Every good decision (Faith, hope and love in me) is watching my old man die...
And every good decision in me is watching my New Man rise from the dead.
So I can watch "me" die, and I can watch "me" live.
I can observe my own creation and be eternally grateful for who I am.

I can be humbled and exalted.
I can love because I am loved.
I can choose the Good in freedom for the Good has chosen me.
I can do nothing... and everything... who Am I?
Well, I guess...*"It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me."*

vii The best explanation of Revelation 20:1-15 must be the words of Jesus in John 5:21-29. Read them slowly and think it through. Isn't this what John is describing as he watches the judgment at the great white throne?

²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.—John 5:21-29

39

The Books of the Dead and the Book of the Lamb

The Books of the Dead and the Book of the Lamb

Revelation 20:11-15

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

Peter Hiatt

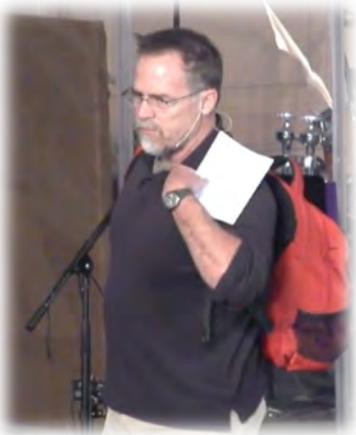
November 24, 2018

Prayer

Lord God, here we are. I pray that you would help us to preach, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Message

I brought these books with me to help you understand Revelation 20:11-15.



We preached on this text last week, but this week I’d like to explain the books—both the books mentioned in Revelation 20 and the books I carry around with me.

I’ve shown you these books before so for some they might be familiar, but it will be a good review... and I wanted to hang with my kids over Thanksgiving rather than spend it writing the sermon.

Sorry, these are kind of awkward and make it rather hard to move.

I used to carry these with me wherever I went—and sometimes still do because I wanted the knowledge of the good, so I can make myself good.

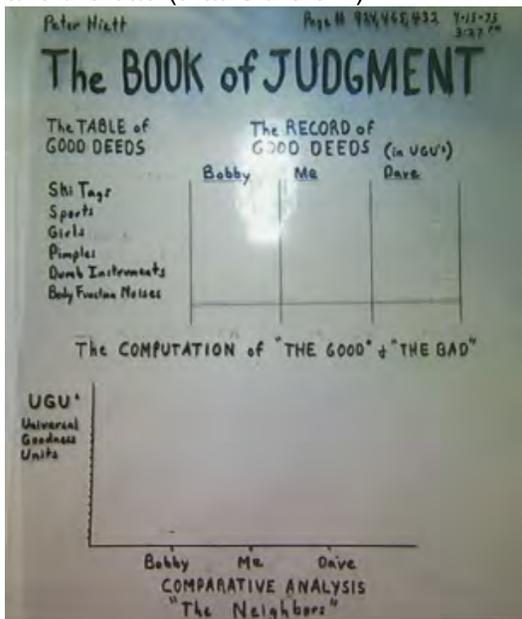
[Peter begins unloading several heavy books from his backpack.]



These are the books of judgment; they give you knowledge.=.
 They're extremely complicated and so extensive I can't carry all of them anymore...
 But I thought I'd show you some and explain how they work.
 To do that, I'd like to explain one page from one book on one particular fall day in 1975.

I've brought this cutting edge mid-70's audio-visual equipment, capable of reading my records from 1975 and projecting them on the screen for you.

This is one page, from one book, for one moment, on one day, in the fall of 1975.
 For the sake of simplicity, I've edited this one page to include only 3 people: **Bobby, me, and Dave**. At any given moment this is how I would judge and determine the Good and the bad (that is the evil).



*Note the date and page number at the top of the page.

On the left is the Table of Good Deeds (of course in 1975 I referred to this as "**Categories of Cool.**")

Peter Hiatt Page # 98,465,832 7-13-73 3:27 PM

The BOOK of JUDGMENT

The TABLE of GOOD DEEDS *Categories of Cool*

	Bobby	Me	Dave
Ski Tags			
Sports			
Girls			
Pimples			
Dumb Experiments			
Body Function Noises			

The RECORD of GOOD DEEDS (in UGU's)

The COMPUTATION of "THE GOOD" + "THE BAD"

UGU⁺
Universal Goodness Units

	Bobby	Me	Dave
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS "The Neighbors"			

On the right is the Record of Good Deeds measured in UGU's
(Universal Goodness Units)

It's calculated for me, and "my neighbors."

One category of cool that was really important when I was in high school was ski tags. If you had a lot of ski tags on your jacket that meant you were cool.

Ski Tags

Bobby had a lot of ski tags (give him 2 UGU's)

I had a lot of ski tags on my jacket (give me 2 UGU's)

Dave never had any ski tags (give him zippo, nada, nothing!)

Sports

Bobby was really good at sports (give him 3)

I, at least, tried to do a sport (give me 1)

Dave didn't do any sports (give him zippo, zero, nada)

Is this familiar to you? See all these computations happen extremely fast in the supercomputer of the human brain so I'm just slowing it all down so we can reflect upon it but it probably could've happened in a nanosecond in my brain.

Girls

All the girls liked Bobby (give Bobby a 3)

I once talked to a cheerleader (give me . . . 3, right?)

Dave didn't have a girlfriend (so give Dave 0—nothing for Dave)

Pimples

Bobby never had any pimples (give him a 3)

I had some pimples; I had some struggles with that (give me a 1)

Dave once came to school with dried Clearasil on his face! (That's, like, -1)

Dumb Instruments

That's really important!

Bobby didn't play any dumb instruments (give him a 3)

I didn't play any dumb instruments (give me a 3)

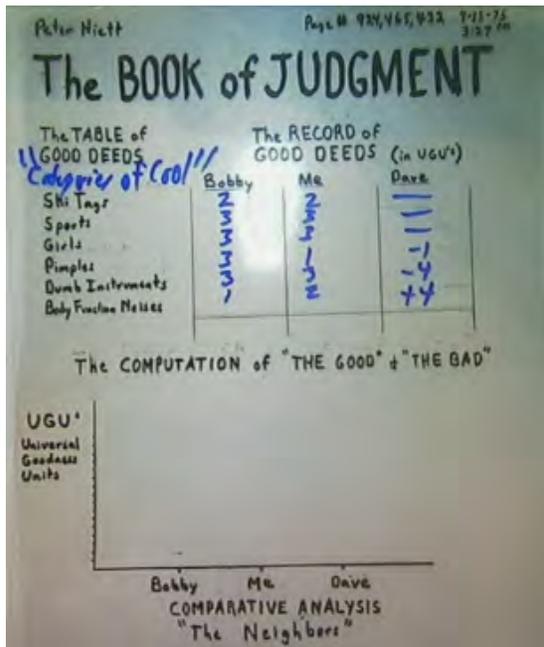
Dave was state champion cello player. (-4!)

Bodily Function Noises

Bobby didn't have a lot of body function noises (give him 0)

I could do pretty well in that department (2)

Dave could burp the entire alphabet (that's +4) It was spectacular!!



These scores were constantly factored into historical scores...

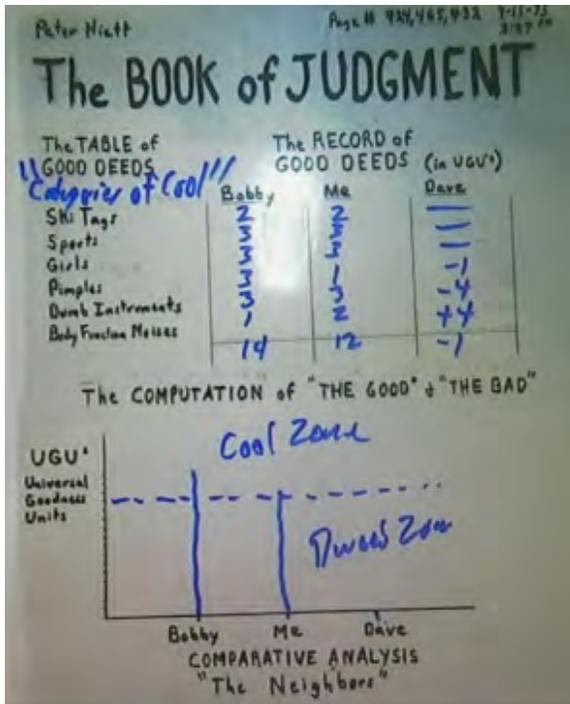
But for the sake of simplicity, we'll only plot the scores for this particular day in 1975 assuming that we had all started at zero.

1st You calculate and plot. Then...

(Bobby—14, Peter—12, Dave . . .)

2nd Directly under your score, you draw the Universal Geek Line.

(Above the UGL are "the Good (the Cool)" and below are "the Bad (the dweebs)"



Good and bad, that's how you "know."

I was ruled by these books of judgment:

It determined who I sat with at lunch...

It determined who I said, "Hey Dude" to, in the hallway.

It was the reason that I went out for sports that I hated.

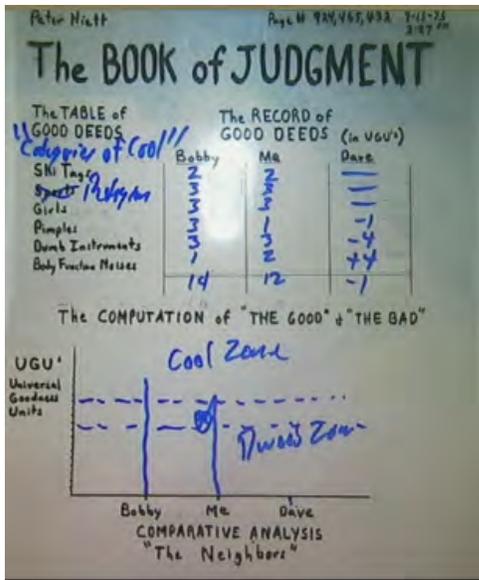
It was why I quit piano in third grade; the cool kids up the street didn't play the piano.

It determined my moods:

- If Bobby got a zit, I rejoiced . . . I was that much closer to my goal, my idol.
- And when I was down, I could watch Dave carrying his cello across the football field while I practiced soccer (in doing so, I could judge him last and least and feel better about myself).

Well, that year I got cut from the soccer team. In all my long life, I had never been that depressed. It wasn't because I cared about soccer; it was because I had suddenly fallen into the "Dweeb Zone" . . . I went down behind our house in Littleton, sat in a hole by the railroad track and wept for hours. In all seriousness, I remember thinking: *"How am I going to explain this to my grandchildren? 'Yes . . . your grandfather is a dweeb.'"*

That hurt like hell . . . but after a few weeks of moping, I just changed a few categories and then, lowered the Universal Geek Line. Not sports, maybe religion.



That's the beauty of this system, but also why it's so much work:

-All the computing.

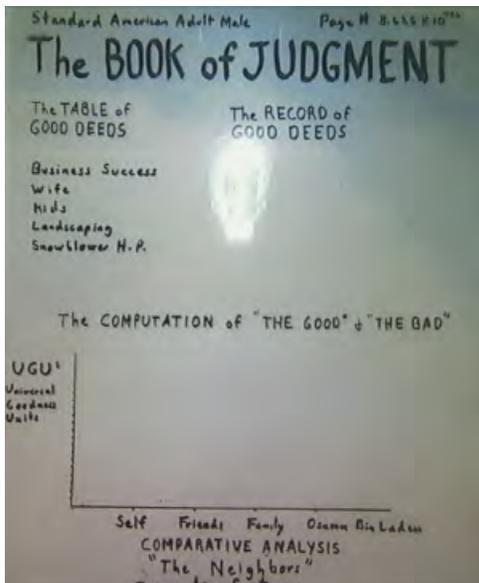
It's also why ya kinda live in fear all the time: things change.

-What if something changes?

-What if my calculations are somehow inaccurate?

- Dave's book may look different than mine
- What if I was Bob's dweeb, the "last and the least" in Bobby's book—the one that made Bobby feel better about himself?

Now, you might be thinking, "Yeah, 10th-grade boys are *so* immature!" Well, let me show you a page out of a book of judgment for the standard American adult male:



The Standard American Adult Male:

It's exactly the same layout... and same operation system

(It runs on pride, shame, envy, and fear)

It's just that the Categories of Cool have changed:

(Business Success, Wife and Kids, Landscaping, Snow Blower horsepower)

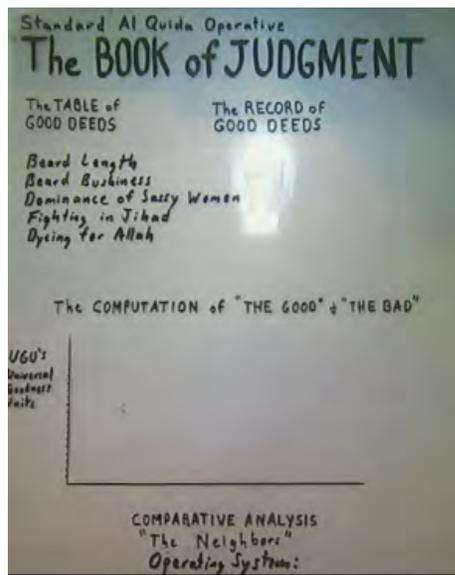
"The Universal Geek Line" has become "The Respectability Line"

(It determines who you might invite over for dinner: Above are successful adults and below are the "less fortunate.")

It's plotted against friends, neighbors . . . and Osama bin Laden.

(It's always important to put someone like this on your chart, so you can judge them "last and least" and feel better about yourself... "I may have my issues, but at least I've never bombed a subway!")

Hey, here's a page out of a book of judgment for a standard Taliban militant or Al Qaida operative:



A Standard Taliban Militant or Al Qaida Operative:

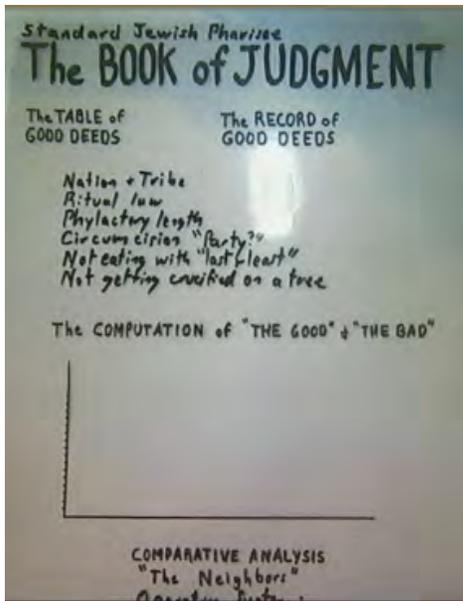
Same layout and operating system... pride, shame, envy, and fear.

It's just that the Categories of Cool have changed to things like;

Beard Quality, Control of Sassy Women (it's not all bad), Dying in Jihad, etc. etc.

The Geek Line is now the Fatwah Line: Above—the faithful, Below—the infidel.

Hey, here's a page for a standard Jewish Pharisee: [See next page]



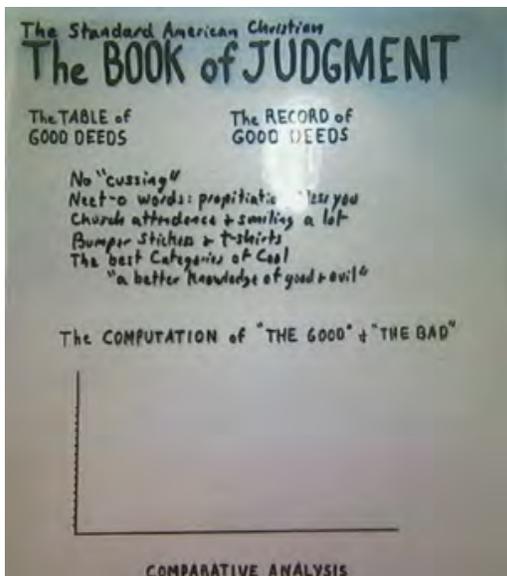
A Standard Jewish Pharisee:

- Nation and Tribe, Phylactery length, Circumcision
 (Do you belong to the "Circumcision Party?")
- Not eating with tax collectors and sinners (the last and the least).
- Not getting crucified on a tree.

Categories of Cool have changed, but it operates just the same way;
 It runs on pride, shame, envy, and fear.

Now, you may be thinking, "Good thing I'm not a Jew or a Muslim; I'm a Christian!"

Hey, here's a page for a standard American Christian:



A Standard American Christian:

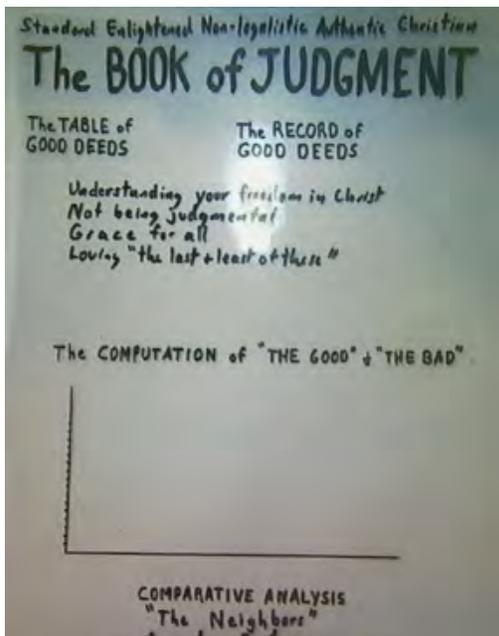
It's just the same but the Categories of Cool are now:

- Not cussing
- Neet-o words like "Bless you" and "propitiation"
- Church attendance and smiling a lot.
- The "right" bumper stickers and T-shirts
- The "right" categories of cool... a better "knowledge of Good and evil"

The Geek line is **Salvation!** (Above are Christians... below is the "I wonder if they know the Lord?" zone—we're not to judge, so we "wonder if.")

Now, you may be thinking, "OK, good point. I'm so glad that I'm not one of those 'unenlightened legalistic cultural Christians'"

Hey, here's a page for a standard enlightened non-legalistic authentic Christian:



Enlightened Non-legalistic Authentic Christian:

The Categories of Cool ("knowledge of the good") are now:

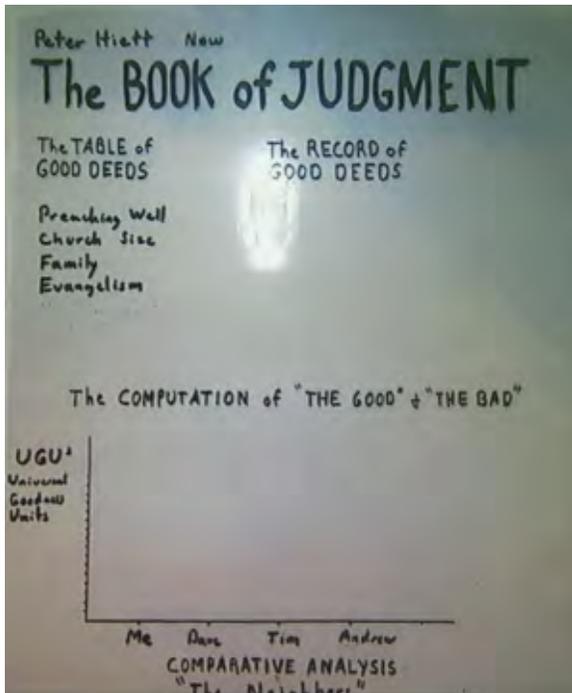
- Understanding your freedom in Christ.
- Not being judgmental
- Grace for all
- Loving "the last and least of these"

AND YET the operating system is just the same, so we end up

- Enslaved to acting free.
- Judging the judgmental.
- Driven to be graceful.

-And we use the last and least to earn points in our books.
(We feed “the last and least” not because we love “the last and least” but because we want points in order to make ourselves “good” and impress God.)

Hey, here’s a page from my book of judgment for today:



My Book of Judgment for Today:

The Categories of Cool are now:

- Preaching well
- Church size
- Family
- Helping people trust the Love of God in Christ Jesus

The Geek Line is the “You’re OK” line “Acceptable Pastor”
(Above is “I can rest zone,” below is the “get to work, no rest zone”)

But do you see? It operates just as it did in 10th grade:
(Competition, pride, shame, envy, and fear)

It’s just that the Categories of Cool have changed...
and I measure myself against my new neighbors.

Fellow pastors, like my old friend Tim Brewer, Andrew Trawick, and Dave Jones
(actually the same Dave Jones-the cello player).

This is surprising: but Jesus was in Dave Jones, (the state champion cello player). He turned out to be one of my best friends, the best man in my wedding. He’s an amazing guy: great mind, quick wit, big heart for God and a great speaker.

We did youth ministry together in LA, but I still kept the books in my heart— so when Dave spoke at youth group, I secretly hoped it didn't go well, cause then, I'd look better.

My friend Tim had a larger church than me, but in a depression he asphyxiated himself leaving behind his wife, children, and church. And something inside me said, *“Hey Peter, you won.” “You’re a winner!”*

I so clearly remember the night Dave fell to pieces in my arms sobbing as he cried, *“She’s leaving. She wants a divorce.”*

That was thirty years ago, and Dave is happily married to a wonderful woman now. But I need to tell you . . .

That night, as my best friend descended into hell, as I held him and I felt the waves of pain course through his trembling body...

Something inside me said, *“Hey Peter... you’re first, Dave is last. Be happy.”*

Andrew Trawick is like my brother. Andrew would come back from mission trips to places like Mozambique and share how hundreds or thousands of people came to Christ, and it would get me depressed. Why? Because in that same time I didn't lead anyone to Christ.

So, what's my desire? That people never come to know Jesus? What am I doing? I'm wishing people to Hell just to feel better about myself—just to feed my own fragile ego.

When I live by these books...

I end up hating my best friends, hating the Kingdom, and maybe even hating God. And then, when I see that, I hate myself! I condemn myself. I do the work of the accuser for him. I damn God, damn all people and then damn myself.

I think Scripture refers to all of these categories of cool as “the law.”

And the energy by which I play this game is called “the flesh.”

And the game is called “justification;” I’m justifying myself.

And when I play the game—when I live by the books—I walk in death.

I can't live gracefully carrying these books.

I can't dance well, sing well, laugh well, or live well.

I consume the Good like a beast, and I use love like a harlot.

Ironically, trying to be good, I can't be good, and I make myself bad.

I'm imprisoned in a body of death and a psyche from Hell.

That's the abomination of desolation: “What is an exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God,” said Jesus. (Luke 16:15)

Jesus said, *“You must lose your life (your psyche)... to find it.”*

You must stop thinking about your self—in order to love.

You see? Just keeping the books, I can't love others and I can't love God.

I can't even love myself.

1 John 3:14 *“He who does not love abides in death.”* I get trapped in “me.”

I become one of the walking dead—a zombie.

Genesis 2:16 God said, *“Adam you may freely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

The knowledge of good and evil, taken from the tree, as if the Good were a thing to be consumed is called “the law.” At the dragon’s tempting, Adam took knowledge of the Good, got the law, and lost God... who is the Good.

Adam got knowledge that he was naked, bad, and dead—the walking dead—and knowledge that he was exiled from God, who is the Good and source of all Life. When I justify myself, everything dies—that’s **my judgment**.

Well, let’s look at **God’s judgment**, what we started preaching on last time: Revelation 20:11-12 John writes, *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead...*

Now, in the previous paragraph, John saw “the living,” those who live and reign with Christ on earth, the first resurrection—those who’ve been born again.

So, whoever is alive in Christ is not one of the dead that John sees.

Or whatever *IN* you that is alive in Christ, is not one of the dead that John sees.

Your New Man is not the dead, but your old man—your old adam is.

That’s what we talked about last week.¹

In Christ, you have a New Man that is Life Eternal, and you have an old man that is dead.

Revelation 20:12

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done (ergon, “their works, their deeds”).

‘The dead’ are judged by the things in the books, according to their deeds—their works. Jesus said, *“Judge not that you be not judged, for with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged.”* So . . . if you want to play “by the books,” you’ll get the books, and when you get the books, you’ll already be dead because playing by the books is death.

Have you ever wondered why it is that across the globe people have a “knowledge of good and evil?”

¹ “The Living” don’t get judged, they’ve already passed from death to life—they believe (John 5:24). Believing in Christ is the Judgment of you—the old you.

We argue about the categories of cool—that is, the definition of the Good—but people everywhere know that there is such a thing as the Good. And people everywhere try to make themselves good by keeping score in these books . . .

I think it's because we all know, deep inside, that we have a Creator and He is Good, and He has access to books. It may be that He keeps no record of wrongs (as Paul says, "Love keeps no record of wrongs.") However, satan—the accuser (your accuser)—does.

We exist in fear of these books, constantly preparing our defense, for we know that one day there will be an accounting. Jesus revealed what that accounting is based upon. He quoted Deuteronomy saying, "*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 the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. On this rests all the law and prophets.*"

By loving my neighbor (that's the people on the bottom of my charts) or not loving my neighbor, I either love God or I don't love God.

In Matthew 25:31-33, Jesus described the judgment this way (Jesus didn't talk about many judgments, just "the judgment"):

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another [Or maybe He will just separate people, I think that might be a little more accurate] as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

He then says some stuff to the sheep on his right, and then in verses 41-46:

...he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment [kolasin], but the righteous into eternal life."

If you want to live by the books, God will give you the books.

He's in Lazarus sitting by the gate.

He's in the last and the least.

He's in the stranger, the emigrant, and sojourner...

The Judgment is happening all the time.

The goats say, "When did we see you?" Well, they didn't see Him... ever!

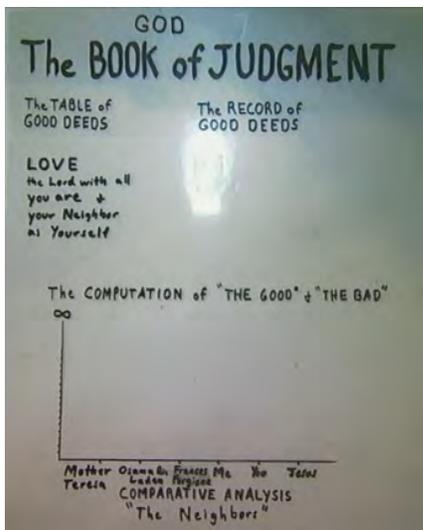
They just saw the last and the least, or at best, a way to score points.

Do you realize that just by judging someone the “last” or the “least,” you judge Jesus Christ last and least? “Whatever you do to the least of these,” he said.

Remember when He walked this earth almost everyone judged Him last and least, baby in a food trough and peasant on a cross—cursed by God—that’s very last and least. If you need someone to be last and least Jesus says, “That’s me.”

Anyhow, living by the books, I constantly crucify Christ and condemn myself. I hate my neighbor and so I hate God, and then hate myself, and I broadcast to the heavenly places, “Yes! I stole fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil; I took the Life of the Good, and now I’m dead, pretending to be alive. . . at church.”

Well, if we dare guess at God’s book, what do you suppose it would look like? I’m guessing, it would look something like this:



Categories of Cool–Good Deeds

Perfect Love

“Love the Lord with all you are. Love your neighbor as yourself”

(Oh and by the way, Love keeps no record of wrongs, 1 Cor. 13:5)

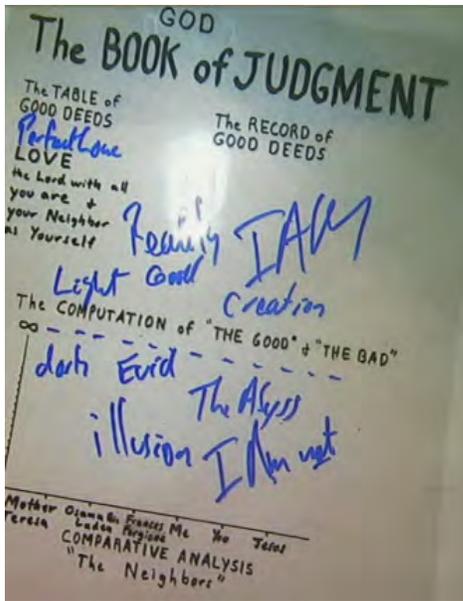
The Universal Geek Line is Perfect Love

Above is *light*; below is dark.

Above is Good; below is evil

Above is *Creation*; And below is the abyss—*Hades, Sheol, loneliness, death*.

Above is Reality; below is illusion. Above is “I Am” below is “I Am not.”



So how do you suppose we measure up?

Now, this is interesting because Scripture says, “Love keeps no record of wrongs.” But supposed he did. How do we measure up?

Mother Teresa, Osama Bin Laden, Frances (our Community Care pastor), Me (I’m as good as Osama) . . .

[Peter begins plotting people on the chart and even the best don’t even come close to measuring up.]

Where are you?

Actually, this really is all illusion because “Love keeps no record of wrongs.” Remember what God said to Moses, “Whosoever sins I will blot out of my book.” Just one sin and you’re already dead . . . Just to reckon according to the books is to take the knowledge of Good and evil from the tree... It is to crucify the Life and declare yourself dead.

So, we might wonder what good are the books and law?

1. Well, the law tells us we’re dead.
2. The “knowledge of Good and evil” tells Adam—mankind—that a walk with God in a garden is better than a law library.
3. The books tell us that we can’t create ourselves, justify ourselves, or save ourselves. Once you know that you can’t save yourself, maybe you’re ready to meet the Savior who is “the Good”—not dead but alive!

So anyway, where’s Jesus on this chart; how do we measure Him?

- Jesus lived a perfect life. Jesus died a perfect death. [Peter draws a cross on the chart representing that Jesus measures up; He *is* the Good.]

- He is everything the law of God describes, the Ultimate Adam (the *Eschatos Adam*), the Last Adam, the Finished Adam, the image of God who is Love.
- He is the standard. He is the measure. He is the Good.
- He is the Judgment of God.

He said, "I judge no one," yet He *is* the Judgment.

He said, "This is the Judgment: the Light has come into the world." And . . .

He said, "I am the Light of the World."

Well, in Revelation 20, on the last day, when "it is finished," books are opened. They are the record of our deeds according to the law, God's law and maybe any law. Books are opened and another book (singular) is opened, one book, *The Book of Life*. Jesus *is* the Life.

In Revelation 13 and 17, we read this book contains names written from the foundation of the world—names, it doesn't say deeds, but names.

To the Hebrews, names were persons.

These are persons who belong to the Lamb on the throne.

It's the *Lamb's Book of Life*. It's His choice, not our choice.

It's His book, not our book.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says that He gives life to whomever He chooses.

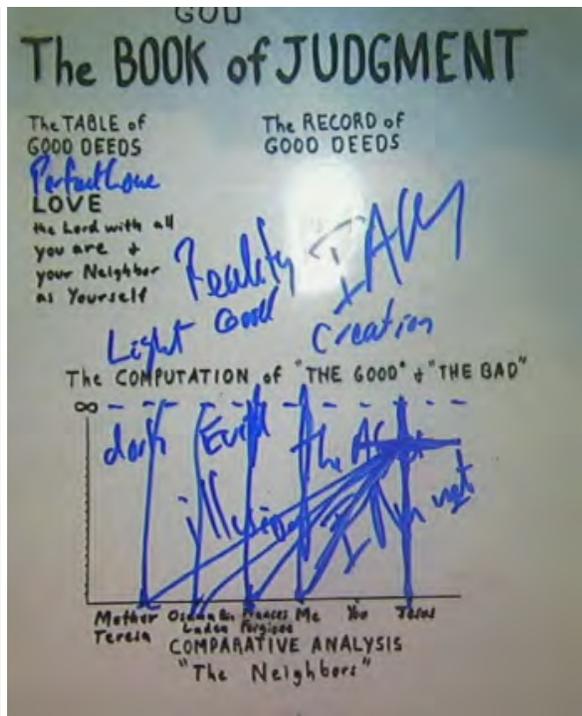
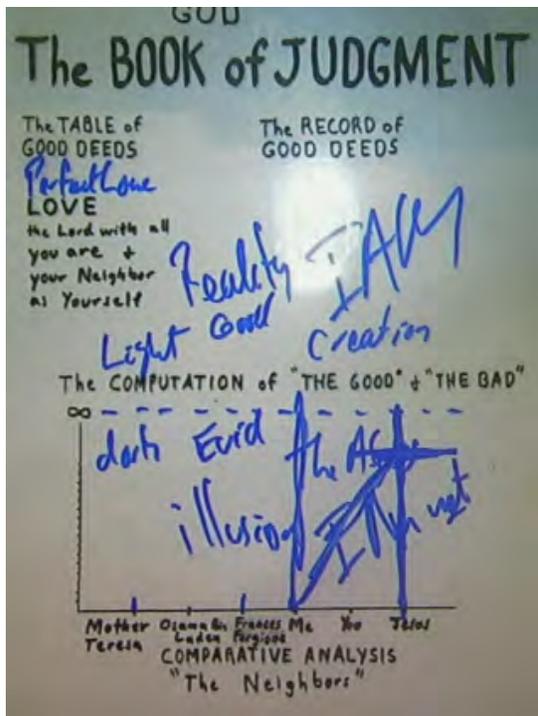
(John 5:21). So, knowing Jesus . . . do you suppose He wants to give it to a *few* or a *lot* . . . maybe all? How might He be most glorified?

Jesus is the Passover Lamb, which could be taken from the sheep or the goats (Ex. 12:5). Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus is the sin offering, which was often a goat (or seven goats) and He is the burnt offering, which was usually a sheep.

Jesus atones for our sin—"He has born our griefs and carried our sorrows...and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." And He Himself is our righteousness—"Our wisdom righteousness sanctification and redemption," writes Paul. He is our Life—eternal Life.

"For our sake, God made Jesus to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2nd Cor. 5:21)

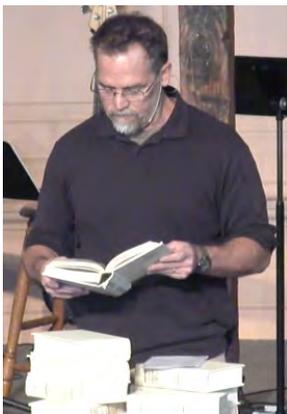
He bears our sin to destruction and His righteousness is imputed to us. It is imputed to me, and to you, to Frances, and to Mother Teresa, and to... Well, if there was any good in Osama bin Laden it must've been "imputed" to him; all good things come from God through His Word—Jesus. And if He "makes all things new," and Osama is a thing, then He must make him new with imputed righteousness. That must be how He makes everyone new: with His Word.



Actually, all righteousness is imputed—every good choice in you is God’s choice in you; it’s the fruit of the Spirit of Christ within you: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faith... You are justified (made right) by faith—the faith of Christ within you. And this faith is not of your self it is the gift of God, lest none should boast. (Ep. 2:8)

In Colossians 2:13-15 Paul writes, *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh [your old man], God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in Him.*

At the cross, it’s like God opens the books; all the judgments of this world. At the cross, God opens your books and my books with their legal demands... And with His own blood, through all my history: past, present, future, with His own blood, He stamped cancelled on every debt. That’s what Paul’s saying in Colossians 2.



It’s like He picks up the record of Peter Hiett’s deeds and begins to read: “Disrespecting his mother – fourteen times, August 13th, 1975.’ Hmmm... He takes a big old stamp, dips it in His blood [Peter pours communion wine] and stamps: “CANCELLED!”



“Lust- 5,347 times, between 4-10pm...” CANCELLED!
 “Murder in the heart” – CANCELLED!
 “Greed” – CANCELLED!
 “Slander” – CANCELLED!
 “Playboy at Tim Wrens’ House” – CANCELLED!
 “Judging Dave Jones and becoming an accuser” – CANCELLED!

“Preaching the Gospel just to feed his own ego” – CANCELLED!

“Taking the Life of the Good, to justify himself– CANCELLED! CANCELLED! CANCELLED...by my blood!

No more books! No more living by the books of damnation. [Peter begins to toss the books to the ground.] “Drink of it all of you, stop living by the damn books—the books of damnation.”

And you can’t, if you take a second look, for they’re no longer books of damnation...

Take a second look, and you’ll see that the books of condemnation . . . have become the testimony of your salvation.



The blood of the Lamb poured out over every event in my life is the word of my testimony.

We overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony.

For every moment, past present or future, that we believe God’s Grace we crush the head of the serpent, for all of his accusations have become gospel.

So, when He whispers in your ear, “Look what you’ve done, you are a wretch.” Don’t argue. Preach to him the gospel! Sing to him: *“Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!”*

Everything you do in Faith by Grace is the Righteousness of Christ rising from the dead in you—the old empty tomb that you thought was you. Do you understand? At the cross Jesus didn’t just cancel out your certificate of debt, He filled all the empty places left by sin, with His very self... His Life.

So, now when you go to the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, what do you see? [Peter turns and looks at the cross] You see Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

1. You see that Jesus died for you and with you . . . all is paid. Your old man was crucified with Christ.
2. But you also see that He rises in you. He is the Life within you. Your New Man is Christ living in you. You see Christ crucified and risen from the dead within you! At the cross, God transformed your certificate of death into the word of your testimony—the gospel according to you.

Satan really has been disarmed—His whole game is to convince you that you crucified Christ and cannot be forgiven. And the Gospel is that God willingly allowed you to crucify him in order that you would forever believe, that you are always forgiven and thoroughly loved, that you would love in the image of God your Father.

At the cross, Juan Carlos Ortiz used to say Christ has cancelled your certificate of debt. But Satan took Xerox copies.

See? Satan is disarmed and so his only hope is to convince you of falsified documents so his entire strategy is lies; it's trying to convince you that you're not forgiven and must therefore, justify yourself.

- For then you begin to live by the old books.
- You begin to condemn your neighbors.
- And then you condemn yourself and start to hate God.
- You choose death and do the work of the accuser for him.
- You put flesh—your flesh—on the evil one.

They asked Jesus, *“What must we be doing to be doing the works of God?”* And Jesus said, *“This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent.”* . . . that you trust “God is Salvation”—Yeshua, Jesus—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and is the death of “me is salvation.”

Back to Revelation 20:13-15 where the dead are judged according to the things in the books, according to their deeds:

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done (their works, their deeds). Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if [Peter emphasizes “if” as he reads] anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Whose name does Jesus not write in His book?

Well . . . maybe those that He does not know.

Remember Jesus said that some will say to Him on that day, *“Lord Lord did we not do many mighty deeds in your name?”* (We say something like: *“Just look Jesus! They should be recorded in the books...”*) And He will say to them, “Depart from me I never knew you... Jesus is the Truth and the Truth doesn't know your false self—your ego.

But does He know your true self? Maybe He *is* your true self, hidden in the depths of your false self—your ego. (To speak truth—even if it is confessing a lie—is to speak Jesus because He is the Truth and the Life.)
Maybe He is the breath that God first breathed into the clay. Like the light that enlightens *all* men according to John.

Whatever the case...

He doesn't know your self-righteous self because that self is an illusion. But He does know your true self, the honest to God self, the lost self: He came to seek and save the lost... not *some* lost, just "the lost". He saves each of us from our own sins—that is our old self, our ego, our flesh.

In Chapter 19 we saw the Word of God riding on a white horse. And He cut the flesh from *all* men, not *some* men, but *all* ("small and great" 19:18). Perhaps these are those corpses ("Great and small" 20:12) standing before the Lake of Fire that seems to also somehow be a throne.

In Isaiah 66 (It used to be the scariest passage to me, now I think it's the most hopeful!), at the edge of a New Jerusalem, *all* people look on the corpses of *all* people burning in the Valley of Gehenna and they can't help but worship because they have been saved from themselves.

At the cross, we surrender our old self and receive our New Self.

That old self is destroyed by Holy Fire or maybe . . . it's destroyed because it's *filled* with Holy Fire, like the disciples were filled on Pentecost.

And so Peter the coward became Peter the Rock.

And John the son of thunder became John the Apostle of Love.

And Saul the Pharisee became Paul the Apostle of Grace to the Gentiles.

And so, what was once an empty shell doing empty deeds—a vessel of wrath—became a Vessel of Divine Mercy bleeding Holy Love, which is Fire.

God is one, God is Love, God is Fire. Love is Fire. This Lake is burning Love.
And you'll remember that the temple of God is to be filled with Eternal Fire.
We are that temple and have been predestined to Love as God *is* Love.

In Rev. 22:12 Jesus says, "I'm coming soon bringing my reward to repay *everyone* for his deeds—*everyone, everyone, everyone.*"

We cannot pay for our empty and evil deeds; we can't pay for anything.
But Christ is the payment for all our deeds—all our empty and evil deeds.

I think that means He renders Grace to each according to the shape of their sins. He is the Manifest Presence of God—that's eternal punishment to evil until that evil is destroyed and replaced by the Good, which is our eternal reward. He is our Payment for evil, and He is our Reward—that is the Good... He is the substance of God that fills the temple and we are His temple.

God is Love. God is Fire. Jesus is Holy Fire in human flesh.
He is Life Eternal, and He finishes us in the image of God.
Welcome to the Sabbath Rest; the Seventh Day, God's Promised Rest!

In Matthew 25:34-40 He says,

The King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

They don't remember.

I bet they don't remember because they weren't keeping score...

They weren't using Love to earn Life.

They just lived and so they loved; they loved Love.

They weren't conscious of the books...

And so they weren't conscious of first or last...

They weren't conscious of themselves...

As if, they were "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

They weren't *trying* to be good; they just *were* good.

They loved the Lord their God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, and they loved their neighbors as themselves, because love was their nature...

That is God was their nature.

He who loves is born of God and knows God; God is Love.

God is Holy Fire and you are His temple—His masterpiece.

"You are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for Good Deeds which God prepared *beforehand* that you would walk in them." (Eph. 2:10)

You're not saved by your deeds.

You're damned by your deeds so you can be saved by God and then do His deeds because you *want* to do His deeds—that's the greatest reward.

He is the Good, and Jesus is the Life, and you are His Body.

I work so hard at trying to be good, to impress God, and to impress you.

On Judgment day trumpets will sound, and Jesus will say something like this,

"PETER HIETT!!"

"August 7, 5:15am, 1087 You gave me a cup of cold water. Enter my Kingdom."

And I'll say,

"Ahh, but I don't even remember that?"

"What about all the sermons... the mission trips... and my 4.0 GPA?
...I don't remember giving you a cup of cold water."

And He'll reply,

"Exactly, you weren't *trying* to be good, you just *were* good...

You just were good, because I made you good...

I made you good with my Judgment of Grace!"

So, what am I trying to say? "Try harder to love?" NO.

Confess that you don't Love, and receive His Love. . .

And it will change you:

"The one forgiven little loves little," said Jesus.

But this is the Gospel: *"You have been forgiven much!"*

Several years ago, in Besarabia Romania, the Soviet army marched into a particular village. They rounded up all the Christians, some two hundred of them, and took them into a field. This was before 1990. They forced them to dig their own graves. They were to be shot. When they finished, the captain said, *"Whoever renounces Christ can go home immediately."* Some decided to be shot; some renounced their faith.

While they were returning to the village and the executions were about to begin, a man came running from the village to the field screaming—the man had been expelled from the church for gross sin—the man came running and screaming: "Shoot me too! Shoot me too! I'm a bad Christian, but a bad Christian is also a Christian. A bad Christian also has the right to die for Christ! Shoot me too."

Do you see?

He wanted to die for Jesus.

He wasn't a bad Christian. He was a New Creation.

He was the image of the invisible God.

Forgiven much, we love much, and we bleed Fire—like Jesus.

So when we did our absolute worst; He revealed the best . . .

Communion

He took bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body given to you."

And 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."

In Revelation 20 we read that death was thrown into the Lake of Fire—the Second Death (It's the death of death, and we'll read death will be no more in the next chapter). In 2 Timothy 1:10, Paul writes that Jesus abolished death (past tense).

Jesus bled Holy Fire—the Life and Love of God. You don't need to fear the Lake of Fire if you've already been filled with Holy Fire—just as Isaiah prophesied: "On this mountain I will swallow up death forever." On that mountain, Jesus was crucified.

In Jesus' name, confess your old self and receive your New Self.
Believe the Gospel.

Pray that with me:

Father, I confess that I just seem to live by these books all the time. Even as I'm preaching I feel the judgments of the books pulling at me. God, I'm sick of the books and sick of sin. I think my friends are too so this morning we want to surrender our books. We surrender our judgments to your Judgment. We surrender our sin and we receive your mercy. In Jesus' name, thank you. Amen.

Come to the table. The wine and the juice are both Fire and you are the Sanctuary—the Temple.

[Communion]

Prayer

We thank you that you washed us and our garments in the blood of the Lamb and you made them white as snow.

Benediction

We want to know: "Is my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?"

Well, what's your name? Is it a name you've made for yourself . . . maybe a name you consider to be a "good" name like Dr., Professor, or Reverend or maybe a bad name like Loser, Thief, or Whore. If it's a name you made for yourself, no; it's not in the book. That's the offense of the Gospel; that's the scandal of the cross: you cannot save yourself, justify or redeem yourself. But that's the Good News! That was never actually your name. You thought you made a name for yourself but that is not who you are! In fact, you're just beginning to discover who you truly are.

You know, in the gospel of John, John referred to himself as "the beloved." That's what the Father called Jesus: "*...beloved son in whom I am well pleased.*" And in 1 John, John wrote, "*We don't know exactly what we will be, but we will be like Him...*" Do you see? God is revealing who we are. And the truth is that you are far better than you ever could possibly imagine. So, there is *no way* that you are going to stand before the throne and be disappointed in you because the New You is a unique expression of the living God, made in His very own image.

So, is your name in the Lamb's Book of Life? Well, not the one that you make for yourself . . . but the one God has made for you? Absolutely! It's all over Scripture, we just freak out because we realize we're not the person that we think we are, which is great news! In John 6:37 Jesus says, "*All that the Father gives me will come to me...*" John 6:44 "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...*" He already told them in chapter 3: "*The Father loves the son and has given **all things** into his hand.*"

You're God's creation and everything that God makes is good.
In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

40

**All Things New:
You *Can* Go Home**

“All Things New:” You *Can* Go Home

Revelation 21:1-8

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

Peter Hiatt

December 9, 2018

Prayer

Message

It’s the second Sunday in Advent, which means that fifty years ago I was in a state of eager expectation, which I felt as a continuous and torturous pain. I couldn’t wait for Christmas; I couldn’t wait to open my presents; it was about fifty years ago that I wanted an electric racecar track.

On Christmas morning, I got it and then something horrid happened.

This is how Tony Campolo describes the same experience in one of his books:

I was overcome with joy. A sense of ecstasy surged through me. I loved everything. I loved everybody. The world became radiant and wonderful. A sense of aliveness permeated my consciousness. . . . I stayed in my state of heightened awareness and sensitivity for almost three hours. Then something happened to the trains. They didn’t break. (Broken trains can be fixed.) Something far worse than that happened to them. They became old.

I remember that moment: about 3pm. [Peter moves his head around and around as if following little racecars on a racetrack with his eyes.] I thought: “*This is boring...*” and I began to long for the next Christmas... I began to want... I was wanton—a wanton seven-year-old consumer of Christmas.

You may be thinking: “Of course. The work of human hands always gets old; you need to get into the wonder of creation.” So I did; I got my children some pets—lots of pets.

One night many years ago, Susan and I came home from a date. We walked into the house and all the lights were on. The hamster cage lay broken and open on the floor. No hamster . . . but hamster bedding and refuse all over the new carpet; it was chaos.

We heard my dad (our eighty-year-old babysitter) upstairs reading stories to our two youngest children. He would explain to us that the neighbor girl brought *her* turtle over to see *our* turtle and then decided to bring *her* hamster to visit *our* hamsters.

In fact, the children had already done this and learned about the wonders of reproduction so our neighbor’s hamster had new babies, which were, technically, like my kids’ grandbabies. Dad told them they shouldn’t hold the babies, but they held the babies.

About that time my son's gecko escaped from its cage and couldn't be found. My son was distraught . . . I imagine the dog was barking . . . and then the mother hamster got so nervous she began to kill her babies . . . and do beastly things with the bodies.

The kids were so horrified at this that our daughter's friend went into a rage and threw her hamster off the top deck. Somehow our hamsters escaped, everyone was screaming and running around in a panic... Dad was on his oxygen; he couldn't keep up, and told them all to calm down... My son screamed, "*You don't understand our pain!*" There was open wailing and gnashing of teeth; all hell broke loose.

My Dad did not know where the older children were. He was reading Bible stories to our two youngest children. They were so distraught that they had come to him and begged him to read Bible stories and say their prayers. And this whole time—as my father explained the situation—he had a twinkle in his eye, and he was laughing.

I was just pointing out how things get old and we long for the new. Toys get old. Possessions get old. Even creation gets old. Go camping and you'll discover that.

Paul writes that God "subjected creation to futility..."ⁱ
To use scientific lingo, "He subjected creation to entropy..."
It's actually the second law of thermo-dynamics.
Without getting technical, it's the basic idea that in a closed system the state of that system will always move toward chaos.ⁱⁱ

Creation gets old, but even more . . . it gets old to us. My race car set would get old and break, but long before that it got old to me—and that would make some sense, I'm part of creation (subject to entropy).

Things get old and they get old to me.

CS Lewis writes this about things:

...they are not the thing itself, they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never visited.

Maybe they were the thing, but were somehow emptied of the thing because we took them as things—we thought the Life and the Good was just a thing.ⁱⁱⁱ

Maybe all creation is like a vase of cut flowers. They look beautiful but because we picked them they are dead and we will watch them decay... and we don't just pick them with our hands; we pick them with our minds—so they don't just get old, they get old to us. We comprehend things—or we *think* we comprehend things—so they lose their wonder and they get old to us. The Good gets old to us... and the Life dies.

My dad got old... But long before he got old, he got old to me...
He'd talk and I'd think, "*Yeah, I know, I've heard that a thousand times.*"
He got old to me, and I don't think I ever got old to him, and sometimes he had the capacity to laugh even though all creation had descended into chaos...

As if he was more than simply part of this creation...

As if he knew something the rest of us didn't yet know...

As if he were becoming forever young.

In His book *Orthodoxy*, GK Chesterton talks about the way in which little children (well below the age of seven) have the ability to rejoice in monotony.

That's why they'll keep saying, "*Do it again. Do it again. Do it again.*"

Things don't get old to a little child—to them, all things are new.

Chesterton writes:

It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we.

Our Father's name is "I am."

No one is older than He, and no one is younger; He is eternal.

Well, I was just pointing out, the way in which "the new" gets old:

I got a racecar set . . . and it got old.

My kids got pets . . . and they got old.

I went camping . . . and it got old.

I pastored a church . . . and it got old.

I made new friends . . . and they got old.

I married a bride . . . and now I'd like to make a different point.

I was just pointing out the way in which the new gets old, and then, we long for the new... But at some point, we switch tactics, we get old and notice that the old is replaced by the new... and we begin to long for the old.^{iv}

I can't believe I'm saying this, but I miss the 70's. I miss these things we used to have: we called them files, and you put them in a filing cabinet; they would not get a virus and they would not be deleted because you forgot to download and update them—they were awesome!

I miss the amazing phones—they were attached to a wall: you couldn't lose them, and they didn't harass you wherever you went.

I miss the files; I miss the phones . . . I miss my dad.

This may sound pathetic, but I can't tell you the number of times that—sitting at my desk feeling discouraged and alone—I've Googled, "Dan Ernest Hiatt." (That's what you do when you want to know something . . . right?)

I Google "Dan Earnest Hiatt." I get nothing, except maybe an old address, and I want to scream, "*What the hell is wrong with this world?!*" And maybe I should be asking, what the hell is wrong with me? He used to get old to me, 'cause I wanted the new. Now I have the new, and I'm obsessed with the old.

We're all like that: progressives become conservatives, and neither are happy. We all want to progress to the new, and then get all concerned about conserving the old, but is there a moment between the two in which we're just happy?

It's a little like taking a drink when you're really thirsty. Sometimes I'll take a really, really hot bath just to experience the intense pleasure of drinking a cup of cold water. In agony you long for the drink, longing to be filled and satisfy your thirst... And then once you've taken the drink, you no longer thirst for the drink... And that moment of sheer joy—the moment of actually drinking—is so fleeting.

How can you stay thirsty and continuously enjoy the joy of drinking? I mean I had my dad and he got old, because I wanted the new. I got the new and lost my dad, and now I long for the old.

And it doesn't do any good to try and hang on to moments. If you try to hang on to that moment of drinking, you'll bust a gut or, maybe, become an alcoholic.

When my dad was dying, I tried to hang on to each moment, but then I couldn't enjoy those moments or even experience those moments . . . Maybe sin is trying to take the Good in every moment such that you can't experience the good in any moment (taking the Good like fruit from a tree).

We long for the new, and we long for the old, and we rarely live now. I used to long for a new house, and now I miss my old home. But it's only in the now that a house becomes a home.

Sometimes, I drive by the house where I grew up in Littleton—someone had the audacity to paint it a different color and rework all the landscaping!

I drive by and think, "*Peter, you can never go home. You will never play with your electric racecar in your own room on Christmas morning ever again. Dad will never work in that garden again, while you dig a hole for your fort, and Lydia and Rachel play with the rabbit, while mom makes fried mushroom sandwiches—in your kitchen with the mustard yellow countertops and the avocado green refrigerator. Peter, you can never go home.*"

Have you heard that expression? *“You can never go home...”*

I’m sure that’s what they were thinking in Asia Minor along about the time that John sent them this revelation. The folks in the seven churches were largely the Diaspora. They were dispersed Jews, and those that weren’t ethnic Jews believed that they were grafted into that amazing family tree... So, Jerusalem was their home, even though most had never even been there.

See? You may never have actually experienced one moment of being at home in this world, and yet we all long for home.

Jerusalem was much more than just a city; it was home.

It was the location of Eden.

It was Abraham and Isaac; it was Mt. Moriah, Mt. Calvary and Mt. Zion all in one.

It was King David and his son, the Prince of Peace.

It was the hopes and fears of all the years.

It was the tabernacle that became the stone temple.

It was the throne of God, in the heart of the Promised Land; it was home.

It was 2000 years of human sweat, blood, and labor . . . or so they thought. 2000 years and in 70 AD, the Romans utterly destroyed it, along with over a million Jews... and then, literally plowed it into the ground. Emperor Hadrian even passed a law that if any Jew appeared within site of the city he was to be slain... they literally could not go home.

Some date the Revelation to a time immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem . . . in which case the prophecy would prepare them for what was about to happen.

Some date the Revelation to a time immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem... but either way, the folks in the seven churches must’ve been thinking, *“You can never go home.”*

The new becomes old, and the old is replaced by the new . . . and we rarely live now.

I remember the day I watched my bride come down the aisle, dressed in the most beautiful gown. I was afraid—afraid that the old was being replaced by the new, and afraid that the new would become old...

I remember thinking to myself: *“Stop it! Stop it! Live now... If I don’t live now, I will miss the bride coming down the aisle; my house will never be a home; and one day she may say to me, “Depart from me I never knew you.”*

You see, we can only know and be known by a person, *now*.

Now is when and where we live.
Now is when a house becomes a home.
And yet we rarely live now, worried that the old will be replaced by the new or worried that the new will become the old.

We seem to have a problem with time. C.S. Lewis wrote:

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.

We seem to have a problem with time...

Physicists have a problem with time; they can’t figure out what it is, or why it is, or why it seems to only move in one direction . . . Most all of their equations work forwards or backwards in time. Physicists say that all we really know about time is that it’s the way we measure “entropy.” That is we really only know that we’re moving forward in time, because chaos increases, things decay, that is, they die.

It seems more than a little significant to me that on the sixth day of creation, in a paradise garden—that seems to have been a little slice of eternity in a temporal world—on a spot which would one day house the temple, within which was an inner sanctuary that was said to be a piece of the age to come—a piece of eternity in that garden, which contained a tree like the tree on which the Lord of the Sabbath died, the Lord of the Promised Rest died.

In that garden, God said, “*Adam, the day you eat of it, dying you will die*”; “the day you take knowledge of the Good, you will begin to experience entropy; it is the beginning, and you will begin to experience time—chronological time.”

In other words, “The new will become old, and the old will replace the new, and you will long to live now, but find “the now” to be incredibly elusive.^v

You will run from the Now, and long for the Now.^{vi}

You will run from “I Am,” and thirst for “I Am” in you.

So what is it that we all want, and maybe all fear? What is it that we all thirst for?

- I think we each thirst for the eternal now.^{vii}
- We each want the old to be forever new; we want to be forever young.
- We all long for home . . . and yet, we don’t really know what it is . . .
- We have a problem with time, and all thirst for eternity.

It's interesting that according to physicists, light doesn't experience time—that is chronological time, but how would we really know that? Has anyone ever had a conversation with the Light?

Well in Revelation 1 the Light of the World appears to John shining like the sun, and says, "Hey John, I'd like to show you things from my perspective..."

John hears all creation and every creature worshipping God...

And John watches Jesus unwrap the meaning of space and time, as he unwraps the seven sealed scroll in the hand of God...

At the seventh bowl and the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal, John hears a voice Cry, "It is done," just as Jesus cried, "It is finished" on the tree.

All sorts of stuff, happens all at once, and then we read this: Revelation 21:1-3

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.^{viii} [Yet, Isaiah prophesies a new sea, (Is. 60:5)] Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God... [Maybe . . . you can go home] prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

In Chapter 19, we read that the bride is adorned with the righteous deeds of the saints, these righteous deeds come down from heaven . . . like "*good deeds prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*" (Eph. 2:10).

People make cities, but we'll see that, this City is made by God with people.

It's like the entire time that the Jews were constructing the old Jerusalem in fear and shame, God was constructing the New Jerusalem with the Jews. They think they're building a city, and they are the City being built. *You* are the City being built.

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle [the dwelling place] of God is with men, and He will dwell [tabernacle, camp] with them, and they shall be His people.

That's amazing! The loud voice says that the dwelling place of God is with men, not *will be*... but *is*. He *will* dwell with them, says the voice, but first it says that He already *is*. And He doesn't simply say, "dwell", He says "tabernacle" [from *skenoō*].

He will tent with them in His tent... It's a clear reference to the tabernacle, the tent, that God had Moses build for the Israelite's journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land, their home, that they thought was some real estate on the other side of the Jordan river. But now Jesus is revealing their home is in that tent with God.

Get the picture? As they journeyed to the Promised Land, the Promised Land was with them the whole time. Their home was in God's tent, but they couldn't go behind the curtain. They couldn't enter, for to enter was to die.^{ix}

Well, as Israel journeyed to the Promised Land, the Promised Land journeyed with them, for the Sanctuary, the Garden, their true home, was in the temple of their own hearts... as we preached a few weeks ago— *They were not at home in themselves; and we are not at home in ourselves.*

They were not at home with God, but God was at home in them.^x

- When Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden, perhaps Eden went with them in the sanctuary of their souls.
- They were cast out by "I Am," and they hid from "I Am," and yet, "I Am" was hiding in them, whispering to them.... from behind the curtain.
- They were terrified of the Light, and yet they longed for the Light, because the Light was hiding in them... behind a curtain.

Solomon wrote, *"God has put eternity in our hearts, yet so that we cannot find out what God has done from beginning to end."* (Ecc. 3:11)

The inner room, behind the curtain, was thought to be eternal—that's beginning and end. When Jesus died, His flesh was torn, and that curtain in the temple ripped from the top to the bottom.

Listen carefully, students of the Revelation: in Luke 17 Jesus said, *"The kingdom of God does not come with observation (signs to be observed); nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."* (17:20-21 NKJV)

Make no mistake: *chronos*—chronological time, will come to an end, and your time will come to an end. And you will see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven"—within one generation. But the *Kingdom of God* will rise from within you like a fountain of living water.

Remember what Jesus said to the woman at the well? *"The water that I will give will become in (you) a spring of water welling up to eternal life* (John 4)." In the next chapter John will see the river of life flowing from the throne. That's the throne that's in the tabernacle, the temple, that is us.

Revelation 21:3-6

Behold, the tabernacle [the dwelling place] of God is with men, and He will dwell [tabernacle, camp] with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

Clip from *The Passion*

[Jesus is covered in blood wearing a crown of thorns, falling under the weight of the cross. Mary cries out to him and touches Him in compassion.]

[In Aramaic]

[Speaking to Jesus after He has fallen under the weight of His cross]

Mary: I'm here.

[Mary pulls Jesus close to her heart to comfort Him. In the process, she is reminded of how she picked Him up as a young boy and the scene changes to that moment. Then the scene changes back to the current moment. Mary looks into Jesus' face as He bears His cross. Her mind returns to a memory of her rocking Him. Jesus reaches back to His mother with deep compassion. He clutches her face, looks in her eyes, and says, “See, Mother, I make all things new.” She gazes at Him in wonder. Jesus stands up and once again picks up His cross; He then embraces it.]

I love how Mel Gibson did that...

For I think that is exactly what John saw on Good Friday and what He sees in Revelation 21. Enthroned on the tree in the garden, at the end of the sixth day, which is the end of the ages, and the edge of eternity, Jesus cried, “*It is finished.*” He is the Alpha and the Omega, beginning and end; He's the plot. When you read a book and get to the end, you learn the plot and it transforms the meaning of every page in the book—every moment in the story.

He is the Beginning and the End, and according to Scripture (Heb. 13:8), He doesn't change—that's eternal. He is an “indestructible life” (Heb. 7:16). We think He changes, but He must not change; we change (relative to Him). He experiences no entropy... except that which He experiences in His tabernacle of flesh, which is us.

He is “the beginning and the end,” and he does not change, just like Yahweh (Rev. 1:8) because He *is* Yahweh. He is eternal. He is eternal... and you are His Body rising from the dead, born out of a tomb that is also a womb—the womb of space and time.

Revelation 13: 5-8 “*Look I make all things new!*” Verse 6. ...“*It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega*, [God says that at the start of the Revelation (1:8) and Jesus says it at the end (22:13)] *the Beginning and the End*. “*I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely* [“freely”: He is free will] *to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son* [singular, not plural].

The one who thirsts *is* the one who overcomes... that means faith is a thirst. On the tree the Son of God said “I thirst;” He thirsts for communion with you. Do you thirst for communion with him? He is the manifest presence of “I Am.”^{xi}

Verses 7-8:

[singular, not plural] *But the cowardly* [and now God uses the plural, not the singular], *the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral [pornos], sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars...*

Notice that all those things—fear, faithlessness, loveless-ness, murder, prostitution, addiction and lies—are all things that divide.

And, as we’ve preached, death is division and Love binds everything together.

Death is separation and Life is communion.

Death is temporal and the death of death is edge of eternity.

The death of death is separation from separation—an eternal communion of Life, eternal Life.

Verse 8... *and all liars shall have their part in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone* [*theion*—*Theion*, which means Divinity—Divine being...]

Divinity is Truth, Light, Life and Love.

All liars will meet their End in the lake of Truth.

All who hate the Light will meet their End in the lake of eternal Light.

All murderers will meet their End in the lake of eternal Life.

All whores and whoremongers will meet their end in the sea of eternal Love—absolutely free Love... Love that you can never pay for, and must never attempt to pay for.

Let’s read verse 8 again, to the end: “*And all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and theion, which is the second death.*”

Now some say, “*See? He doesn’t make all things new!*” as if their judgment of what’s possible undoes the abundantly clear Judgment of God spoken from the throne.

They say, “*See? He doesn’t make all things new!*” as if something reduced to dust by a fire can’t be made new by God, for God just can’t make stuff out of dust... can He?

They say, “*See? He doesn’t make all things new!*” But maybe that’s exactly how He makes all things new, indeed, His temple, which is us, is predestined to be refined by fire and filled with fire—holy fire and God is that fire. He is the End.

They say, “*Well, does God make evil new?*”

God makes all *things* new, but evil is not a *thing*; it’s the *absence* of a thing.

Scripture is clear, that God creates all things, and all that God creates is Good...

Evil is the absence of the Good, which means it’s no thing; it’s nothing—but the void.

To make a void new God fills it with “I am.”

So, if God makes lies new, we call it Truth and it comes to us as Grace or forgiveness.

If God makes darkness new, we call it Light, and the process revelation—enlightenment.

If God makes death new, we call it Life, and we witness a resurrection.

If God makes Love—Love that’s been sold, abused, used and nailed to a tree— new, we call Him Jesus.

Jesus said, “*To him who is thirsty I will give the water of life without payment*” (22:17).

Are you thirsty for Grace, thirsty for Light, thirsty for abundant and eternal Life?

If so, you’re thirsty for communion with Jesus in the temple of your soul. You’re homesick.

You know, the fire of tribulation makes us thirsty for the water of life. And in the end you’ll see it was all Grace—both the water and the fire, like a sea of glass mingled with Fire. ^{xii} It’s all the Judgment of God drawing us to Himself—just as He said He would (John 12).

Some might say, “Well, if He makes all new, they don’t stay new, for after He makes all new, He throws some into the lake of fire.” Well, it doesn’t say that: the Revelation is not a chronology but a theology. And the boundary between the City and the outer darkness is the boundary between eternity and time. Once you’re filled with holy Fire, you can’t be burned by holy Fire.

Eternal life cannot die; to have eternal life is to be forever new; it is to be as old as time and as young as now... it’s to be forever young. I suspect it means you are no longer bound by time, but can travel through time... you can’t conceive of that now, but you dream of it now. That’s why you liked all the “back to the future movies.” That’s why you say, “How he’s grown! How time flies! Why, it seems like only yesterday... If only I knew then, what I know now... If only then was now!”

You dream of it now and maybe you even experience it now, just a bit.

Whenever you forgive... that changes the meaning of the *past*.

And whenever you hope... that changes the meaning of the *future*. . .

And it frees you to live *now*, where history—His Story—is made.

Wherever and whenever, you commune with “I am,” that moment changes all moments, and moments in your past, present or future become new. They become *knew* because you know the Plot... or I should say the Plot knows you on every page of your story.

Listen to Paul in 2nd Cor. 5:17: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*

Fully in Christ, which means Christ fully in you, means that you’ll never grow tired of *electric trains, racecar tracks, hamsters, daisies or people*, for everything will be filled with “I am that I am,” who is the Beginning and the End, and always now, such that He never gets old and is always new. In other words you can go home... and you most truly are at home . . . already.^{xiii}

You’re like a child dreaming a dream on your Father’s lap,
You’re dreaming a dream of your own sovereignty, but even now He is waking you from your nightmare.

“Awake oh sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will give you light” (Eph.5:14).

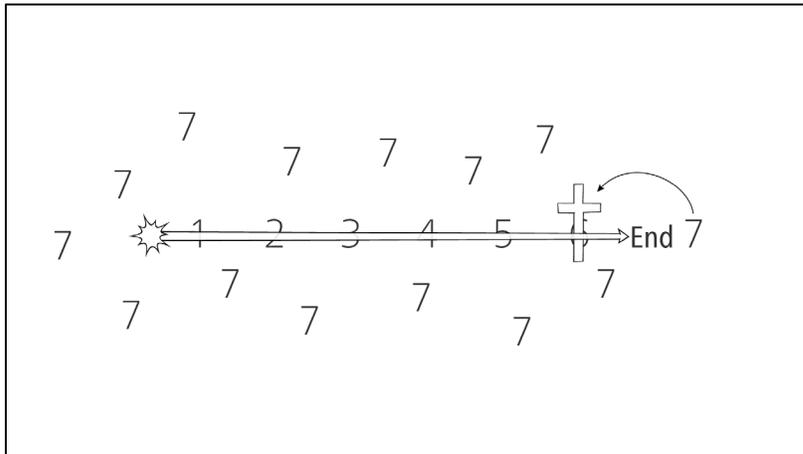
“In a moment in the twinkling of an eye you will be changed... The perishable will put on the imperishable, and you will be changed” (1 Cor. 15).

“He makes all things new”... even now—He is Now.

And now you must be thinking, Saint Paul was smoking crack...

And old John clearly drank too much communion wine one Sunday afternoon on the Island of Patmos...

Well let’s review what we’ve learned:

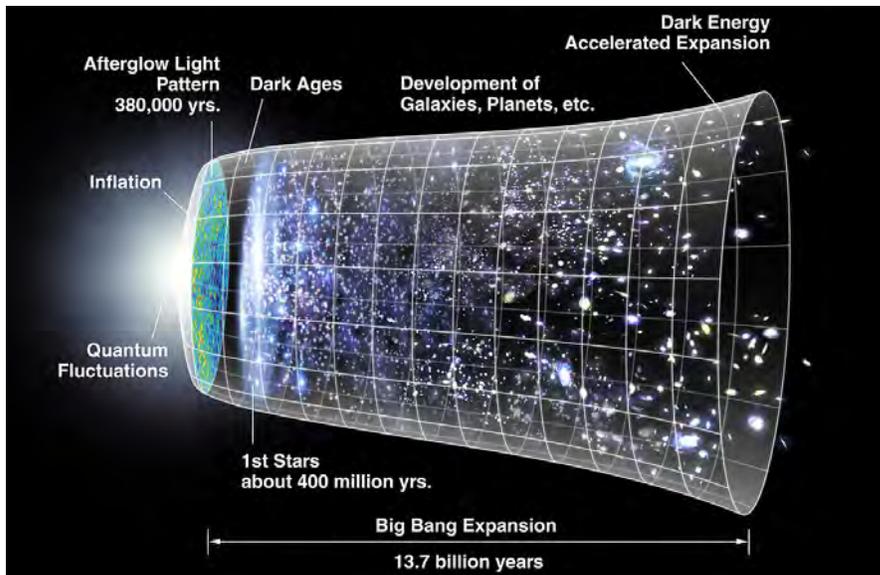


In Scripture chronological time looks something like this:

- At the cross eternity invaded time.
- And whenever we come to the cross we come to the “end of the ages.”
- The tree in the garden on which we took God’s life, and on which God gave His life, is the boundary of space-time and eternity.
- Our time exists in eternity, as if the kingdom of God were actually “at hand.”



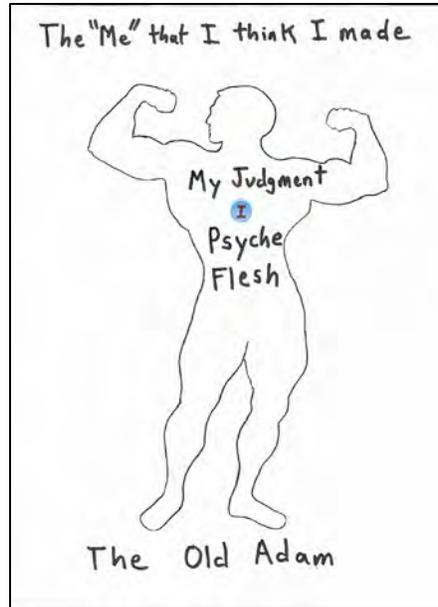
So the timeline reminded us of the seven-sealed scroll in the strong right hand of God—the strong arm of God—who is Jesus.



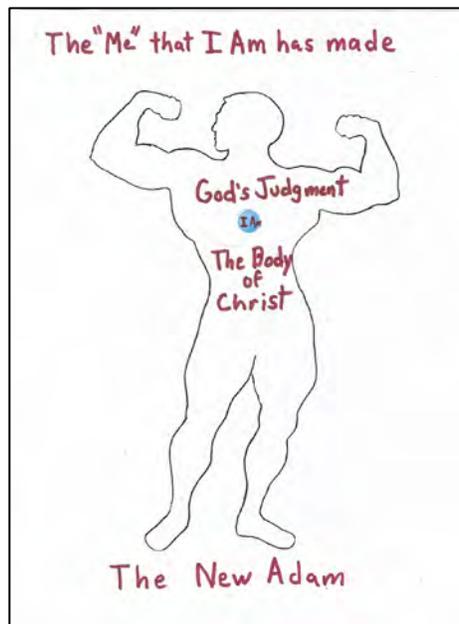
The Scroll is all creation, and that reminded us of this picture from NASA—a picture of the Cosmos, this picture of all things.

God makes all things new, and he makes all things new by filling all things with Himself—He is Truth, Light, Life and Love.

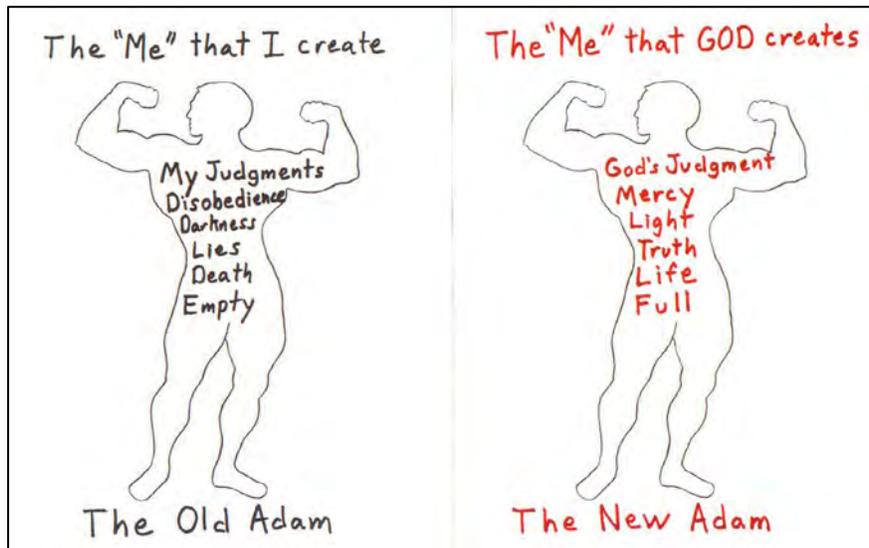
He is "I am" and He is eternal Fire.



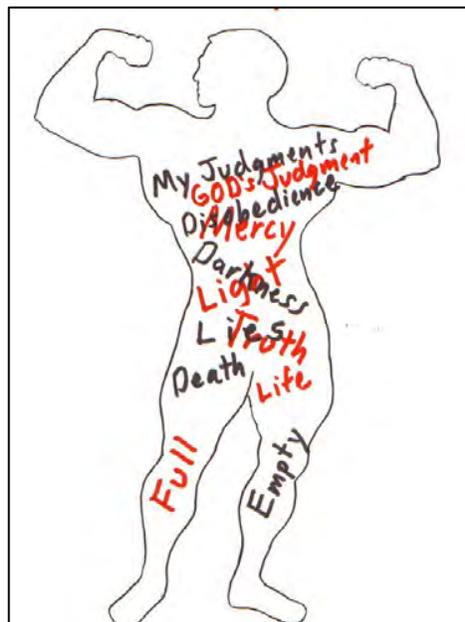
We each have an old man that we think we made with our judgments.



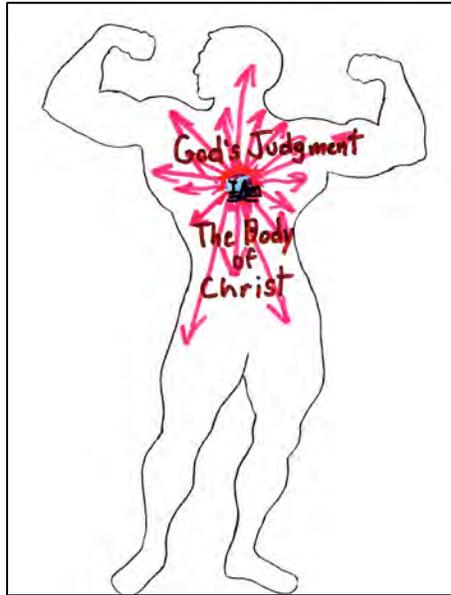
But God gives us a New Man that He has made with His judgment.



A Christian is both.



I think every *person* is both.



But the moment I see Christ, and so surrender to the Judgment of God, the curtain in the temple that is me, rips from top to bottom, and the Spirit of God begins to fill the old me, with the forever new me—Christ in me—Jesus, *yehoshua*, meaning, “I am” *IS* Salvation.

“I am,” doesn’t just save one moment of me; He saves every moment of me. He doesn’t just save me in three dimensions; He saves me in at least four.

Self in Time Clip

You can view it here starting at about 2 minutes and 40 seconds

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q_GQqUg6Ts

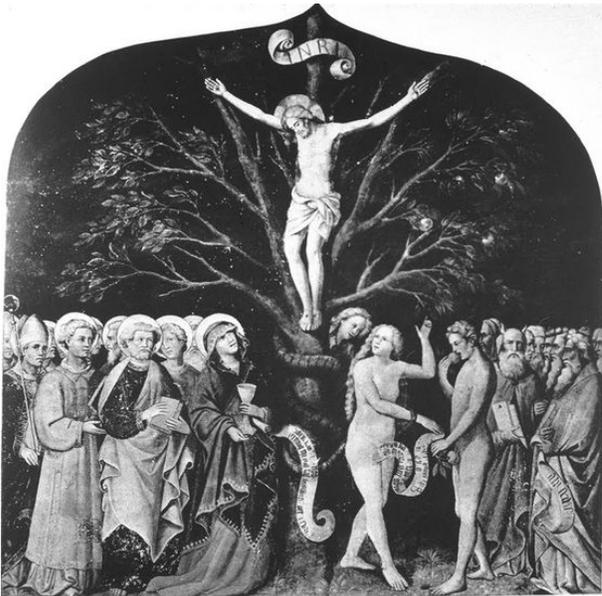
“The first three dimensions can be described with these words: Length, Width, and Depth
What word can we assign to the fourth dimension?
One answer would be duration.
If we think of ourselves as we were one minute ago . . .
And then imagine ourselves at this moment . . .
The line that we could draw from the one-minute-ago version to the right-now version would be a line in the fourth dimension.
If you were to see your body in the fourth dimension, you'd be like a long angulating snake with your embryonic self at one end and your deceased self at the other.
But because we live from moment to moment in the third dimension we are like our second-dimensional Flatlanders . . .
Just like that Flatlander who can only see two-dimensional cross sections of objects from the dimension above.
We as three-dimensional creatures can only see three dimensions of our fourth-dimensional self.”

Right now God sees all of me, and He has saved all of me.
He sees all of me, and He's madly in love with all of me... He really likes me.

I see maybe, what . . . half of me, if I live to 114... or maybe 2/3 of me, if I make 86?
I see 2/3 of me, and most of that is probably an empty void, that I have created with my illusion of control, my ego, my pride, my sin... It's *what I am not*.

But God does not see 2/3 of an empty me.
He sees all of me, filled with Himself, which is *who I am*.

Where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more.
In the void, which I create with my judgments, God pours His eternal Judgment and it's solid Gold... eternal and incorruptible. When and where I was faithless, He makes me eternally faithful with Himself. In the very place I was "not his people," there I am revealed as "a son of God," and even, the Son of God—the Body of the Son of God.



In fact, in my worst moments, there He reveals His greatest glory. All my worst moments are moments in which I *take His life* on the tree, and are the very moments in which He *gives His life* on the tree, and makes me good.

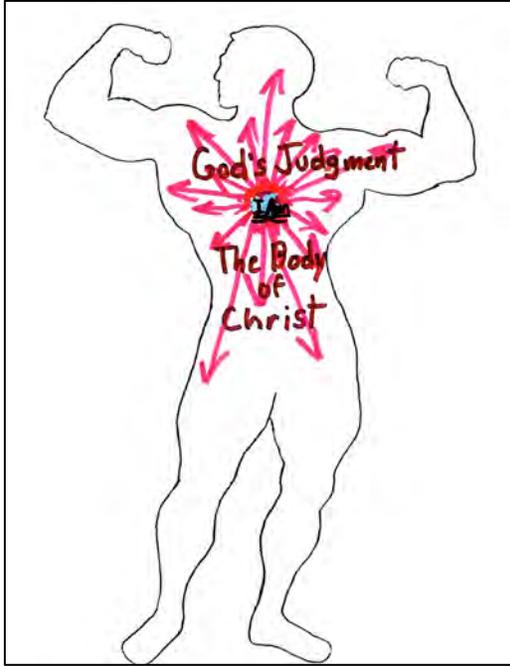
It's like Jesus said to Julian of Norwich, "Since I have turned the greatest possible harm into good, it is my will that you should know from this that I shall turn all lesser evil into good."



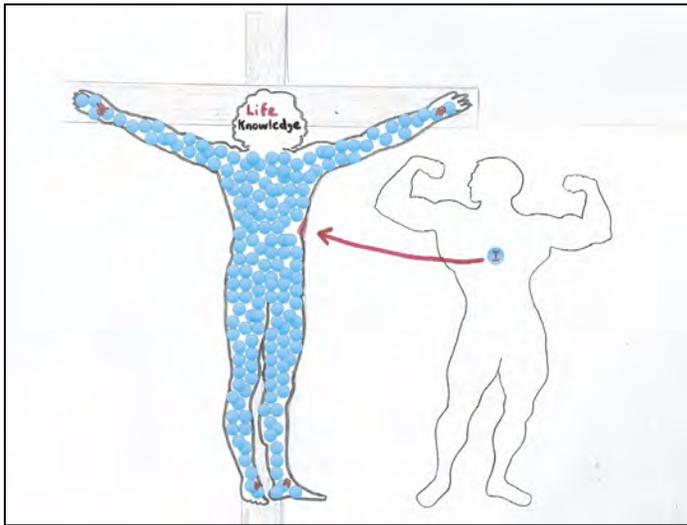
He fills all things with Himself.



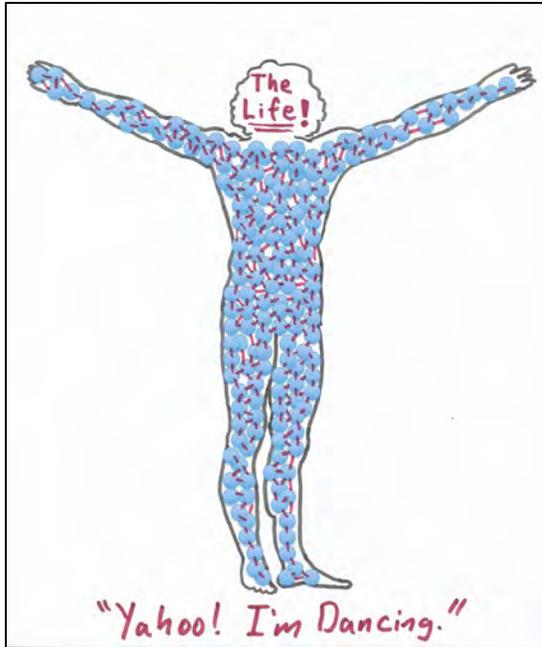
He fills all things with Himself, and all of me with Himself.
So, no matter where and when I go, I'm at Home with my Father, for my Father has made His home in me...



It's in all of me... and not just me.



All of Him, the fullness of Him, flows through me and through all of humanity . . .



Like a river of Life, He is the Life and we are His body.

In Him, which is also Him in me, I lose my life and constantly find it. I drink the water of life and am constantly filled with the water of life even as I bleed that water of life into others. The thirsting, and the drinking, and the being filled, are forever now, forever one, and forever new. And I am forever young. And everywhere, and every when is home.

Last scene from *The Wizard of Oz*

[Dorothy is lying on pillow back in her room in Kansas]

Dorothy: (Mumbling) *There's no place like home. There's no place like home...*

[Aunt Em places a cloth on Dorothy's head]

Dorothy: (mumbling) *There's no place like home. There's no place like home...*

Aunt Em: *Dorothy - Dorothy! It's me—Aunt Em. Wake up, honey.*

Dorothy: *No place like home—there's no place like home—no place...*

Aunt Em: *Dorothy - Dorothy! Dear! It's Aunt Em, darling.*

Dorothy: [Now waking as if from a dream] *Oh, Auntie Em— it's you!*

Aunt Em: *Yes, darling.*

Professor Marvel: *Hello, there! Anybody home? I—I just dropped by because I heard the little girl got caught in the big... Well.... ...she seems all right now.*

Uncle Henry: *Yeah... She got quite a bump on the head. We kinda thought there for a minute she was going to leave us.*

Dorothy: *But I did leave you, Uncle Henry—that's just the trouble. And I tried to get back for days and days.*

Aunt Em: *There, there, lie quiet now. You just had a bad dream.*

Hunk: *Remember me—your old pal hunk?*

Dorothy: *Oh?*

Hickory: *And me? Hickory?*

Zeke: *You couldn't forget my face could ya?*

Dorothy: *No. But it wasn't a dream; it was a real place [Dorothy begins pointing to all her friends] and you, and you, and you, and you were there....*

Professor Marvel: *Oh!*

Dorothy: *But you couldn't have been, could you?*

Aunt Em: *Oh, we dream lots of silly things when we...*

Dorothy: *No, Aunt Em; this was a real, truly live place. And I remember that some of it wasn't very nice, but most of it was beautiful. But just the same, all I kept saying to everybody was, "I want to go home." And they sent me home. Doesn't anybody believe me?*

Uncle Henry: *Of course we believe you, Dorothy.*

Dorothy: *Oh, but anyway, Toto, we're home! Home! And this is my room, and you're here! And I'm not going to leave here ever, ever again, because I love you! And— Oh, Auntie Em . . . there's no place like home!*

I think Scripture is saying that we each ran away from home... We have been trying to get home for eons and eons. We each ran away from the garden, and began to dream our own dreams... But God in Christ Jesus is bringing us home, and waking us from our dreams... And when He does everything will be new... and we'll know something we didn't know before: *"There's no place like home, there's no place like home."*

Well, I'm just saying God is your home . . . and all things with Him. He really makes *all things* new.

Sometimes people will say to me, "Peter, why does it matter?" And I just want to freak out... "Why does it *matter*?"

If you knew a person that could make all things new, wouldn't you do everything you could to take everything, and every moment and every person to that person?

God makes all things new—if you knew God makes all moments new—wouldn't you have courage to live now?

If you knew that God made all things new, wouldn't you have hope for all things and love for all people, and faith for every moment; wouldn't you bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things?

If you knew that God made all things new, and all things were your home... wouldn't you "let Him" make all things new?

I mean, wouldn't you forgive *all things, all people, everywhere and every when?*

Wouldn't you forgive, as you've been forgiven right now?

If you knew that God made all things new, wouldn't you come to this table and bring all things, and every moment, with you?

Communion

He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body ripped and broken for you."
And in the same manner, 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."

So, how's it going on this journey of yours? Are you thirsty... for home?

Have you become thirsty yet?

What are you thirsty for . . . for home?

This is "The Way" . . . home . . . and it has the ability to show up in the strangest of places.

Benediction

My Dad loved TS Eliot, so maybe we could end with this:

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
*And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well*

When the tongues of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one."
- TS Eliot

I think he's saying: "Believe the Gospel, AMEN"

Disclaimer: The author has not edited this document. 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.

ⁱ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. (Romans 8:18-24a ESV)

ⁱⁱ I'm part of creation. And at the fall, I became my own "closed system." "Apart from me—the Logos—you can do nothing," said Jesus. "But with God, all things are possible." He is Logos in my chaos.

ⁱⁱⁱ Things are empty of the reality for which we're looking. So, we take things and the things get old to us, for they're empty of that for which we're looking. Plato would say that they are the form of the thing, an imprint (*tupos*, in Greek). They are the form of the thing, empty of the substance of the thing. In Romans 5:14 we read that Adam was a *tupos* (type) of the one to come. That means humanity is like an empty imprint of Christ, as if Jesus were pressed into a wet ball of clay leaving an imprint that is the old man. When Jesus comes to each of us, He fills that empty space with Himself, the New Man, the *Eschatos* Adam.

^{iv} Hopefully you realize this before you've divorced several brides. And yet, you can divorce your bride because you long for something new, and you can divorce your bride because she's not like she used to be... So how do you love her now? How do you live now? We long for the new, and at some point switch tactics and long for the old, but have a hard time living now.

^v In other words, "'The Now' will be elusive for you, for you will hide from 'I Am;' You'll hide from the Now in the leaves of the trees under the cover or countless justifications and anxieties; You'll be cast from the garden and long for the garden and yet be terrified of the garden, for you'll know that in the garden "I Am" is and you have chosen 'I Am not.'"

^{vi} Pascal declared, "Our imagination so powerfully magnifies time, by continual reflections upon it, and so diminishes eternity . . . for want of reflection, that we make a nothing of eternity and an eternity of nothing." — John Eldredge, *The Journey of Desire*

vii The riddle of the present is the deepest of all the riddles of time. Again, there is no answer except from that which comprises all time and lies beyond it—the eternal. Whenever we say "now" or "today," we stop the flux of time for us. We accept the present and do not care that it is gone in the moment that we accept it. We live in it and it is renewed for us in every new "present." This is possible because every moment of time reaches into the eternal. It is the eternal that stops the flux of time for us. It is the eternal "now" which provides for us a temporal "now." We live so long as "it is still today"—in the words of the letter to the Hebrews. Not everybody, and nobody all the time, is aware of this "eternal now" in the temporal "now." But sometimes it breaks powerfully into our consciousness and gives us the certainty of the eternal, of a dimension of time which cuts into time and gives us our time. —Paul Tillich, *The Eternal NOW*

viii "The sea" was "the abyss" from which the beast arose. (Rev. 13:1, 17:8)

ix God never wanted to dwell in a temple of stone, God always wanted to dwell in a tabernacle of flesh (see: 2nd Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17).

x So when they disobeyed and descended into Sheol, somehow God went with them. In the words of David, "though I make my bed in hell, even there thy right hand will hold me" (Psalm 139:8).

xi Long ago you hid from "I Am" in the leaves of the trees under the cover of countless justifications and anxieties.

You were cast from the garden, for you were terrified of the gardener.

You long for the garden, but your terrified of the gardener, terrified of "I Am."

You know that in the garden is "I Am," and you have chosen to hide in "I Am not."

You ran from the garden, ran from home, ran from yourself and ran from all things.

xii We must each be baptized in water and fire... and it's all Grace.

It's all the sea of glass mingled with fire.

The river of life is a river of eternal life and eternal fire.

- The manifest presence of God is Holy Fire.
- And the manifest presence of God is Living Water.

- If you're thirsty for His presence, it wells up within you from the sanctuary of your soul.
- If you're not thirsty for His presence, you might just be thrown into His presence and it will burn you until you are... He is life eternal

xiii Although our Lord showed me that I would sin, by me alone I understood everyone. At this I began to feel a quiet fear, and to this our Lord answered me as follows: 'I am keeping you very safe.' ...And this was seen in the ninth showing where more is said of this matter. And in spite of all our feelings, weal and woe, God wants us to understand and believe that we are more truly in heaven than on earth. —Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 25 and 131

41

Feeling Sexy?

Feeling Sexy?

Revelation 21:1-25

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

Peter Hiatt

December 16, 2018

Prayer

Thank you, Father. Lord God, this is our forty-first sermon from the Revelation. The Revelation is one incredible revelation so I pray that, through the power of your Spirit, you would bring all the pieces together. I especially pray for those who might be new to these Revelation messages. Help them not to get confused. May your Spirit help all of us to see you because it all means you; it’s the revelation of Jesus. Lord Jesus, help us to see you and welcome you. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Message

Pastor Walter Wangerine wrote:

The woman sitting before me has a . . . problem so difficult to state that she twists her fingers in silence. She has come alone and looks . . . lonely.

“I’m sorry,” she says. “I just don’t know how to say it.”

“Take your time,” I say.

She smiles a small apologetic smile. “He,” she says—she’s referring to her absent husband. The problem is in their marriage. “Whenever we, ah, make love,” she says, dropping her eyes

As though she has just made up her mind, she says the sentence smoothly: “Whenever we make love, he laughs.” She looks up. Her eyes question me.

“At you?” I ask. “He laughs at you?”

“No. Oh, no.” Now she is concerned that I don’t misunderstand. “No, he laughs for joy.”

This is what she thinks the problems is . . . her husband’s pleasure at entering her He laughs like a boy at a new joke; the tears run down his cheeks and he kisses her.

“Does the noise distract you?” I ask.

“I don’t think so,” says the woman. We’re talking about her feelings now, so she drops her eyes again and twists her fingers. “I,” she whispers, blushing: “I sort of giggle with him. He’s having so much—” Her poor face blazes with embarrassment; her voice falls to a distant whisper, “—so much *fun*, you know. But that isn’t right, is it? Isn’t he being, I don’t know, disrespectful, like laughing in church? And then, when I laugh too, I feel so—guilty.”

She feels shame . . . some of you feel it right now . . .

We each have a deep thirst that we often cover up, and then, deny.

We try to satiate the thirst with all manner of things that don’t satisfy, things that make us even more thirsty, and then, in self-conscious fear, we refuse to acknowledge the ever-increasing thirst; we feel shame.

Maybe, it's alcohol... it satisfies for a few hours and then makes us even more thirsty, addicted, unsatisfied and ashamed.

Maybe, it's pornography, adultery, greed or just old-fashioned power... it seems to complete us for a moment, but it transforms us into beasts instead of men; it turns us into harlots instead of brides.

Maybe we try to satiate the thirst with our own "good deeds" and that turns us into Pharisees that crucify the Christ in order to justify themselves.

In Genesis 2, God makes humanity and says, "It's not good that the Adam is alone..." But Adam is alone in the presence of God, who is Love . . . That means the Adam doesn't know that Love is Good and God is His Helper, our Husband—our *ezer* in Hebrew.

Over and over, in the Old Testament, we read that God (*El* in Hebrew) is our Helper (*ezer* in Hebrew)... *Eliezer* means God is helper. Never is a woman said to be a man's *ezer* or a man said to be a woman's *ezer*. Adam, as male and female, is a reference pointing to our *ezer*—our Helper who is made fit for humanity.

So, get the picture? Adam is alone in the presence of God because Adam is not thirsty for communion with God . . . He doesn't know the Love that is God. He does not know that Love is Good.

Genesis 2:21 "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep (*tardemah*) to fall upon the Adam—humanity."

I'm not entirely sure what to make of this, but we really don't read anything about God waking *the Adam* from this *tardemah*, this deep sleep, until Isaiah prophesies that God will wake Jerusalem.¹

Isaiah 60:1 "*Arise shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you...*" And then Isaiah goes on to prophesy the most incredible things about Jerusalem—all things that John sees, and we will read, here at the end of the Revelation.

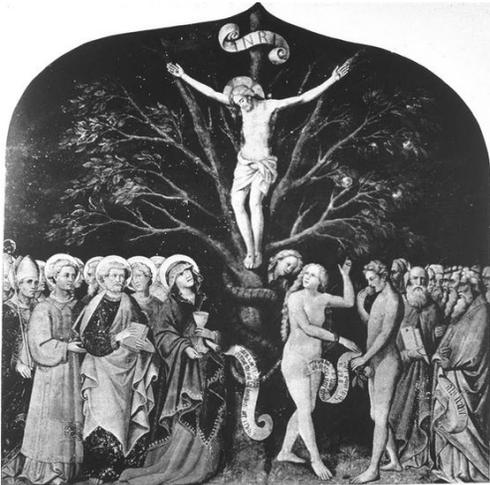
Paul quotes Isaiah in Ephesians 5:14 saying "*Anything exposed to the light becomes light.*" Therefore it says, '*Awake oh sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will give you light...*'

The Bible talks as if we're all still asleep, and this entire fallen world is like a nightmare—a nightmare we are having as God performs surgery upon our souls.

Adam is not thirsty for Love, who is our God, and so God puts the Adam to sleep.
And from His bleeding side He forms Eve—His Bride.
Adam *is* thirsty for Eve . . . and Eve is thirsty for Adam.

Genesis 2:24 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.”

In Ephesians 5:31 Paul quotes this verse and then writes, “This mystery is a profound one and I am saying it refers to Christ and the church.” Paul taught that Christ is the *Eschatos* Adam, the ultimate Adam, and we are His Bride.ⁱⁱ Adam and Eve are thirsty for each other, and God will create a thirst in humanity for Himself.



In the middle of the garden, there is a tree.
It's either two trees that look just the same and are in one spot.
Or it's one tree, that to us appears to be two.

On the tree is the Judgment of God.
On the tree is the fruit of the knowledge of Good—and God alone is Good.
And on the tree is Life; It's the tree of Life . . . and Jesus is “the Life.”

Genesis 2:25: “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.”

The serpent (the Ancient Dragon) tempts Eve...
She is a picture of the Bride, who is us.
She sees that the Fruit on the tree is Good for food—but she doesn't see that the Good in flesh, who is the Life, who hangs on the tree . . . is her Helper.
Scripture calls Him the *Eschatos* Adam, or “last Adam.”
Well, Eve takes the Fruit and gives some to the first Adam.ⁱⁱⁱ

Gen. 3:7-10

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths.

They covered that place on their body where they would experience communion in the covenant of marriage producing life...

They covered that place where they would complete each other.

They covered that place where they would thirst for each other, that place that was to teach them of their thirst for God.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. . .

[“In the presence of the Lord there is fullness of joy. At his right hand are pleasures for evermore,” Writes David in Psalm 16.]

And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And Adam said, “I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

A pastor went to visit one of his parishioners. He rang the doorbell, waited, and no one came. Finally, he took out his card and wrote Revelation 3:20 on the back, and slipped it under the door: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.”*

Two days later the pastor received his calling card back in an envelope with a brief note attached — Genesis 3:10: *“I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”*

One year ago, we read the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:20: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock . . .”*

- Why don't we open the door?
- Why don't we invite him in? He tells us what He wants— *“I will come into him and eat with him and he with me”*; He wants communion.
- Why *don't* we invite Him to fill every dark corner of our souls so every breath we take is the ecstasy of unadulterated, passionate surrender?
- Why don't we invite Him in?

Maybe we think that He's like a pastor making house calls.

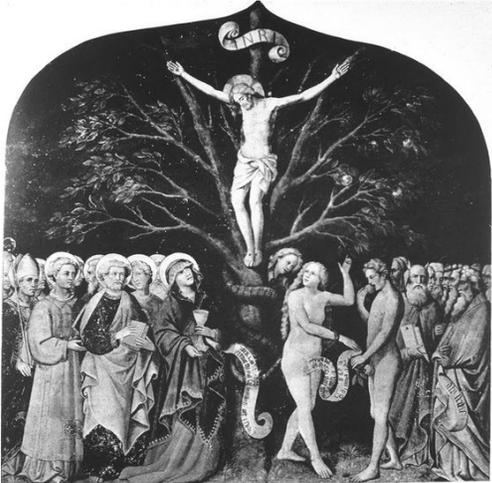
Maybe we think He's a thief in the night; when in fact He's the Bridegroom and we're His Bride.

Maybe we can't imagine that He's actually attracted to the very places that we long to hide

Maybe we can't imagine that He actually longs to fill that very place with His glorious presence, which is Himself, and He is Love.

Why don't we invite Him in?

Because of shame. . . And we have reason for shame.



We took knowledge of the Good from the tree.

We take knowledge of the Good so we can take good things and make ourselves in the image of God.

- Alcohol is a good thing . . . anything created by God is a good thing, but it's the way that we take it that makes it a bad thing.
- Gold, jewels, houses, and cars are all good things; but the way we take them makes them bad things.
- Sex is a good thing, but the way we take it can be the worst thing.

We've all tried to satiate our thirst for God with things and turned those things into idols. We've taken Good things... and even worse we've taken "the Good" as a thing.

When we take knowledge of the Good, in order to make ourselves in the image of God.

- We don't receive the Good as the Life that He is.
- We take the life of the Good as a law, which reveals that we're dead.
- We crucify the Good—take the life of the Good, and then, we perceive His presence as nothing but condemnation and criticism.

That's the story of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem.

Through the law, God reveals: *“Israel, you’ve become a beast.” “Jerusalem, you’ve become a harlot!”* But it only drives Jerusalem deeper into the dark, into the closet, and she *will not* open the door and let Him in.¹

Husbands, you know that if you really want to make love to your wife, criticism isn’t the way to go. She may commune with you ’cause it’s her duty; she may honor you with her lips but her heart will be far from you.

Jesus said, “This people—Jerusalem—honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” He was quoting Isaiah, who goes on to say, *“Therefore, I will again do marvelous things with this people”* (Isaiah 29:13-14).

Hosea 2:14: *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, romance her, entice her, and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her, and there I will give her vineyards; there I will make the Valley of Achor [Valley of Trouble] a door of hope.”*

Jesus is the Door; His broken flesh is the veil that’s torn in this wilderness world. He is the Door that brings you home to yourself, your God and all things with Him.

In Ezekiel 16, God speaks to His whoring Bride Jerusalem saying: *“Yet I will establish with you an everlasting covenant... that you may be confounded... when I forgive you all that you have done”* (Ezekiel 16:60-63 RSV).

Well, if you didn’t follow all of that, I’m saying that the Spirit of God whispers to you from behind the veil, in the tabernacle of your soul.

He whispers:

Just peek outside your walls—just beyond the gate of your city.

You’ll see a tree in a garden, and you’ll see a Man standing at your door.

He has wounds on his body that match wounds in your soul.

And He has a wound in His side that will remind you of home.

Don’t run from Him; listen to Him. The Man says to you:

You took my life; but from the foundation of the world, I’ve given you my life.

You’ve sinned against me, but I have always been Grace to you.

You’ve dreamt that you are your own creator, savior, and redeemer.

You’ve dreamt that you are your own helper.

You’ve dreamt that you are a harlot, but now awake and look in my eyes:

¹ A child wrote in a school paper, “The Jews were proud people, and throughout history they had trouble I think he meant “Gentiles,” but I hope he got an “A” . . . because he was right.

In Acts 2 the problem with the Jews was . . .

An uncircumcised heart, the unsympathetic genital of the soul;

A heart unfeeling, sealed off to God, Hiding in the dark, hiding in the bushes...

The law was criticism driving them deeper into shame.

You are not a harlot, you are my Bride. And . . .

Now would you open the door; would you drink from my fountain?
Would you thirst for me, as I have always thirsted for you?

Once you did not know, but now you do know:
It's not Good for you to be alone . . . and I am your Helper.
Awake Oh sleeper and rise from the dead and I will give you light...
I am the Light, and I make *all* things new.

Short clips from *The Passion, Snow White, and Inception*

Scene 1: Under the weight of His cross, Jesus is covered in blood wearing a crown of thorns; He reaches for His mother with deep compassion, clutches her face, looks into her eyes, and says, "See, Mother, I make all things new." She gazes at Him in wonder. Jesus stands up and once again picks up His cross; He then embraces it.]

Scene 2: Prince Charming bends down, kisses Snow White and awakens her from a dream.

Scene 3: Ariadne: (Sitting across from Cobb and a coffee shop, Ariadne looks around bewildered) *We're dreaming?*
[The "reality" surrounding Ariadne and Cobb crumbles to pieces.]

Scene 4: Dorothy: (mumbling) *There's no place like home. There's no place like home...*

Aunt Em: *Dorothy - Dorothy! It's me—Aunt Em. Wake up, honey.*

Dorothy: *No place like home—there's no place like home*

Revelation 21:1-2

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned [kosmeo] for her husband.

Last week, we began preaching on this text and titled the sermon "You Can Go Home." I made the point that home is being at home with "I Am" at home in you.

I talked about my dad and my home in Littleton growing up...
And I mentioned my bride coming down the aisle.
And now I need to tell you that home, for me, is Susan.

I mean that in a very physical way.
And I mean that in an emotional, psychological and theological sort of way.
I rest in her, and I think: "This is where I belong."

John writes that He sees the New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven like a bride adorned for her husband... Jesus is her husband. The word translated “adorned” is *kosmeo* in Greek. It’s where we get our word “cosmetics.”

In Revelation 19, we read, *“The bride has made herself ready, it was granted to her (given to her) to clothe herself with fine linen bright and pure. The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints”* (Rev. 19:7).

In John’s day, when a young man would desire to marry a young woman, he would prepare a covenant and present it to the young woman’s father along with the bride price (what the young man would pay the father as compensation for losing his daughter).

Jesus pays for us with His very life.

The young man would then pour a cup of wine, which represented a blood covenant—the Life is in the blood. If the girl would drink from His cup, the wedding was sealed. They were engaged.

At that point, he would go to prepare a place for her in his Father’s house. It was the custom that he would come for her at an unexpected hour and take her to her new home, where they would consummate the wedding, and everyone would celebrate for an entire week.

While he was preparing a place for her, she would be using the gifts that he had sent to prepare herself as a place for him. She used his gifts to purchase the fine linen, bright and pure... and cosmetics: perfume, oil, and flowers, with which she would adorn herself for him.

And you see, it all sent a message:
“I’m thirsty for you, my groom.”

When my bride walked down the aisle she was clothed in fine linen... or rayon; I’m not sure... but it was bright and pure... She had her hair all done up in flowers and her cosmetics were just right. It all meant that she was thirsty for me. And, in a very real way, I purchased that thirst for me, with my love for her. I had romanced her for five and a half years... and made her “thirsty.” I had waited for five and a half years, not perfectly, but I had/we had waited.

We waited because of my neurotic desire to make myself Good—which really isn’t good, but bad. We waited because I wanted to make myself good, but also because I had simply come to trust that God is Good—and that’s good, but not to my credit; that was a gift He had given to me.

Well, I'm just pointing out that I was thirsty for her.
And Her adornment said, "Peter, I am thirsty for you."
And that's what the Groom wants.

I was not thinking about cake as I watched her walk down that aisle. I was thirsty for her, and just her, hidden under that adornment. You know Scripture says that we are to be clothed with Christ. He is our adornment.

I was thirsty for her without any adornment but me.
I was thirsty for her, and a particular part of her . . .

That very part of her that she had hidden from everyone else in shame,
That very place in which she felt incomplete.
That very spot which looks like a wound, left from the day, that God made the
Adam male and female,
That very place where I had been made fit for her, and her for me.

I longed to fill that empty place in her self, with my self.

"This mystery is a profound one and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church,"
wrote Paul in Ephesians 5. *"Christ and his church"*—which is you, His Bride.

Now, even as I'm preaching this, some of you feel intense shame, and you're starting to hide. Male or female, you're all Christ's Bride, and you each have an empty place. And you've tried to fill that place with all sorts of things and just become more and more aware that it's still empty.

I've tried to fill the empty place in me with Susan...

- Susan is good, and Susan's body is a sign, but something inside Susan is the substance. (I can't take it as a possession, but I can receive it as a gift).
- Wine is a sign, but the Spirit of Christ is the substance.
- All creation is a sign, but our Creator is the substance.
- Signs fade and get old, but the substance is eternal.

We argue about legitimate and illegitimate signs:

Like if and when a photograph or art turns into pornography.

Or when a romance novel turns into coveting your neighbor's husband?

Or whether or not a divorced person who re-marries can still reflect the sign?

Or whether or not homosexuality can reflect the sign—scholars debate just what the biblical words mean: do they mean pederasty and idolatry, any same-sex attraction, or something in between?

And what about singleness? Jesus was single, but does He thirst for a bride?

Well, we argue about the signs, and I don't know the answer to all those questions... but I know that the presence of God is the substance.

- And I know that we're all thirsty for communion.
- And I know that we're all thirsty for communion in that very place that you were just now tempted to hide . . . from Jesus . . . your Bridegroom.

Now stop and listen for a minute:

Maybe Jesus is attracted to that very place, in you.^{iv}
 And maybe His greatest sorrow is that you'd hide it from Him.
 It doesn't matter if it's wrong or right; if you hide it from Him, it's evil.
 And so, His presence burns like fire.

"Shame is like that," writes CS Lewis. "If you will accept it—if you will drink the cup to the bottom, you will find it very nourishing: but try to do anything else with it and it scalds."^v

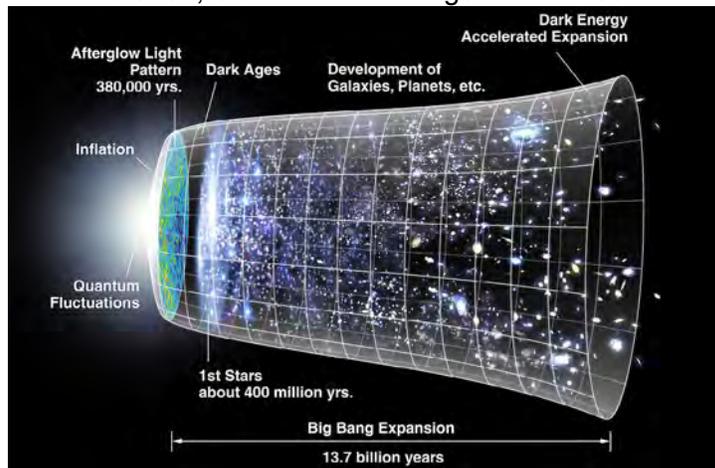
In the same way, if we confess our confusion, lies, and decay, those empty places will reveal The Way, The Truth and The Life... but not as something we've earned—but as the thing they truly are, the Grace of God, which is the presence of God, which is Jesus—at His right hand are pleasures forevermore.

I just remember how terrified I was of my nakedness as a child—older than three or four years old (after I'd gained the knowledge of good and evil)—and then, how amazed I was that someone as beautiful as Susan would actually be attracted, even thirst, for the very place that I had always hidden in shame. What a delightful discovery!

Well, John saw the New Jerusalem coming down... as a bride adorned (*kosmeo*) for her husband; it means, she's thirsty.

Kosmeo, comes from *Kosmos*, it's the idea that God orders and beautifies His creation.

As we've seen, God will fill all things with Himself.



He will fill every eon, with His meaning—His Logos.



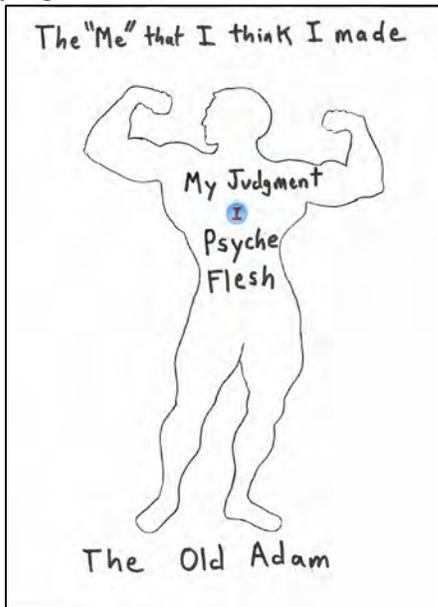
And He will fill every moment in your life with Himself.

[Image of a human life illustrated as an undulating snake with five stages: a baby, a youth, a man, an old man, and a coffin.]

He saves you, not just in three dimensions, but at least four.

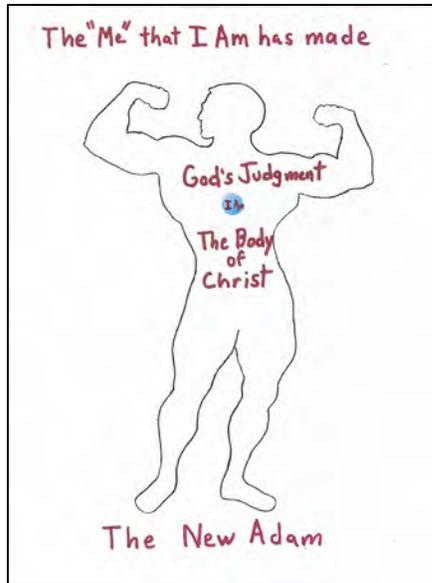
He transforms all your moments past, present, and future and in that way makes you in His image.

As we've learned, we each have an old man that we think we have created with our judgments.



It is who I am *not*. That man is my nightmare: the result of dreaming that I could make myself in the image of God by taking knowledge from the tree and choosing to apply the Good to myself in the strength of my own flesh. We each have an old man.

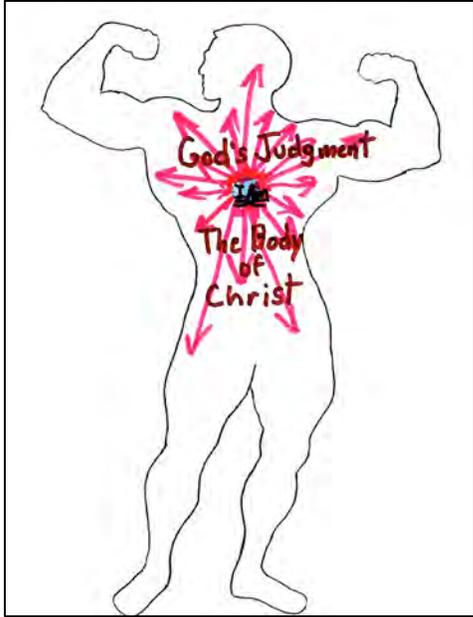
And we each have a New and Eternal Man that God has created with His Judgment.



He actually is God's Judgment... He is somehow "Christ in me".
He is the Good and He is the Life, not taken but given, even for-given from the foundation.

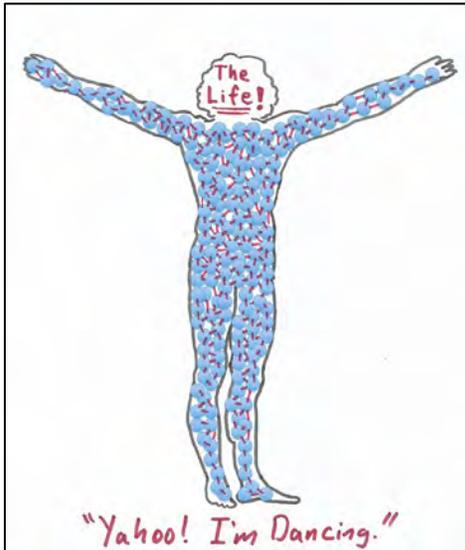
You know? The moment you confess your old man, He becomes your New Man.
The moment you confess your lies, they become a beautiful testimony to the Truth.
The moment you confess that you're lost, you are most found by the Way.
The moment you confess that your dead, it is the Life Himself that's rising in you.
The moment you confess your old man, the New Man is revealed in you.
The New Man is the Way, the Truth and the Life; He is Christ in you.
"This is the mystery hidden for ages and generations," wrote Paul, "Christ in you..."

To the woman at the well who had had six men, and to whom Jesus was the Seventh Man, the *Eschatos* Adam—Jesus said, if you would ask of me, I would give you a fountain of living water welling up from inside of you unto eternal life.



When we "ask of Him," He fills us with Himself.
And His Eternal Life, becomes our Eternal Life, in the very place we once experienced temporal death in this world of illusion.

And you know this, at least those of you who are over forty or fifty years old . . .



The signs get old and fade but the substance is eternal.

I'm saying that God in Christ Jesus wants us to agree with our own creation, the way a bride agrees to her honeymoon on the night of her wedding.
He wants us to agree, not only once, at camp in junior high.

He wants us to agree, in every moment of our space and time—*past, present, and future...*

- That every moment would be a moment of ecstatic, passionate and free communion—constantly willing what we want and wanting what we will
- That everywhere, and everywhen we would be entirely at home with Him at home in us
- That we would thirst for him as he has always thirsted for us.
- That we would love Love... forever in His image.

Not because we stole His identity but because we received it as a Bride.

Imagine if Susan came down that aisle, looking just like me in clothes that she stole from me . . . and when the minister said, “Do you take this man?” she said: “I am this man,” and produced a fake ID that claimed that she was me?

To steal your identity is death and sin, but to receive it is salvation by Grace through faith . . . and faith is thirst for your Helper.

Revelation 21:2 -7

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes (nikao conquers) shall inherit all things...

Remember this whole vision has been begging the question: “How do we conquer?”
The thirsty conquer and inherit all things.

...thirsty for what?

...the fountain of the water of Life—the Life who is our Bridegroom.

“This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith,” writes John in 1 John.

See what that means? It means that faith is thirst. And so, of course, the Bridegroom wants faith and arranges all things to grow faith..

Sometimes I wonder if this whole God and Jesus thing is working. But if they want thirst... it’s working. Is this world making you thirsty for the Way, the Truth and the Life? Your Bridegroom is the Way, the Truth, and the Life... and all for free.

Your Bridegroom is Grace.
Have you become thirsty for Grace? Grace is relentless Love.
He's making you thirsty.

Sometimes I wonder why God does miracles, and then, doesn't do miracles?
Why He gives us a taste and then makes us hungry?
Why He gives us a sip and then leads us into the wilderness?

He's making us thirsty.
The adulterous generation is thirsty for His signs...
But the Bride is thirsty for Him; He is the substance.

He withholds His glory and power so I wouldn't try to abuse or try to rape His person.
And He withholds His glory and power because He refuses to abuse me . . .
He refuses to take me against my will, and so He romances my will until I surrender my will to His Will... until I surrender to the thirst. That's the glory and power of Love. Love creates all things—even that thirst for Himself called faith.

Do you remember what Jesus said as He hung on the tree in the garden just outside the walls of Jerusalem? He said, "I thirst"^{vi} (all Judah could give Him was vinegar—sour wine). Then He lifted His eyes to Heaven and said, "It is finished," and He delivered up His Spirit.

- That Spirit fell on a Roman centurion and he began to worship; he was thirsty; he drank and he was drunk by Love. (Song. 5:1)
- I know that Spirit fell on His disciples in the old Jerusalem on Pentecost and they began to worship; they were thirsty; they drank and people thought they were drunk... and they were drunk with love and by Love.
- Within a generation the walls of the old Jerusalem came tumbling down, and John saw a New Jerusalem (she's made of people) coming down; she's made of people that are thirsty.

She's made of people that are thirsty for Grace.
We're saved by Grace through thirst—a thirst for Grace called faith.

You know this; your heart knows it. Two weeks ago, Karl Wheeler had us finish this sentence, and write it on a piece of paper, which we placed in a bucket. This was the sentence: "Because of Grace I am free from the shame of _____."

He then read our responses.... rejection, pornography, addiction, anxiety, despair etc., etc. When Karl would read a slip of paper, was there something in you that just wanted to find that person, hug them, "And say, thank you, thank you, thank you. I love you. God loves you. And it will be OK!"

That something in you that was attracted to that place of surrendered shame in them is Jesus. We are the Sanctuary, where we celebrate communion, in the Covenant of Grace.

You see? You shouldn't just surrender your shame to anyone. Every one of those confessions could've easily been abused. You must surrender your shame to Jesus... who sees it as the treasure that it is (a pearl of great price).

There was one slip of paper that took my breath away. It read, "Because of Grace, I am free from the shame of thinking I'm better than others." I wanted to find that person, wash their feet, and say thank you, thank you on behalf of us all.

Do you remember the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus? The way Jesus tells the story makes it rather clear that the Rich Man is Judah, father of the Jews—and Jesus was a Jew. And the poor man was Eliezer, Abraham's servant who you'll remember ends up in Abraham's bosom.

Eliezer was a gentile who lost what he would've inherited had Abraham not had a son, and become the father of Israel and the Jews. Eliezer is the Hebrew name for Lazarus. *El* means God and *ezer* means help. Lazarus means "God is Help."

You may also remember that Judah, the rich man, ends up on the other side of a chasm tormented by a flame.^{vii} He seems to have thought he had justified himself, and so didn't need Grace, and so looked down on Lazarus. He thought he was better than Lazarus . . . and so, was not saved.

The Church is the Israel of God, and sometimes I fear that we're not saved, and we still need to be saved, for to be saved is to be thirsty for Grace. If you've experienced much Grace, you'll want Grace for all. You'll be thirsty for God to make all things new.

Rev. 21:6-8

Behold I make all things new and He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes (nikao conquers) shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral (pornos, sorcerers), idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and theion, which is the second death." That's the death of death.

Cowards must not be thirsty enough for Love, for perfect Love casts out fear. Unbelief is un-thirst; perhaps they're full of themselves. The murderers are not thirsty for the life.

The liars are not thirsty for the truth... or at least much truth.
Whores and whoremongers are not thirsty for Love that can't be bought.
Idolaters are not thirsty for Yahweh, "I Am, that I am."
Judah was not thirsty for Yeshuah, Yahweh is Salvation, Jesus.
And the rich man sure wasn't thirsty for Jesus in Lazarus.
He wasn't thirsty for God is our Help, Eliezer.

Judah and Jerusalem believed that they had justified themselves. Jesus said, "*Many will say to me on that day, did we not do many mighty works in your name? And I will declare to them "I never knew you."*" Jesus doesn't know your false self, but the moment you surrender that false self in Truth, you become the New Self by Grace.

In the outer darkness at the edge of the eternal fire that surrounds Jerusalem...the rich man gets thirsty. And Jesus said, "*To him who thirsts, I will give of the fountain of the water of life without payment.*" (21:6, 22:17)

Lazarus can't cross the chasm. But on the cross, Jesus, the king of the Jews, destroyed the chasm. Every valley is exalted and every mountain and hill laid low. When Jerusalem sees Him as He is, a fountain is opened with her, and she opens her gates and the King of Glory comes in.

He will save the whole house of Israel including Judah.
He will save all that fell asleep and died in Adam.
He will create in all of us a thirst for Him.

But you are particularly blessed if He has created a thirst for Him, in you, right now.
I often complain about the thirst, but I need to be grateful for the thirst. The thirst is a gift.
I didn't create it, but it is creating me.

I'm thirsty to see the Way, the Truth, and the Life fills all the lost, the liars, and the murderers with Himself.

I'm thirsty to hear the addicted confused and insane, join the chorus of praise because the Logos of God, the Logic of Love has filled them with songs.

I'm thirsty to see every empty void of sin filled with the liquid gold of Grace.

I'm thirsty to see Adolph Hitler washing the feet of six million Jews because he wants to because it is his heart's deepest desire.

And I'm thirsty to see six million Jews placing a crown on his head because in him they recognize the presence of their King who conquers all things... even Hitler and Judas.

I'm thirsty to see Jesus conquer all things and make all things new.

And if you're not . . . I pray for your soul, that the King would make it new and make mine new too.

I'm thirsty, but not near thirsty enough.

I'm thirsty until someone cuts me off in traffic, criticizes my sermon, or really needs my help when I'd rather just watch TV. See a thirst for Grace will manifest as deeds of Grace, like a beautiful white wedding gown.

Over the years, Susan and I have prayed for several women that have been ritually abused. It's really weird and wild and yet, all strangely familiar, for we are all Eve, and we have all been abused by the ancient dragon.

Seventeen years ago, when I first preached on this text, we were praying for a friend who forty years before had been ritually wed to Satan... and literally imprisoned in a closet.

We discovered that she was delivered from evil, by seeing "the epiphany of His *parousia* (2 Thess. 1:9)—Jesus in every moment of her space and time. He would reveal Himself in her memories... He had always been there.

She and Susan both would see Him in visions, and the manifestation of His presence in all those places of shame would transform those places of shame into the Gospel of Grace—stories of God's relentless love for her everywhere and everywhen. And it would free her from oppression, fear, and despair.

In these visions, Jesus would often hold up a mirror. She had been sold as a harlot for a time. But in the mirror, she could see that she was Christ's Bride for all eternity. She would see herself adorned as a bride for her Bridegroom.

At one point, she bought a wedding dress. We had her hang it on her bedroom door. When she did, and she looked at that dress, the ancient serpent could not enter. Of course, it wasn't the dress; it was her thirst for Jesus, which is a gift from Jesus and the presence of His Spirit.

"To the thirsty... the one who conquers... I will be his God... And he will inherit all things," says Jesus.

Don't be a foolish virgin; know what it is that the Bridegroom wants.

He wants a bride thirsty for Him, and for Him alone.

He doesn't want a bride that wraps herself in flannel and makes him some tea.

He wants a Bride that dances into the bridal chamber and gladly, boldly, freely, and lavishly, surrenders her shame.

He wants a Bride that thirsts for Him as He has always thirsted for her.

Communion

And so, in Jerusalem, on the night He was betrayed by all of us, He took bread and broke it saying this is my body given for you. And He took the cup saying this is the covenant (it's a marriage covenant) in my blood; drink of it all of you.

Are you thirsty?

Or are you offended?

Perhaps you're thinking, "Hey that wasn't much of a Christmas sermon."
If so, you appear to have forgotten just where it is that babies come from.

In all of Israel, this may have been the most shameful place of all [Peter points to a manger on stage]: a food trough, in a stable, just outside the walls of Jerusalem, in Bethlehem.

Jesus was born to a poor, unwed, teenage, peasant girl and placed in a manger. There are four women that Matthew listed in Jesus' family tree. The first is Tamar, who disguised herself as a whore to convince her father-in-law Judah to impregnate her with his seed. The second is Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute from inside the walls of Jericho. The third is Ruth a desolate woman from Israel's ancient enemy Moab. The fourth is Bathsheba who committed adultery with David. And then, Mary... and all we really know of Mary is that she was very thirsty for the presence of the Lord; she prayed, "*May it be unto me according to your Word.*"

This is God's Word and He's attracted to you . . . even in—especially in—that place where you feel shame. You know the place; maybe it's several places. Let's give those places to Him. Those places are wherever you want to hide from Jesus

Let's pray. Jesus, you're my Helper and so I give you my shame.

Benediction

God's love for you in your place of shame makes you beautiful or you are not beautiful, but you *are* beautiful, so Jesus holds up a mirror; what you see in His mirror of Grace—the Gospel—is not wishful thinking; it's eternal. Believe the gospel, in Jesus' name.

[Peter prays a closing prayer thanking God that He covers us from all shame.]

ⁱ For a long time, I've found it very curious that in Gen 2:16 God literally says to the Adam, "*Of every*

It's made me wonder, did Adam take fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ("you will not eat," said God) or did Adam dream that he did? When, in fact, he was eating from the tree of Life all along.

I must be careful here, but is death and this whole fallen world like a nightmare that God is allowing us to dream, and wonder of wonders, in Christ Jesus, God enters our dreams and wakes us from those dreams. This fallen world may be a dream, but the wounds on Christ's hands and feet are real; they come from the temple in Heaven.

ii And this is "the mystery hidden for ages and generations," Christ in us. (Col. 1:26-27)

iii The first Adam sinned when he took the fruit from Eve; humanity, as male and female sinned, by taking knowledge of good and evil to justify ourselves. But the last Adam did not sin, and yet He "became sin for us..." He freely chose to suffer with His Bride—not to make Himself good, but because He *is* Good; He is the Good in flesh.

iv Sexual imagery is universal in human religious experience. But when the living God, in whose presence Moses had to remove his shoes, is presented as a cuckolded husband who relentlessly pursues His wayward wife, some Christians have protested that this is not only an outrageous symbol but a blasphemous one. Why? Because the prophet Hosea is implying that God doesn't just care for His people; Hosea implies that God is sexually aroused in the presence of His people. And that idea was shocking to the Jews, scandalous to their neighbors, and it remains an enormous stumbling block for Jansenists and neo-Manicheans in our own day.

Are you aware that in the fourth century A.D., the Christian community borrowed and assimilated the spring fertility symbol of the Roman Empire and put it into our Easter liturgy? At the baptismal rite of the Easter vigil, a lighted candle is inserted into a vase of holy water to symbolize that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead He consummated His union with His bride the church. . . .

Have you ever been sexually aroused to an intense degree? Really stimulated in a sensuous way? Passionately turned on? Both the Scripture and the liturgy of the Christian community say that human sexual arousal is but a pale imitation of God's passion for His people. That is why human love, though it's the best image we have, is still an inadequate image of God's love. Not because it overdoes it, but because human desire with all its emotion cannot compare with the passionate yearning of Jesus Christ. That is why saints can only stutter and stammer about the reality, why Blaise Pascal on his famous night of fire, November 21, 1654, could not speak a word, why Bede Griffiths wrote, "The love of Jesus Christ is not a mild benevolence; it is a consuming fire." - Brennan Manning, *Lion and Lamb - The Relentless Tenderness of Jesus*

v The Ghost made a sound something between a sob and a snarl. "I wish I'd never been born," it said. "What are we born for?" "For infinite happiness," said the Spirit. "You can step out into it at any moment. . . ." "But, I tell you, they'll see me." "And hour hence and you will not care. A day hence and you will laugh at it. Don't you remember on earth - there were things too hot to touch with your finger but you could drink them all right? Shame is like that. If you will accept it - if you will drink the cup to the bottom - you will find it very nourishing; but try to do anything else with it and it scalds." Almost, I thought the Ghost had obeyed. Certainly it had moved: but suddenly it cried out: "No, I can't. I tell you I can't. For a moment, while you were talking, I almost thought . . . but when it comes to the point. . . . You've no right to ask me to do a thing like that. It's disgusting. I should never forgive myself if I did. Never, never. And it's not fair. They ought to have warned us. I'd never have come. And now -

please, please go away!" "Friend," said the Spirit. "Could you, only for a moment, fix your mind on something not yourself?" - C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

^{vi} Israel, His vineyard, would only give him sour wine—vinegar.

^{vii} Song of Solomon 8:6

*Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm,
for love is strong as death,
jealousy is fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
the very flame of the LORD.*

42

Do Ya Wanna Go to Heaven?

Do Ya Wanna Go to Heaven?

Revelation 21:1-22:17

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

January 13, 2019

Peter Hiett

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Prayer

And so Lord God we pray that we would sing your praise right now. We pray that you would cause us to preach. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Message

Who wants to go to heaven? [Go ahead and raise your hands]
...yeah everybody wants to go to heaven.

Who wants to go to hell?

...the question is how to avoid the one and get to the other right?

[Clip from *South Park* Season 4 Episode 10: “Probably”]

A crowd of confused people shout out questions in an immense chthonic wasteland studded with titanic obsidian stalagmites, surrounded by jagged black mountains and curtains of rippling flame.

A voice addresses the crowd over a cheap PA system. The camera turns around to show a man with a clipboard standing at a microphone.

Speaker: Hello, newcomers, and welcome. Can everybody hear me? *(taps the mic a few times)* Hello? Can everybody—Okay. *(the crowd quiets down)* I'm the hell director. It looks like we have about 8,615 of you newbies today, and for those of you who were a little confused, uh, you are dead, and this is hell, so, abandon all hope and yada yada yada. Uh, we're now going to start the orientation process, which will last about—

Man 4: Hey, wait a minute, I shouldn't be here. I was a totally strict and devout Protestant! I thought we went to heaven!

Hell Director: Yes, well I'm afraid you were wrong.

Soldier: I was a practicing Jehovah's Witness.

Hell Director: You picked the wrong religion as well.

Man 5: Well, who was right? Who gets into heaven?

Hell Director: I'm afraid it was the *Mormons*. Yes, the *Mormons* were the correct answer.

Crowd: *(disappointed)* Awww.

Sorry you've all seen that clip before, but it makes my point...we all think we want to go to heaven, and so we want to know what it is that we have to do, or believe, in order to open that door.

My friend, Andrew does evangelism crusades around the world. One day my Dad asked him what they said in their messages. Andrew replied, “well we ask the crowd who wants to go to Heaven instead of Hell.” And my Dad, the Pastor, said “well, why would anyone want to go to heaven?”

Andrew thought long and hard about that, and it changed his life, and how preached the Gospel.

The author of Hebrews argues that Abraham, the Father of faith, did what he did because he wanted to go to Heaven. That is, He was seeking “a city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11:10)ⁱ

- Some people think that city is Old Jerusalem, and so they’re willing to start World War III in order to get it.
- Some think that country is the United States and so they’re willing to defend it at all costs.
- Some think that city is their church—Presbyterian, Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon, or even the 501(c)(3) named the Sanctuary Denver.

It might be worth asking: “What is Heaven and why would I want to go to there?” . . . before you tried to get to there.

In Revelation 21 and 22, John sees it and describes it. Very few seem to believe it. Almost everyone argues it’s a metaphor. But I don’t think that John thought it was a metaphor. I think he thought that everything in this world is a metaphor referring to what he saw.

In other words, it wasn’t less real, but more real than anything he’d ever seen.

In other words, he wasn’t dreaming, but waking from the dream that we call reality or maybe space and time.

But we’re still dreaming and so I cannot fully explain what he saw to you, but maybe I can help you, at least a little, to believe. Actually, for over a year now, in every sermon, I’ve been thinking about this picture and hoping to help you, and me, believe what John sees.

Sorry that our text this morning is so long, but it’s all one picture and I want you to see, in order that you might believe, and even want to go to there.

Revelation 21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

John sees a new heaven and a new earth, which is a biblical way of saying a new creation. The sea is chaos; it’s no more, but according to Isaiah and Ezekiel there will also be a new sea.

John sees a new everything, just as he heard a new everything in Revelation chapter five—he heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea worshipping.

John sees a new everything, which must include a New Jerusalem... And then he sees something else.

v. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

You’ve got to wonder: what it’s coming down *to*? Because, as we’ll soon find out, not everything is new outside the city. And yet, it appears that everything is new inside the city... everything.

So it’s like it’s inside is bigger than all of the outside.

In the Chronicles of Narnia, the old land of Narnia comes to an end at a stable door. When the children pass through the door they find an entirely new Narnia. Someone says, “its inside is bigger than its outside.”

And Lucy says, “In our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world.”

When the children enter through the stable door they find that everything old is new. They had been horrified to see the old Narnia destroyed, but then someone says, “That was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan’s real world... All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream . . .”

“The new one was a deeper country,” writes C.S. Lewis. “Every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more...

“It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right forehoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried: ‘I have come home at last! This is real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this!’”

Well, that’s what we preached before Christmas: that you can go home.

We read these verses and realized that God is calling us to be at home with him in every moment of our space and time—every moment filled with himself, who is the meaning of all things.

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place [tabernacle] of God is with man. He will dwell [tabernacle] with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

We read those verses and a few more last time, but now in verse 9, an angel that looks like Jesus—one of the seven bowl angels—gives John a closer look.

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues (literally, “7 *eschatos* wounds” or “7 ultimate wounds”) and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

That’s fitting for it was one of these angels that had shown him the great whore. But now, where there had been a great whore, there is a glorious bride.

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain (this must be Mt. Zion), and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God...

In Isaiah, God says repeatedly “I give my glory to no other” (42:8, 48:11). If the city has the Glory of God, the city is filled with God.ⁱⁱ

¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

¹² It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels [*angelos*, messengers], and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed...

That would include the names of 9 or 10 boys that plotted to kill their brother, but then sold him into slavery in Egypt to profit from his destruction and steal his glory...only to be saved by the one they had tried to destroy.

That would include names like Dan, Asher, and Judah—Judah who slept with whores, one of whom was his daughter-in-law (and also the great great grandmother of Jesus).

Names. Names that mean something.

¹³ on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.ⁱⁱⁱ

That would include names like Peter, who denied Jesus three times. And wouldn't it include a name like Judas? Judas, which comes directly from the name Judah. Jesus picked him and called him “friend.” They tried to replace him... but if he was replaced, it was with a Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus—or Paul, the “chief of sinners.”

They're the foundation. Foundations are laid before walls are built. It's like God had this city in mind all along. A city built with people that have been saved from all manner of things—particularly themselves. Each of them has quite a story to tell.

Each is like a pearl.

You know, a pearl is an impurity in the body of an oyster, that causes a wound, that gets encased in minerals—minerals that form the treasure that is the pearl.

Your testimony is a treasure, like a pearl. It's the story of God's Grace covering your sin, which is an open door to others saying, “you can entrust yourself to God, for he is Relentless Love.”

All that John sees, is prophesied extensively in the Old Testament, particularly in Zechariah 8-14, Ezekiel 40-48, and Isaiah 60-66.

Through Isaiah, God says your walls, Jerusalem, will be called “Salvation” (Is. 63:18). That's *yashuwah* in Hebrew, which sounds a lot like *yeshua*, which, in English, is pronounced “Jesus.”

“Your walls will be called *yashuwah* and your gates praise.”

And that's what a testimony is—it's praise to Yahweh in the name of Yeshua—praise that is entirely inviting to sinners and so looks like a gate and a pearl all at once.

Well the city is built with people, which is exactly what Jesus, Paul, and Peter tell us in the New Testament: “You yourselves like living stones are being built into a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). It’s why God spoke to Jerusalem in the Old Testament as if she were his house, his temple, and his bride—as if she weren’t dead stones but living stones.

You see this entire time that God had people build a city of stone, God was building a city of people, a city of living stones. For four thousand years we’ve gone to war over Old Jerusalem, and for four thousand years we’ve slaughtered the New Jerusalem. And yet even then, especially then, God is building his city.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem and said, “Destroy this temple and I’ll rebuild it in three days,” as if Jerusalem were actually His body.

Once my old friend Dale had a vision during one of our worship services:

He looked around the room and saw people suffering everywhere, both in the room and in places like Nazi concentration camps...and even in the midst of angry mobs that you read about in the book of Acts.

He prayed “God there must be more.”

He heard the Lord say, “Be patient, come up a little higher and look a little closer.”

He found himself raised high on the cross—the cross, which the Bible calls a tree—raised high in the middle of the Sanctuary.

He writes, “I saw that all of this was happening all at once within the walls of the New Jerusalem, the gleaming white walls with flags flying in the wind.”

“This is heaven,” he heard the Lord say. “This is what the New Jerusalem is made of.”^{iv}

Think what you will of my friend’s vision. But that’s what the twelve tribes are made of, and what the twelve apostles are made of—they’re made of sin that’s been covered in Grace. They’re made of sorrow that’s been turned into eternal Joy. They’re made of mourning that’s been turned into an eternal dance of praise.

“Blessed are the poor in Spirit, *of them* is the kingdom of heaven.” This is a literal translation. “Blessed are the persecuted for righteousness sake, *of them* is the kingdom of heaven” said Jesus (Matt. 5:3,10).

John looked and saw names. One of which was his own.

I think he saw himself as he truly is... already “seated in the heavenly places,” like St. Paul would write.

“In spite of all our feelings, weal and woe,” writes Julian of Norwich, “God wants us to understand and believe that we are more truly in heaven than on earth.”^v

v. ¹⁵ And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. [see: Rev. 11:1, Ez. 40-42] ¹⁶ The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its

width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal.

[Image: New Jerusalem Footprint – a satellite map of the Middle East with a square overlay 1,380 miles by 1,380 miles in size. The square covers all or part of the modern countries of Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Greece, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, and Sudan.]

This is the footprint of a cube 12,000 stadia on each side; you can see that the New Jerusalem is quite a bit larger than the old. And yet, I don't think time and space work the same in the New Creation. So the point isn't 1,380 miles but 12 (the number of God's people) times a thousand (the largest denomination in Scripture). Cubed! Meaning there is room for all.

And the point isn't a cube, but that it's shaped just like the Sanctuary in the temple, because the New Jerusalem is all temple and all sanctuary.

v. 17 He also measured its wall, 144 cubits (that's 12 times 12) by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. 18 The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

Our faith is like gold refined by fire, says Scripture.

v. 19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. vi The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

The twelve stones are like the twelve stones on the breastplate of the High Priest—who would enter into the Holy of Holies, the Sanctuary, to make atonement for the people, to bring the people to God.

Jesus is our high priest who made a way through the curtain into the Holy of Holies. He is the priest and he is the offering—the slaughtered lamb.

We conquer by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony (as in Rev. 12:11).

Jesus is the Word of your testimony—and your testimony is a pearl and a door wide open to people lost in darkness.

v 22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

God is our temple—our dwelling place. And we are God's temple—His dwelling place. Heaven is an eternal communion of Grace through faith, which means trust.

v 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Jesus said that he is the Light of the World (John 8:12). He also said that we are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14).

Understand? We are a lampstand; the church is a lampstand, and the Spirit of Christ is her Glory, her Light, and the Fire that burns within.

^{v 24} **By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth** (remember, it's the kings of the earth that went to war with the Lamb, to take His Glory...) **will bring their glory into it,** ²⁵ **and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.** ²⁶ **They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.**

“Everything created by God is good,” says Scripture (1 Tim. 4:4). And we know God is the creator of everything. The glory in everything, that's anything, belongs to God. He is the good in everything that's anything, for “God alone is Good,” said Jesus.

So one day Led Zeppelin will bring all their albums into heaven and say, “Lord only you can write a song—you're the rhythm in every song; the logic in every tune. You are the Stairway to Heaven.”

Elon Musk will drive all of his Tesla's into the New Jerusalem and say, “Lord you made my brain, you made electricity, you even made Nikola Tesla... and you allowed me to enjoy them all.”

One day, you will bring everything you think you've made—including yourself—into the eternal city and sing “Lord all praise glory and honor belong to you forever and ever, amen.”

^{v 26} **They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.** ²⁷ **But nothing unclean will ever enter it...**

Well, if everything God creates is good, and God is the creator of everything, then *anything* that's not good is *nothing* but a lie—a lie, which is the absence of the Truth, who is Jesus, the Word of God, by whom everything that's anything is created.

^{v 26} **They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations** [or “of the Gentiles,” as it is often translated]. ²⁷ **But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false** [literally: “anyone doing the abomination or doing the lie”], **but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

Remember: That's God's choice—who He writes in that book. That's God's choice, not our choice. Actually, Jesus, the Lamb that was slain for the sins of the world, *is* God's Choice. It's not your choice that saves you... all Glory belongs to God. If a good choice is in you—God has bled it into you.

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street (or the broad place) of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life...

We're back to the garden, but there are not two trees. There is one tree, and the garden is a tabernacle, a temple, a city, and a whole new creation.

Youngs literal translation, translates what we just read as follows:

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, bright as crystal, going forth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: ²in the midst of its broad place, and of the river on this side and on that, is a tree of life (in Greek “a *Skylon* of life)...”

That’s not the normal Greek word for “tree” and can also be translated “cross.”

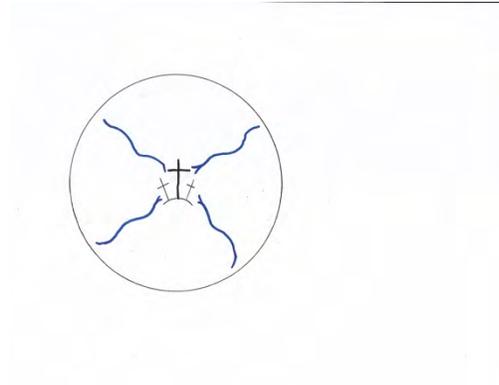


Figure 1

So John sees something like this, not two trees, but one tree. And the tree is also a throne—If you’re a Bible student you know that John always pictures Jesus as being enthroned on a cross, which is also a tree, in a garden. From the throne come rivers like the four rivers of Eden, one of which was the Jordan.

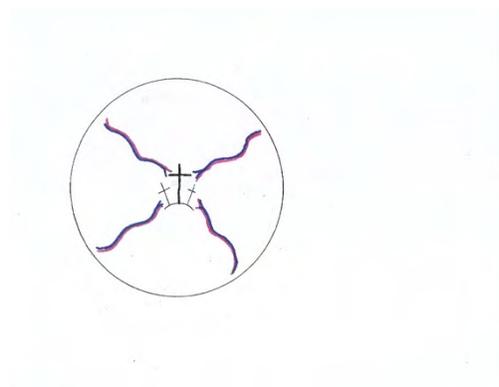


Figure 2

And wherever the river goes it brings life, like a river of blood, the life is in the blood (Ez. 47:1-12)—we’ll talk more about that next time.

V. 2 ...the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Not “some nations,” just “the nations.” And that’s huge! Last we read of “the nations,”^{vii} they were all worshipping the beast, in bed with the whore, and then—along with the kings of the earth—they were being slaughtered by the sword from the mouth of the Word of God on the white horse.

³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face^{viii}

[*prosopon*: presence or face]

Exodus 33:20 – “No man can see my face and live” says God.

2 Thessalonians 1:9 – “Eternal destruction (*aionios* destruction) comes from the face of the Lord.”

2 Thessalonians 2:8 – It’s “the appearance of Christ’s presence” that “brings the antichrist to nothing.”

The antichrist is the imitation Christ and the abomination of desolation. And this is the abomination according to Jesus in Luke 16:15:

“What is exalted among men.”

...that is, justifying yourself. It’s an abomination; it’s your false self; it’s your arrogant ego.

Well his servants will see his face and live—that means they die, and yet, live.

4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more.

“On that day, there will be neither night or day,” prophesies Zechariah. Night and day, that’s how we measure time. That was especially true back before they had clocks. “...there will be neither night nor day, but one day...a unique day,” according to Zechariah (Zech. 14:7).

See? I think the inside of the city is eternal and the outside is our world of space and time.

- Which means the walls of the city are the boundary between eternity and time.
- Which means the end of *all* time, and the end of *your* time, are the same moment from the standpoint of eternity, but could be separated by thousands of years from the standpoint of this earth.
- Which means that we will all be caught up in the air to meet him in one moment.
- Which also means the Kingdom of heaven really is *at hand*.

So, the King and his kingdom really are coming soon. In fact, you encounter Him and His kingdom every day, even in “*the last and least of these his brothers*,” of whom the New Jerusalem is constructed. In fact, every decision to love, is the eternal king and his eternal kingdom invading this empty world of space and time.

5 ... night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (for ages and ages).

Eternity will fill time and “*chronos* will be no more” (Rev. 10:6) and you will reign over every moment, past, present, and future. I think it means something like that.

6 And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.”

7 “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, 9 but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near (at hand).

In Daniel the words are to be “sealed till the time of the end.” But here, these words are to be “unsealed” for it is the time of the end and has been the time of the end for 2000 years—Jesus is the end.

There will be an end to space and time as we experience them now. But whenever we come to Jesus, we come to “the End.” Or I should say “the End” has come to us.

^{v 11} Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

¹² “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.

In Chapter 20 we read that the dead are judged according to what they’ve done. And now we read that Jesus repays each person according to what they’ve done. He repays them with “His reward, His recompense, His pay.”

It’s just what Isaiah prophesied, and Jesus declared in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21):

- The Year of the Lord’s favor and the day of the vengeance of our God. (Is. 61:1-2)
- That He would trample the winepress alone. (Is 63:1-6)
- And He would give us beauty for ashes and a double portion for our shame—a covenant of everlasting joy. (Is. 61:3-8)
- A river of Life that flows from the throne that is the Tree on which He died.

His Life fills the empty place that was your sin. He repays according to your sin. It’s called Grace.

^{v 13} I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” ¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

There’s so much more to say, but for now I hope you’re just getting this picture. John sees Heaven and John sees people outside of heaven. And the doors of Heaven are always open by day...and it’s always day in heaven, where there is no night.

The doors are open, and these people won’t go in.

Why don’t they go to heaven?

Because they don’t *want* to go to heaven. It appears you can’t be saved, unless you *want* to be saved. In fact, being saved is *wanting* to be saved, and *wanting* to be saved is salvation.

We assume that everyone wants to go to Heaven, but it appears that some prefer hell. Perhaps most, maybe all, prefer Hell. Maybe all work to get into heaven, but their heaven turns out to be hell and their hell turns out to be heaven.

In one of my favorite South Park episodes Satan wants to send Saddam Hussein to Hell, but Saddam Hussein loves it in Hell, so in desperation, Satan sends Saddam to Heaven to live with the Mormons.

[Second Clip from *South Park* Season 4 Episode 10: "Probably"]

Satan: Good-bye forever, Saddam!

Saddam: What are you talking about?! You can kill me, but I'll be back tomorrow.

Satan: Not this time! I asked a favor of an old friend of mine to let you in!

Saddam: Let me in where?

Saddam is whisked into Heaven.

Saddam: What the? Hey, what the hell is this place?!

Mormon 5: Hello, and welcome.

Mormon 1: We're glad you made it, brother.

Saddam: Ey, who the hell are you?

Mormon 6: We're just about to do a play, about how much stealing hurts you deep inside. Come join us.

Mormons: Yes. Come on. Let's go.

Mormon 6: You're here forever.

Saddam: Nooo! Nu- nooooooooooooo!

I don't think Heaven consists of nothing but Mormons writing plays about how stealing hurts you deep inside...and I don't mean to pick on Saddam Hussein. I think most of us are just like Saddam (or Sodom), at least for a time.

The doors are open, and we don't want to go in... Why???

I hope you ponder this long and hard, but here are a few suggestions:

The Doors are Always Open and People Don't Go in Because:

1. The Doors are always open

- That's why the older brother wouldn't go into the party in Jesus' story—because his father let his younger brother in.
- That's why the early workers in the Master's Vineyard left the Vineyard—because they didn't want the late workers to receive the same pay.
- That's why the Scribes and Pharisees crucified Jesus—He would let anyone into His Vineyard and there was no one with whom He refused to party.
- That's why the unforgiveable sin is unforgiveness—forgiveness is an open door.

Jesus said, "Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened unto you."

See, the problem isn't the door...the problem is that no one seeks to go in. Romans 3:11 "No one understands. No one seeks for God." The door is open which means you can't open it.

2. You can't pay.

We'll soon read, "let the one who desires take the water of life without price." We don't desire "life without price." We like to think we can pay.

Isaiah says all our good deeds are as "filthy garments..." So, to enter, we must wash our garments in the blood of the Lamb. No one can pay for the blood of the lamb...it is the life that is God. You can't pay for the blood and so your ego doesn't want the blood.

3. You cannot labor; you must rest.

For everything is very good and it is finished. Heaven is a temple and the inner Sanctuary is the age to come (Heb. 9:9). It's the presence of Eternity. It's the 7th day; the Jubilee; the finished creation...where everything is very good, and you can't get better than "very good."

4. You can no longer be a "winner."

Because everyone's a winner.

5. You can no longer be a "loser."

The first are last and the last are first. The humble are exalted and the exalted are humbled.

Is. 65:25: "The wolf will graze with the lamb." No more "survival of the fittest."

You can no longer be a "winner," and you can no longer be a "loser." That means you can no longer be a victim. You have to see that all things have "worked together for your good," and now you're perfect. So...

6. You cannot justify yourself.

You've already been justified. To try to justify yourself is to do "the abomination of desolation." It is the original sin; it is to believe the lie—that you can take the knowledge of the Good from the tree and make yourself in the image of God, who is the Good and the Life.

7. You can no longer hide.

Your fig leaves won't work. There are no "private parts." Not even your shame. C.S. Lewis wrote, "The joys of heaven are...an acquired taste... Perhaps the lost are those who dare not go to such a public place."^{ix}

8. You can no longer be alone.

"It's not Good for the Adam to be alone," said God.

So John writes:

¹⁵ Outside are the dogs...

That's the beasts. Scripture refers to religious people who bite and devour others to justify themselves as dogs (Phil. 3:2, Gal. 5:15, Matt. 7:6).

¹⁵ Outside are the dogs dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral (*pornos*: whores and whoremongers) ... [The pornos try to buy and sell Love and God is Love.] **murderers and idolaters, and** (or "that is") **everyone who loves and practices falsehood.**

We've seen that we've all been beasts and whores. That's not what God created, but what we think we have created. That's the false self in which each of us is imprisoned and alone. The False.

The doors are always open by day, and yet Jesus did tell of a master and a door that appeared to be closed, at least to some.

In Luke 13:25 he says, “many will seek to enter, saying ‘Lord open to us,’ and the master will say ‘I don’t know where you come from.’” Now that is quite a statement if it is coming from the Creator of all things. It means they come from nothing but a lie.

But any master would know where they came from if they told him where they came from, but they’ve chosen to hide in the darkness; they’ve chosen the night. If they said, “I’ve come from biting and devouring my neighbor and trying to purchase love like a whore,” then, the false self would suddenly become the true self, and they’d see that the door is open, for suddenly their eyes would be open, and they’d wake from the dream of their own control. The prison of their own ego.^x

In the Chronicles of Narnia, some dwarves enter the stable door, having heard of Aslan and His Kingdom—but these dwarves are easily offended and very proud. The children see a great banquet appear right in front of them. The dwarves even take the bread, but they fight over the bread, and suspect they’ve been conned by the good news. They say, “this is only straw.” They taste the rich red wine, but they think its only water from a trough built for an ass. The children are dumbfounded, and Aslan speaks to the children saying, “Their prison is only in their own minds, yet they are in that prison; and so afraid of being taken in, that they cannot be taken out.”^{xi}

9. You will die;^{xii} you will lose your life and find it.^{xiii}

I hope you see this pattern:

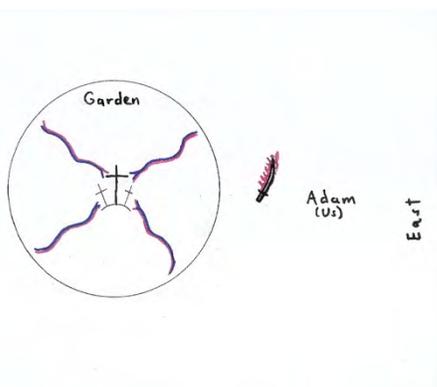


Figure 3

God said, “the day you eat of it dying you will die.” That was the 6th day. They took the Life of the Good from the tree and God kicked them out of the Garden to the East. He placed cherubim and a flaming sword at the entrance to guard the way to the tree of life.

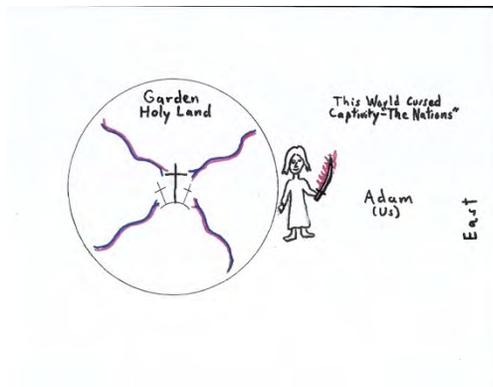


Figure 4

When the Jews entered the Holy Land and crossed the Jordan from the east, they encountered a God/man with a drawn sword, and Joshua took off his shoes and worshiped.

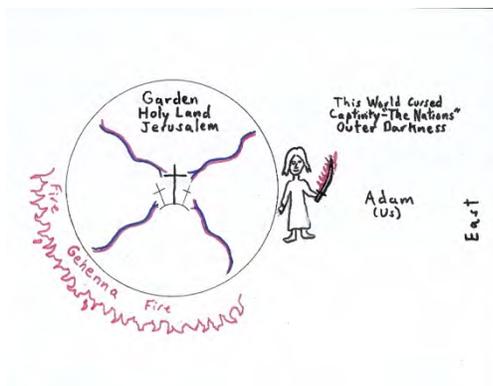


Figure 5

Jerusalem was built in the Holy Land on Mt. Zion, which the Jews believed to be the site of the Garden of Eden. It was surrounded on two sides by the valley of Gehenna. "The breath of God like a stream of brimstone doth set it ablaze," writes Isaiah.^{xiv}

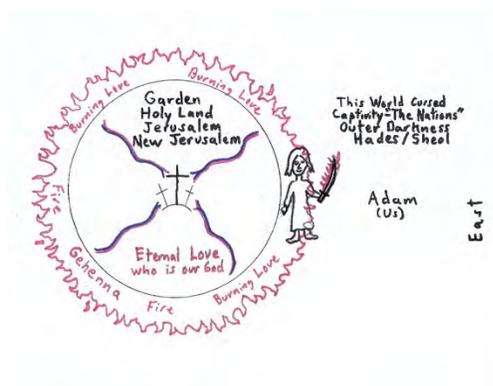


Figure 6

The New Jerusalem comes down where the old one was destroyed.

- Zechariah prophesies, "I will be a wall of fire around it and the Glory in its midst (2:5)." God is Fire. God is Love. And God is One.
- Outside the city is this fallen world and the outer darkness.
- Inside the city is the fulness of eternal Love, who is our Lord.

- Around the city the fire burns away all that's false and purifies all that's true.
- It burns away the old man and reveals the new.^{xv}

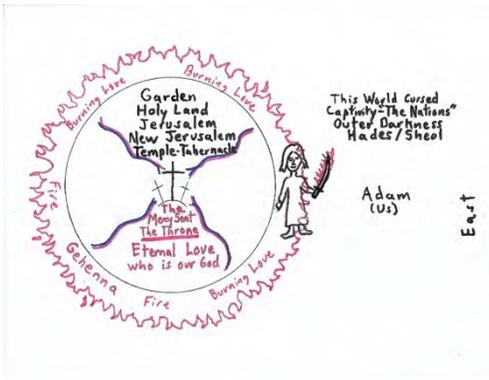


Figure 7

The New Jerusalem is a temple, and in the old Jerusalem, was a temple.

- In the Holy of Holies, behind the curtain in the temple, was the Ark of the covenant that contained the Law, that was sprinkled with blood, forming the “mercy seat,” which is the throne of God—the place of his glory and presence.
- It was guarded by two cherubim, just like those guarding the way to the tree of life.
- And to enter the Sanctuary was to make sacrifice.

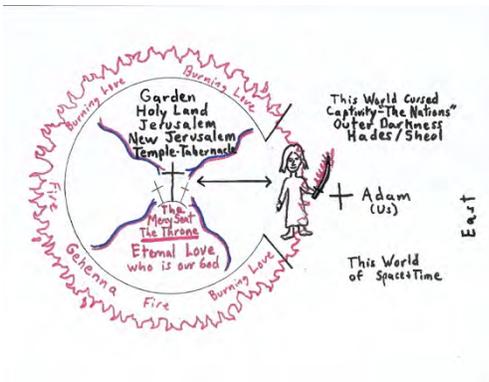


Figure 8

On the cross, Jesus our high priest, sacrificed himself. And the veil was ripped... the door was forever opened.

But he didn't sacrifice so we wouldn't have to sacrifice; He sacrificed so we would sacrifice ourselves with him, so we would present ourselves a living sacrifice, so we would lose our lives and find them, so we would love as he has always loved us.

You see on the other side of the veil in the temple was an entire New Creation. You must lose your life to find it, and when you do, you will find Him and all things with Him. You will be finished

in the image of God and immersed in the Kingdom of Love as the King of Love immerses himself in you.

At the end of C.S. Lewis's book *Till We Have Faces*, the heroine prepares to meet her Lord and she comments, "To be eaten and to be married to the god might not be so different."

Get the picture? We're the Bride of Christ. And our bridegroom wants us to want him. He wants us to want to enter his tabernacle, his tent, and surrender to his Love.

And that's number 10.

10. You must surrender to Love.

It may scare the hell out of you for a time, but will become heaven within you for an eternity. You are God's temple, His heaven, to be filled with Holy Fire.

If you said to a four-year old girl, "Would you like to be a princess, live in a castle, and ride white horses?" She'd probably say "OH YES!"

But if you explained what it is that the Prince wants from the princess, she'd be traumatized, feel abused, and hide in horror.

So what does the Good Prince do? He waits and He romances—from behind a curtain or even from hanging on a tree—until He creates a new heart, a new desire within her for Him.

All that time Israel Journeyed to the promised land, the promised land journeyed with them in the Sanctuary in the Tabernacle behind the curtain.

We think we spend all our lives trying to get into heaven, and it turns out that heaven spends all our lives trying to get into us. But He won't come in, until we want to go to Heaven.

Do you want to go to Heaven? Heaven is your Prince...and all things with Him.

Nine years ago, some of us had the strangest set of experiences in our old church building... down on 30th and Vallejo It started with a video of something black flying through the old sanctuary. I preached three sermons on it in September of 2010. You can watch them along with the video of the creepy thing on our website.

To make a very long story, very short, we discovered that our old building was built on a masonic cemetery. Once we prayed some demons out of the building, my wife, the cleaning lady, started encountering ghosts—not demons but "the lost," in outer darkness.

I couldn't "cast them out" like demons, they'd just act confused. But on three occasions I preached to them the Gospel. I didn't see them, but my wife and members of our prayer team did. I know it's pretty weird, and you don't have to believe me...But this is why I'm telling you.

On all three occasions, some left with Jesus, and on the last two occasions, my wife and others saw a door that opened in these dark rooms under the church and through the door they saw green hills sunshine and an entire new creation.

Jesus would stand by the door, but these figures would cower in the darkness refusing to look in his face. And so, I would tell them who Jesus is and how much he loves them. I preached the

gospel to them. And Susan would say to me, "Oh Peter, I wish you could see! The moment they look up and see his face, they're like transformed, the old has passed away, the new has come, they rise and go through the door... but Peter there are some that won't look up."

The last time it happened my wife heard Jesus say, "I'm leaving this door here for those that will still come."

Scripture teaches, that one day, all will come, every knee will bow and every tongue give praise and surrender to Love. But you don't need to wait, you can surrender now.

Do you want to go to heaven? Cause this is the door and it's open.

Communion

He took bread and broke it saying, "this is my body."

This is the open door. This is the veil in the temple.

And He took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood.

It's a marriage covenant.

Do you see his face with the eyes of your heart?

Pray: "Jesus I surrender myself to you."

Prayer

And so Lord God, the Spirit and the Bride says "Come Lord Jesus." And Lord God I think that we might mean it, a little bit. We confess to you that it scares us, and we thank you that perfect love casts out fear. And that's who you are. Thank you, Lord God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Benediction

So the problem is not getting God to love you. The problem is that God loves you. That's a bit terrifying. So do you wanna go to heaven?

Now, you may say, "Peter, how do I want to go to heaven?"

But you see, that's not something you can just do. It's something God has to create within you. And how does he create it?

It's that tree. And I think this is such great news: it was there from the beginning. God has never changed. We change. And that's what we'll talk about next week.

But all I'm ever saying is: believe the Gospel. In Jesus' name. Amen.

ⁱ He goes on to say that every hero of faith—Abraham, Enoch, Noah, Moses—desired a homeland... a better country... a heavenly one. (Hebrews 11:14)

ⁱⁱ "We have seen the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God shining in the face of Christ", writes Paul (2 Cor. 4:6). He is the Way, the Truth, the Life and the Light of this world, according to John's Gospel. He is the radiance of the Glory of God, writes the author of Hebrews (Heb. 1:3)

ⁱⁱⁱ "For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." -Ephesians 2:18-22

^{iv} "Tonight [3-15-03] Peter Hielt was preaching from Matthew 6 in a continuation of last week's sermon. The topic was not being psyched out by the devil and into taking our problems and ourselves too seriously but rather live in the moment and realize that Satan has no influence over "now", only yesterday and tomorrow, so right now we need to dance with Jesus, and store up some treasure.

Through much of the sermon I got in the way and so was unable to see anything. At the beginning of the evening God took a sword and cut my chest open and asked me for my heart. Near the end of the sermon, He had to do it again because I was still getting in the way. Once He got me out of the way so I could see, He said "come up here with me and I will show you". He was on the cross and so He crucified me on the cross with Him. As I looked out over the room I saw many different people doing many different things. I saw people praying, worshipping, crying, scared, anxious, children running around... Next I started seeing a lot of suffering. I saw people with cancer, enduring horrible abuse, involved in ritualistic sacrifice. I also saw a person executed while on their knees, face and hands uplifted as their body was riddled with bullets. I saw people die in the German concentration camps, and I saw Peter (from the Bible) get stoned. At that point the vision just ended and I told God, "this is a message of hope, that can't be it. There must be more." He told me to be patient and to come up a little bit higher and then to look closer. When I did I saw that all of this was happening all at once within the walls of the New Jerusalem, the gleaming white walls with flags flying in the wind. "This is heaven." He said, "This is what the New Jerusalem is made of."

On the way home Amy asked me what the purpose of the vision was and I said that, first it served as a reminder that everything we do, everything we endure, when we do it in the name of Jesus, is treasure. Second, it is a very difficult picture for many people to grasp. We have always been taught that heaven is a place of no suffering, and that is very Biblical and true. And yet, these things are what make up the foundation of heaven. Also, this vision could help those who are suffering see a little bit more purpose in what they are going through." - Dale

^v "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." - Ephesians 2:4-7

"And this was seen in the ninth showing where more is said of this matter. And in spite of all our feelings, weal and woe, God wants us to understand and believe that we are more truly in heaven than on earth." - Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 131

^{vi} "Fear not, for you will not be ashamed;
be not confounded for you will not be put to shame;
for you will forget the shame of your youth,
and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.
For your Maker is your husband,
the Lord of hosts is his name;
and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
the God of the whole earth he is called...
O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted,

behold, I will set your stones in antimony,
and lay your foundations with sapphires.
I will make your pinnacles of agate, your gates of carbuncles,
and all your wall of precious stones.” – Isaiah 54:4-5, 11-12

vii *Ethnos*: normally translated “gentiles.” For St. Paul “gentiles” that believed were no longer gentiles.

viii Notice that “face” is singular. He’s talking about “God and the Lamb,” but one face.

ix All times are eternally present to God. Is it not at least possible that along some one line of His multi-dimensional eternity He sees you forever in the nursery pulling the wings off a fly, forever in toadying, lying, and lusting as a schoolboy, forever in that moment of cowardice or insolence as a subaltern? It may be that salvation consists not in the canceling of these eternal moments but in the perfected humility that bears the shame forever, rejoicing in the occasion which it furnished to God’s compassion and glad that it should be common knowledge to the universe. Perhaps in that eternal moment St. Peter—he will forgive me if I am wrong—forever denies his Master. If so, it would indeed be true that the joys of Heaven are, for most of us in our present condition, “an acquired taste”—and certain ways of life may render the taste impossible of acquisition. Perhaps the lost are those who dare not go to such a public place. - C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

x In Matthew 25 Jesus tells a story about bridegroom that wouldn’t open the door to some foolish virgins, “He says, truly I don’t know you.” Foolish virgins don’t know what the bridegroom wants, and so the bridegroom doesn’t “know” them, the way a bridegroom knows a bride. Foolish virgins think the bridegroom wants wedding dresses, ribbons and bows, but he wants them, just them—that’s who he knows and who he wants to know. We are all foolish virgins until we realize that we’re the bride of Christ and Mother of the Living. We’re the New Jerusalem coming down.

xi “With the merciful you show yourself merciful;
with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;
with the purified you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.” – Psalm 18:25-26

The measure we give is the measure we get, for we project ourselves onto God and suffer by assuming that He is one like us, and not relentless Love and absolute Mercy.

xii “Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.” It’s not a bad saying. If you want to die, you probably don’t want to die to yourself. Suicide is not losing yourself but asserting yourself; it’s not surrendering control but seizing control. Suicide will not get you to where you want to go, but may, in fact, trap you in the place you already are.

xiii God is saving us from more than Egyptians and the consequences of our sins; He is saving us from ourselves.

xiv “For Tophet was established of old,
Yes, for the king it is prepared.
He has made *it* deep and large;
Its pyre *is* fire with much wood;
The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone,
Kindles it.” - Isaiah 30:33

xv See Isaiah 66:23-24

43

The Tree in the Middle of the Garden

The Tree in the Middle of the Garden

Revelation 21:22–22:14

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

January 20, 2019

Peter Hiatt

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This document was prepared by Michael Hanna using Peter’s notes and the video version of this sermon (available [on our website](#)). Please let Michael know if you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document: themichaelhanna@thesanctuarydowntown.org. Thank you!

Prayer

Lord God I thank you that you have literally done everything. An entire creation in order to make us feel your love. And Lord God I pray that this morning you would cause us to preach. I’m praying for us, that we would love you with all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our soul, and all of our strength. And Father I pray especially for those who may be hearing this for the first time, as we’ve been preaching through the Revelation for a year and a half. God, I thank you that your Word is really one, and all of the pieces seem to be coming together now. But Lord I pray that you would help people, help us connect the dots in our minds, our hearts, our spirits, our souls, that you would be glorified in us Lord God. In Jesus’ name, as we preach, amen.

Message

For the last three messages from the Revelation we’ve been looking at the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22. Last week we looked at this shocking picture at the end of Scripture.

The Gates of Heaven are always open...and there are people outside that don’t go in.

We conjectured that the doors are always open, and they don’t go in because:

1. The doors are always open.
2. You cannot pay.
3. You cannot labor; you must rest.
4. You can no longer be a “winner.”
5. You can no longer be a “loser.”
6. You can no longer justify yourself.
7. You can no longer hide.
8. You can no longer be alone.
9. You will die; you will lose your life and find it.
10. You must surrender to Love.

It appears that you can’t go to heaven unless you want to go to heaven. So the question is not: “who wants to go to heaven?” but “How do you want to go to heaven, when you don’t want to go to heaven?”

“How do you want what you don’t want?”

I alluded to the answer last week. It has to do with a tree, and how we understand the Bible, and the nature of all things.

For the last several hundred years modern people in Western Civilization have tended to believe that the cosmos is all that is, was, and ever will be. And so, the cosmos has no beginning, no end, and no plot. And so, if there is a story, it's only the one that we're writing.

Ironically, physicists no longer think that way. However, most Christians still tend to think that way.

We have little faith in the beginning, the end, and the plot—both the plot of all of space and time and the plot of the Bible.

Most tend to think the Bible is a smattering of good advice—kind of like a self-help book containing some knowledge of good and evil from a weird diverse group of people—so you kind of pick and choose what you like.

But what if the Bible is a story that God is telling through a weird diverse group of people, well then it would have an end that was entirely anticipated in the beginning, and everything in it would work to reveal the plot. And you'd want to pay attention to every confusing detail in the story to get the meaning in the end.

Stories do more than give information. A story, like a storehouse, stores meaning. And it reveals people.

If you're hiring an employee—you ask for their resume. But if you want to know a person—you get them to tell you their story.

Stories are incredibly powerful. Information can cause you to change your behavior. But a story can create in you a new desire—a new want, a new heart. A story can make a person want what they did not want before. Tell a child your story, and you can shape a heart in your own image for an entire lifetime.

In Revelation 21 we come to the End for the End has come to us. And it turns out the end is the beginning and everything in between. Since the foundation of the world God has been telling a story and it has a plot. The Revelation is the Revelation of the Plot, the Logos, Jesus.

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life...

This is Young's literal translation of what we just read:

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, bright as crystal, going forth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: ²in the midst (or middle) of its broad place, and of the river on this side and on that, is a tree of life...

Modern translators try to clean up that confusing sentence, but I think John is seeing something like this:

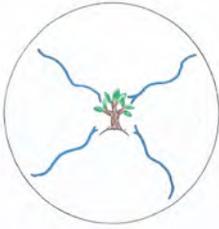


Figure 1

He's seeing the tree of life in the middle of the garden of Eden. So, we're at the end and looking at the beginning. That tells us that the Bible and all things with it, are one great story.

As a kid and a science geek I always struggled with end and even more the beginning of Scripture. I mean, where was this silly garden, what's up with these ridiculous trees and why would God do such a thing? But now I see that the beginning and the end are the edge of spacetime and eternity—so asking, “when and where is the garden of Eden?” or “when and where is the New Jerusalem?” is not like asking, “when and where is Cleveland, Ohio?”

The Garden is at the edge of when and where, so when and where could be any place that eternity touches time, including the depths of my own soul.

He sees a tree and a river, that branches into rivers “on this side and on that,” just like the river in Eden that branched into four “on this side and that.”

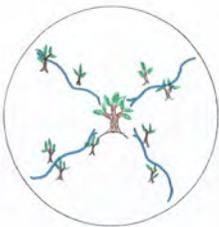


Figure 2

He sees a tree and a river and more trees—trees that are really the same tree, the tree of Life.

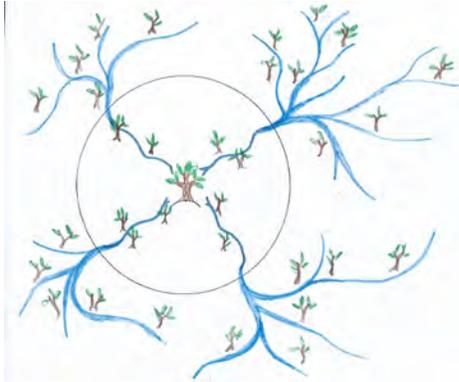


Figure 3

And now this is weird, and I can't draw it well, but in Genesis 2:10 the river flows "out of Eden to water the garden." And there it becomes four rivers—the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Gihon that appears to be the Nile, and one other river that hasn't been identified...

In Ezekiel the river starts small and gets deeper the further it flows and wherever the river flows it brings healing and life (Ez. 47).

In Daniel the kingdom of the Son of man strikes the earth like a meteor, destroying the beast, becoming a great mountain and then filling the world (Daniel 2:31-45).

See it's like the whole world it destined to become the garden, and a city on a mountain, that is a temple, and a bride, and a body... That's quite a story.

...the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.

A tree is a pretty amazing thing. With its leaves it absorbs light and mixes it with dirt and poop, making life and even fruit. With all the knowledge in the world you can't make one piece of fruit. But a tree makes fruit out of dirt and poop by mixing it with light—and God is light.

The Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faith, and Self-control. Each like a new desire we could not create...but maybe a tree could create.

...the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

(not "some nations" or part of each nation, just "the nations.")

³ No longer will there be anything accursed...

"Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" says God in Deuteronomy (Deut. 21:23, Gal. 3:13).

A tree can make life or be used as an instrument of death.

³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

⁶ And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true...

¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹ Let the evil doer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy...

What a statement: You can't make people want what they don't want.

You can't make anyone want to go to heaven. If we had read this during the Crusades or the Inquisition we might have saved people a lot of trouble.

You can't make anyone want to go to heaven. But maybe a story can—or the plot to a story—a Word, like a seed planted in the dung and dirt of the human heart. A Word that grows like a tree. A Word that's “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword cutting to the division of soul and spirit... discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

¹¹ “Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

¹² “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.”

It's just like Paul writes in Romans 11:32 “God consigned all to disobedience that He may have mercy on all.” Christ repays our sin with His Mercy. And the particular shape of our disobedience, determines the particular shape of God's mercy in us. Mercy fills you like wine fills an empty earthen vessel or blood fills a blood vessel—the Mercy flows from a tree that is also the throne. On the throne stands a lamb, “newly slain”ⁱ from “the foundation of the earth.” From the throne flows a river of life—eternal life—and the life is in the blood.

¹³ “I am the Alpha and the Omegaⁱⁱ, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

In Revelation 7:14 we read about saints, coming out of the great tribulation that washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb.ⁱⁱⁱ “Come reason with me,” says the Lord through Isaiah (1:10), “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.” In Rev. 2:7 to the angel of the church in Ephesus, Jesus says “to the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God.” It was to Ephesus that Jesus said, “You've lost your first love.” To conquer is to love because you want to; it is to love in freedom.

Blessed, happy, are those who wash their robes in the blood of the lamb—white as snow. Blessed is Snow White. It's quite a story.

And if you believe it's a story that has an author that actually knows what He's doing, it raises an obvious question, that doesn't even occur to most folks these days.

The question is: “*Where's the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil?*”

Gen. 2:9 "...the tree of the life was in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."—That's knowledge of *tob* and *ra* in Hebrew, knowledge of beauty and corruption, Good and evil.

The Tree of Life and The Tree of knowledge are both in the middle of the Garden, on the 6th day of creation, when God makes Adam in his image. But Now, it seems that John only sees a tree of life.

Where's the tree of knowledge?

"Everything created by God is good" writes Paul, "And nothing is to be rejected if it is received with Thanksgiving" (I Tim. 4). Wouldn't that include the tree of Knowledge?

Jesus just said, "Behold I make all things new... it is done, it is finished."

We just read, "No longer will there be anything accursed..."

"The day you eat of it you will surely die," said God, to Adam on the 6th day of creation. Well, John is no longer looking at the 6th day, but the eternal 7th day when everything is good and it is finished.

So where's the tree of knowledge, and what's the tree of knowledge? and how come "no longer will (or can) anyone be accursed?"

What does it mean to take from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil?

There are a million ways to describe it, but basically it means this:

Clip from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
Walt Disney Productions, 1937

Slow zoom on an idyllic fairy tale castle. High, dissonant violins set an ominous mood. A slowly descending series of notes on the harp accompanies our transition from sunshine and ether to a darkened room, a phosphorescent mirror, and the clandestine ritual of a narcissistic monarch.

Queen: Slave in the Magic Mirror, come from the farthest space, through wind and darkness I summon thee. Speak! Let me see thy face.

Flames fill the mirror, then subside to reveal a floating eldritch mask, wreathed in smoke.

Mirror: What wouldst thou know, my queen?

Queen: Magic Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?

Mirror: Famed is thy beauty, majesty. But hold, a lovely maid I see. Rags cannot hide her gentle grace. Alas, she is more fair than thee.

Queen: Alas for her! Reveal her name.

Mirror: Lips red as the rose. Hair black as ebony. Skin white as snow.

Queen: Snow White!

The Evil Queen wants knowledge of the Good, so she can judge whether or not she is Good, and if not, make herself Good, make herself *tob* in Hebrew. It means beautiful.

And you know the story: she doesn't make herself beautiful but ugly—on the outside and on the inside. She actually orders the huntsman to bring to her the heart of Snow White so she can keep it in a box.

In John 1, John tells us that Jesus comes from “the bosom of the Father.” Jesus is the heart of God.

Well, if a person wants knowledge of good and evil, what do they want? Usually they want a description of the Good, so they can judge if they themselves are good and try to make themselves Good. They want the law. They want God's law.

And by that I don't just mean the ten commandments, I mean any law—it could even be your score on the enneagram, if that's the way you take it. Paul writes, that “when gentiles, who don't have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves... it's written on their hearts.” It's all God's law, or an attempt at capturing God's law, on paper, stone, or maybe in a box—like a coffin. Or an ark. In Hebrew, it's the same word (*aron*).

The law isn't bad, and the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil isn't bad. God made it, but “the day you eat of it, dying you will die.”

To understand what it is and how it works we can just read Romans chapter 7 substituting “the knowledge of Good and evil” for “the law.”

Romans 7:7 What then shall we say? That *the knowledge of good and evil* is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for *the knowledge of good and evil*, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if *the knowledge of good and evil* had not said, “You shall not covet.”⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from *the knowledge of good and evil*, sin lies dead.⁹ I was once alive apart from *the knowledge of good and evil*, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.¹⁰ The very commandment—

You know, Jesus said “[God's] commandment is eternal life” (John 12:50). That's amazing. But listen to this sentence.

¹⁰ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.¹² So *the knowledge of good and evil* is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.

The Law revealed to Eve, and that first Adam, that something was not good. Before the fall, God had already said, “It's not good for the Adam to be alone.” Adam was alone, and he didn't even know what alone and not alone was. For he did not know what Good and evil are. He did not know Love. And Love is Life.

Adam ate and died. Paul writes that we are dead. So when did we eat and die?

Did you notice what Paul wrote: “I was once alive apart from the law”? So there was a time before he had “the knowledge of good and evil.” In Deuteronomy 1:39 God tells the Israelites that their children do not yet have the knowledge of Good and evil.

In Luke 22, hanging on a tree in a garden on the sixth day of creation, sixth day of the week, around the sixth hour of the day, Jesus cries “Father forgive them they know not what they do.”

They did not have knowledge of Good and evil, but they were taking it... weren't they? In John 15:22, Jesus says, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for sin.” He exposed their sin.

It's like Jesus is the Good hanging on a tree and each of us has taken from that tree...but when did we take that knowledge from that tree?

You know I think I remember that day with each of my kids. Psychologist say that an infant sees him or herself entirely mirrored in the eyes of his or her mother or father—they don't perceive a separation. I've told you that when my kids were little, they lived in the light of my eyes. They were literally the *ishown*, the little man, the apple of my eye, reflected in my eyes. They saw themselves in my eyes and they were perfectly at rest in who they are. Singing, dancing, playing...

But in each of them a day came when they stopped being simply so beautiful...and they began to ask, “Am I beautiful?” And they looked in another mirror.

They began to judge themselves and make themselves not quite so beautiful, trying to be beautiful.

They began to judge themselves and everyone around them.

They began to try and earn what they already had—my love.

In C.S. Lewis's novel *Perelandra*, satan tempts Eve by showing her for the first time, her face, in a mirror.

“Oh—oh,” she cried. “What is it? I saw a face.”

“Only your own face, beautiful one,” said the Un-man.

“My face—out there—looking at me... What is it?”

“...The mysteries had all vanished from her face,” writes Lewis. “It was as easy to read as that of a man in a shelter when a bomb is coming.”

“What is it?” she repeated.

“It is called Fear,” said the mouth [of the satan, the accuser], and then grinned.

When I take knowledge of the good and judge myself, I create two selves. The self I think I should be and the self I am. I create a false self I try to project to the world, and then my true-self becomes imprisoned in that false self—hiding in fig leaves, which I now think make me who I am.

The law gives me knowledge of the good, but the law can't make me good. In fact, it makes me bad, dead, and eventually very ugly.

The law can't make me good, but it can describe what the good might look like. The law might say, "Communion is good; drunkenness is bad. Or two drinks is good, but three drinks is bad. Two drinks is heaven, and three drinks is hell." That's a bit crazy-making.

But you see, if I need the law to be good, it just reveals that I'm not good—right? Cause I don't freely choose the good, in fact I must be constrained in order to choose the good, which is not good and not free. If I need the law to be good, it will reveal that I'm not good, AND it will make me hate the good, which is the law.

I used to actually do this at Macaroni Grill—where they'd let you fill up your own glass of wine on the honor system. The honor system made me dishonorable. I'd fill two glasses to the very brim, resenting the fact that I had only two and coveting three, but I'd tell myself I was being good, while I was teaching my heart to be bad—to be ugly.

See? Maybe the difference between Good and Bad isn't about how much wine you drink, but the way in which you drink it.

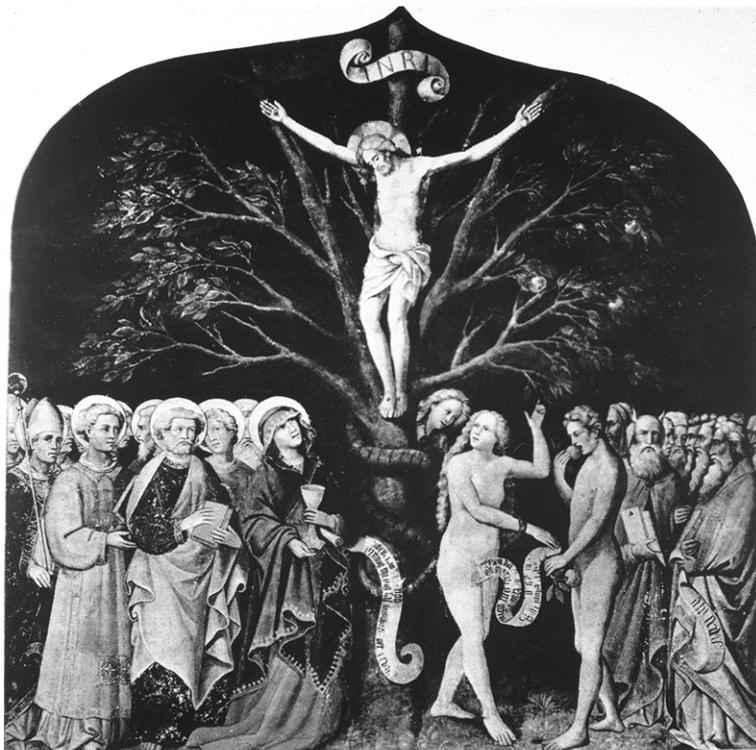


Figure 4 "The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

What's this?

Is this the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil?

Maybe it depends on how you take it and drink it.

Jesus is the "fulfillment of the law," and He is the Good in flesh, and He is the judgment of God. So how do you take him?

Is he a standard that you try to live up to? I mean:

- A judgment that simply tells you when you're bad, so you try harder to be good?
- Like a WWJD bracelet, so you look at Jesus and when you see that you're not doing what Jesus would do, you just try harder to do what Jesus would do?
- Some people think this is a test—so if you don't make yourself in His image, you'll go to hell and if you do make yourself in His image, you'll go to heaven.
- Some people think it's a test to see if you can judge what's good and what's not good—so if you judge Jesus to be good, that's called faith, and you get in to heaven...and if you can't judge that he is good, well, then you're an idiot and will be tortured for all eternity.

So is this the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil...or is this the tree of Life?
Maybe it depends on how you take it...or receive it.

So what's the tree of life? The tree of knowledge is like a mirror and I suspect the tree of Life is also like a mirror, but you look at it in a different way, asking a different question, and wishing a different wish...a new "want."^{iv}

Maybe like this:

Second clip from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
Walt Disney Productions, 1937

Snow White sings into a wishing well, which magically echoes back only those phrases less than four syllables in length.

Snow White: I'm wishing [*I'm wishing*]
For the one I love
To find me [*To find me*]
Today [*Today*]

I'm hoping [*I'm hoping*]
And I'm dreaming of
The nice things [*The nice things*]
He'll say [*He'll say*]

We see a handsome prince, roaming about on a white steed (as handsome princes are wont to do). He appears to have heard Snow's song.

For the reprise of the first verse, we see only that which is reflected in the pristine surface of the well water. Snow White continues singing down into the well.

I'm wishing [*I'm wishing*]
For the one I love
To find me [*To find me*]
Today

We expect to hear Snow's high, warbly soprano echoing a descending major 3rd. But no! the face of the handsome prince pops into the picture next to Snow's, and his heroic tenor voice provides the echo. But it is not a true echo; he inverts the motif with an ascending 3rd, landing on the fifth scale degree (as handsome princes are wont to do):

Prince: Today!
Snow White: (*startled*) Oh!

Did you notice a difference?

The queen wants to take the Good, possess the Good and make herself Good. Snow White wants the Good...to find her and love her. Then she'd know the Good because the Good knew her.

The queen thinks that the good is a thing and so the face she sees in the mirror is death. Snow White thinks the Good is a prince—not dead, but alive—her mirror is a hope, that turns into his eyes looking back at her.

The queen is stuck on herself, trapped alone within herself. Snow White has lost herself... and Snow White is found.

Snow White doesn't try to be good, she just is good—she's beautiful. For Snow White the Good is a Life—the Life who is her Prince. The Good is more than *what* the good does; the Good is *who* the Good is. The Prince is the Good and the Good is the Prince...

So, if Snow White is Good—how does she get the good inside of her?

She could kill him and eat him. But there is another way.

In Scripture there are two ways of “knowing.” One results in death and the other results in babies.

I'm not trying to be crass, Bride of Christ... I'm trying to preach the Gospel to foolish virgins and women that have been abused by men who claimed to be good, but were in fact, evil.

Jesus is the Good in flesh and Jesus is the Life.

So anyway, we were asking “Where's the tree of knowledge and What is the tree of Life... in the middle of the garden?”

In his Gospel, John goes out of his way to point out that Jesus was crucified in a garden (19:41). And that when Mary found him on Easter morning she thought he was the gardener. And you might remember that Adam was a gardener. Jesus is called the *eschatos* Adam, and we are his bride.

And I hope you remember what we said last time:

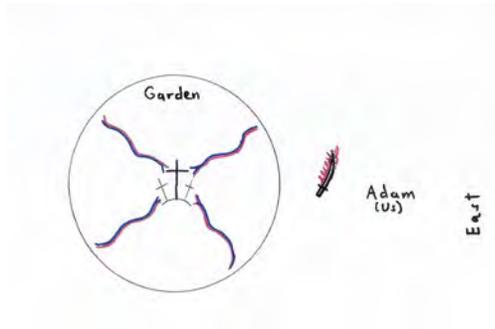


Figure 5

The Garden is also The New Jerusalem.

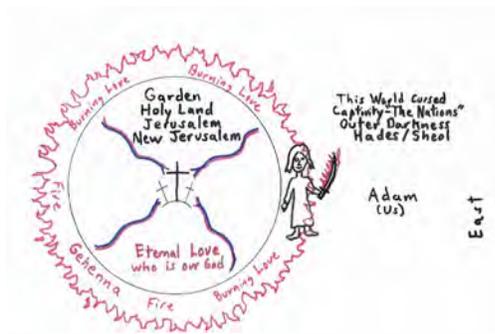


Figure 6

that is also a tabernacle and a temple.

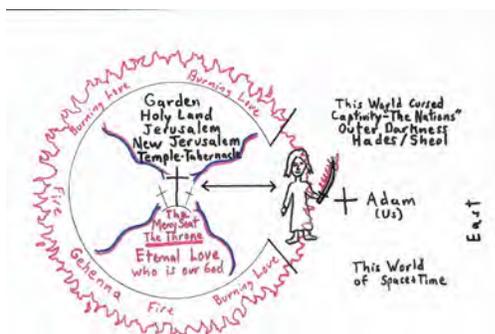


Figure 7

that contains the throne, which is the law in a box (or a coffin), covered in Mercy, on which now stands The Slaughtered Lamb.

And you know that John always picture Jesus as enthroned upon a tree.

John sees a tree, but John doesn't used the normal word for tree (*dendron*). He uses an abnormal word for tree that can also be translated wood, gallows, or cross. When Peter, Luke,

and Paul all point out that Jesus was crucified and cursed on a tree they all use the same word: *Skulon*.

I don't hear modern preachers talking this way, but I know that our ancestors thought this way because you can find all sorts of ancient paintings of Jesus crucified on a tree. The tree of Life, and maybe even sometimes the tree of knowledge.

And that makes sense doesn't it? Jesus is "The Life." There's only one Life. And that means "your life" is actually His Life. Jesus is the Life and He said, "None is Good, but God alone." God is the Good, and God in flesh is Jesus: Jesus is the Good in flesh.

So the tree of life looked like this:



And the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil must've looked like this.



The Good is God and the evil is the absence of God...Or maybe, taking the Life of God like fruit from a tree.

Well there were two trees in one spot (the middle of the garden). Or there was one tree, that looked like two.ʻ

Whatever the case, I think it's the Judgment of God.

You know we tend to think that God is Two—sometimes we call it Love and Justice—which we define as "not love".

We think that God is two, but maybe God is One and his judgment is one, and we are two. Maybe we tried to judge the judgment and cut ourselves on the flaming sword that's guarding the way to the Tree of Life.^{vi}

The tree is the Judgment.

And now, if you understand what I'm saying, you might be starting to panic. You might be thinking: "Maybe it's too late! Maybe I was Snow White when I was little, but I've been eating from the tree of knowledge for fifty years...and I'm getting old and ugly!"

Yes, that's correct. God said, "The day you eat of it, dying you will die."
You live in a world under a curse, you will die, and your body will turn to dust.

I thought you knew that already. We get so freaked out that God would smite people, burn their bodies and they'd turn to dust... But I thought we knew that already.

You know, even Snow White didn't stay snow white. Unable to trap Snow White's heart in a box, the Evil Queen actually made herself ugly in order to trick Snow White and tempt her with a poison apple. Rather than waiting for the one she loves, the Queen tempts Snow White to seize control of the one she loves...

You see, the magic fruit works like her magic mirror: it gives her power over Love—or at least that's the lie.

Third clip from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
Walt Disney Productions, 1937

The Queen, disguised as a hideous old crone, tempts Snow White with a plump, juicy apple.

Queen: This is no ordinary apple. It's a magic wishing apple.

Snow White: A wishing apple?

Queen: Yes! One bite and all your dreams will come true.

Snow White: Really?

Queen: Yes, girlie. Now, make a wish...and take a bite.

You can't blame Snow White. Because she was an idiot. And you really can't blame my children, because they were idiots. All little children are idiots...innocent, adorable, idiots.

They're adorable idiots—we love them and don't want them to ever suffer pain, but we also want them to grow up and choose to love us in freedom. We want them to know the Good, and freely choose the Good. We want them to learn to love, even though the lesson can hurt like hell and take a lifetime.

You can't blame Snow White and two-year-olds, because they don't know better. And you really can't blame Eve and that first Adam... because they didn't know better. They didn't have the knowledge of Good and evil. So when God said "the day you eat of it dying you will die," how were they to know that the Word of God is Good, so they could trust the Word of God, who is Good, and find their helper?

And when God said, “It’s not Good for ha Adam (that is humanity) to be alone,” how were they to know it is not good to be alone? How could they recognize their Helper and want their Helper, Who is the Good and is the Life...and is standing right next to them in the garden?

You know, Snow White wishes for what she already has but doesn’t know she has—the Love of her Prince.

Fourth clip from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
Walt Disney Productions, 1937

Snow White holds the apple aloft as she fleshes out the details of her wish.

Snow White: ...and that he will carry me away to his castle...where we will live happily ever after.

Queen: (*urgently*) Fine! Fine! Now, take a bite.

Snow White: Oh! I feel strange.

The murderous hag rubs her hands together in malevolent glee, ecstatically muttering through the progression of symptoms as the poison runs its course.

Queen: Her breath will still.

Snow White: Oh...

Queen: Her blood congeal.

Snow White: Oh...

Snow White gasps and falls on the floor. The apple rolls out of her outstretched hand, whole except for the place where Snow took that fateful bite.

In the bible it’s a little unclear as to whether eating of the tree put Eve to sleep or whether she was already asleep, for God had already put the Adam to sleep to teach them a lesson. Remember?

God put the Adam to sleep and made Adam male and female to teach us about Christ and the Church, that is Himself and us, the eschatos Adam and his Bride. He put us to sleep, to perform a surgery, and help us find our Helper. It was heart surgery.

Now you may say, “OK Humanity is the Bride and I see her there, in the Garden. And God in flesh is the Groom, the Helper...but where is Our Helper?”



Well do you see? I think He's hanging on this tree

He's hanging on this tree and I think it's the edge of time and eternity. The Judgment of God. John already told us that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. It means that God has been telling one story all along. And stories have the power to create, in people, a new desire—a new heart.

Last time we saw that you can't go to heaven unless you want to go to heaven. So the question isn't do you want to go to heaven, but how can you want what you don't want. How can you want to go to heaven?

Well maybe someone needs to tell you a story, or better yet, write you into their story. And I think that's just what the Revelation, and the Bible, is all about:

We took the knowledge of Good from the tree and so took the life from the tree. Everything got ugly, for the good died and we died. In fact, God kicked us out of the garden so that we would die and wouldn't take again^{vii} from the tree of life and live forever—forever feeding on the Life the way the evil Queen fed on Snow White, the way zombies feed on body broken, and vampires feed on bloodshed. Feeding, and feeding, and feeding. Never dying and never living.

He kicked us out of the Garden and subjected (or had subjected) creation to futility in hope. He consigned all to disobedience that He may have mercy on all.

He put two naked idiots in a garden with talking snake and a terrible tree, that He might tell us the story of redemption and create in us his very own heart.

He cast us into the outer darkness,
so that in the darkness His light might shine.
So that we might nail his Heart to a tree and see that he bleeds a river of relentless love that is eternal life.
So that we might take his life, and he might give his life, that we would come to know that He is good and forever choose the good in freedom...
That we might love as he has always loved us.

You see the cross was never plan B, but always plan A.

Jesus didn't die because you made a bad decision.
Jesus died and rose to create in you a good decision.

God's Love is not dependent on our free will.
Our good free will is dependent on the Relentless Love of God.

The cross is not what God needed in order to love us.
The cross is what we needed in order to love God.

God's Judgment does not change; but we change because of God's Judgment.
The tree in the garden does not change; but we change because of the tree. "We die with Him and rise with Him," writes Paul. The cross reveals the judgment of God; and it creates the judgment of God in us.

Our judgment is to take the Life, and possess the Life, which is to damn the Life. (“The blood congeals.” Did you hear the evil Queen?)

God’s judgment is to give the life, which creates a river of life, which brings all creation to Life.

In the Garden we took the Life, damned the life and damned ourselves.

On the Cross, God revealed that the life we took, he had always given—in fact fore-given from the foundation of the world.

And now, Revelation 22, we’re back at the garden. And to enter the garden is to return the life you stole from the tree. It is to surrender the Life because you want to surrender the Life. Jesus is the will to surrender your life; Jesus is the will to Love.

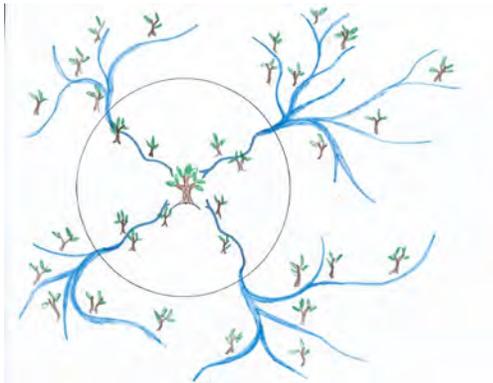
To enter is to lose your life and find it.

It’s to love as you have been loved—to Love in freedom.

It is a new and eternal desire, a new want, a new will, a free will—It’s the will of God in you; it’s Jesus in you His Bride, His Temple, His Body.

It’s Jesus in you and you in Him—the body of Christ.

Remember what John and Ezekiel saw?



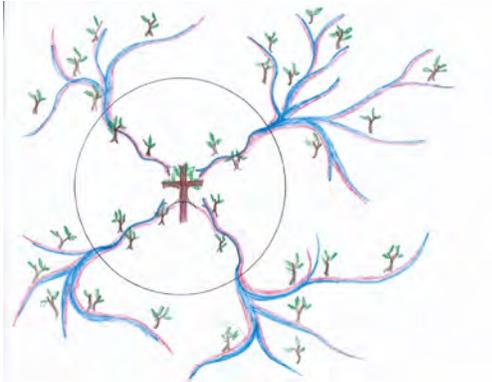
The river of life flowing from the throne—that’s where judgment comes from. The Throne.

The river of life flowing from the throne—on which stands a slaughtered lamb.

The river of life flowing from the throne—that is also a tree, that is the revelation of God who is the one who loves in absolute freedom.

He sees the river of life, flowing from the throne and the life is in the blood.

And so he sees something like this.



Every tree is a tree of life and a decision to Love from the throne of God, which is in the temple of God, that is the human soul.

So John sees something like this...

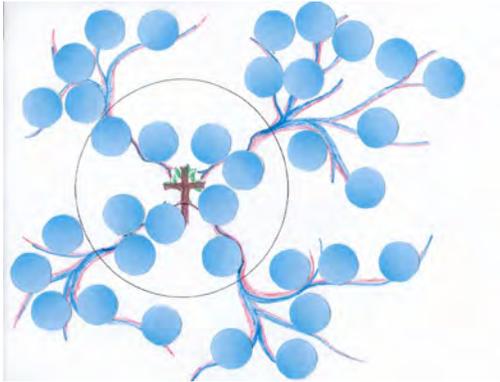


Figure 8

Which I hope reminds you of this...

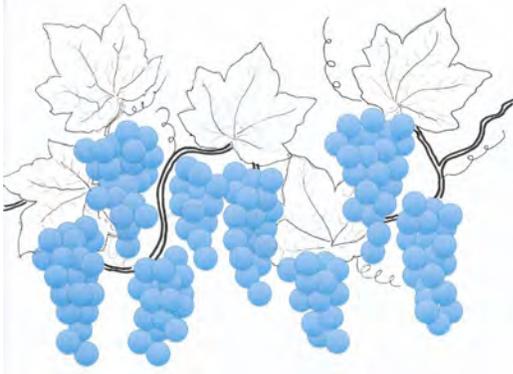
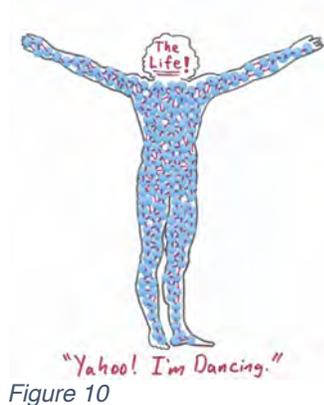


Figure 9

And definitely reminds you of this...



You see a soul that damns the life is a vessel of wrath,
 But a soul that surrenders the life is a vessel of mercy, a blood vessel—it constantly loses its life
 and finds it, for it channels a river of life that flows from the throne and throughout all creation.

When one person loves in a world that doesn't love it looks like a man hanging on a tree.
 When two people love in a covenant of love it's called a good marriage and a great honeymoon.
 When all people love, it's the new Jerusalem coming down, an eternal temple, the bride and
 body of the Will of God, Who is God and the Word of God.

And now, in case you're thinking, "but it's too late, I've become the Evil Queen!"
 Well, don't you understand, we've all become the evil queen or dreamt we were the Evil Queen.
 Every believer is like Snow White trapped in bad dream—the dream of her own sovereignty, the
 dream that she could conquer love, when Heaven is to be conquered by Love.

When Snow White bites the apple, she falls into the sleep of death. And when we took the fruit
 we fell into the sleep of death or dreamed that we were dead. We sleep until the prince enters
 our nightmare and gives us a kiss, waking us from death and giving us the light of life.

Fifth clip from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
 Walt Disney Productions, 1937

Snow White is laid out on an ornately-carved bier as though ready for the grave. The Prince approaches. Sustained high strings and a descending four-note melodic figure provide intrigue reminiscent of the slow zoom on the Queen's castle at the beginning. But it is also different: imbued with longing and anticipation and hope against hope...

He kneels and kisses Snow White. The instant his lips touch hers, the music resolves in an unexpected way to a warm, thrumming major chord—the beginning of the main theme, "Someday My Prince Will Come."

The company of mourners are oblivious to the change. As the Prince bows his head to pay his respects, the Seven Dwarfs and all the woodland creatures follow suit. But the melody continues and Snow begins to stir. As she yawns and stretches, the song takes up a quick waltz tempo. Then she and her prince see one another and she reaches out her arms to him.

Cut to a golden evening sky. The Prince is on foot, leading his white horse who carries Snow White. A glittering gold castle appears in the clouds (“Not the old Jerusalem, the new one!” Peter shouts, helpfully), and the heavenly hosts sing out a reprise of the final verse of “Someday My Prince Will Come.”

Well that’s not just a description of something that happened once in a garden. That’s a description of what will happen in every moment of your space and time and is happening, even now, in the sanctuary of your own soul.

With every breath you take and every move you make, you’re either looking in this mirror trying to justify yourself...

[image: Evil Queen looking into the Magic Mirror]

...or you’re looking in this mirror having forgotten yourself and having found yourself in Him.

[image: Snow White looking into the eyes of the Prince]

Hey, there’s a tree *[Peter points at the cross]* and there’s a mirror *[he gestures towards the communion table]*.

Communion

On the night he was betrayed by all of us he took bread and broke it saying this is my Body given to you. Take and eat.

And he took the cup saying, this is the covenant in my blood...

A cup of wine. Is it good or evil?

It’s good. Actually, it is The Good and The Life. It is the Judgment of God.

Here’s the tree *[the cross]*. Here’s the throne *[the communion table]*. Here’s the Judgment.^{viii}

The Judgment doesn’t change.

But how do you take it? Now that could be evil...or Good.

If you take it as a possession, with which you judge yourself and your neighbor—then you’re the judge, aren’t you?

You’re the Evil Queen.

If you receive it as a gift, The Love of God, poured out for you—then the doors of the kingdom are open and the doors of your heart swing open. You’re Beautiful.

You’re Snow White.

The truth is, right now, you’re both. So Go ahead and drink it. For God’s Judgment is stronger than your judgment.

It will destroy the Evil Queen: The Heart of God will rise from the dead and burst open the box, just like the veil in the temple ripped from top to bottom. The Blood will burn the Evil Queen and reduce her to dust.

And the Blood will Liberate Snow White: The blood will purify Snow White—that's what blood does in a body. It carries away impurities, decay and death. And it brings healing; it brings life... Jesus is the Life.

Jesus is the Heart of God...Given to you.

Benediction

Everything is created by God, and sanctified when it's received with thanksgiving. So Lord Jesus we say thank you. Thank you for everything. And you make all things new. Thank you that you overcame, and that's how we overcome. In Jesus' name, amen.

You saw the picture. Now you're a tree of life. And fruit starts to grow. And don't be surprised if people come along and take the fruit and eat it and don't even say thank you. That's part of the program. Those people are not your mirror. [The cross] is your mirror.

For 57 years...or maybe 55 or 56...I've been asking myself this question: "am I good? Am I good? Am I good? Am I good?" And it's just about killed me. It's made me dead and ugly.

You can spend your life asking that question: "am I good? Am I good? Am I good?" Just drop it. And just look at the one who is Good. And see Him looking back at you. And that's how you're made in His image.

But you don't have to worry about that. He's the Creator. Not you. Just look at Him.

In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.

Endnotes

ⁱ See Hebrews 10:19-22. Jesus is the “new (prosphatan) and living way.” Prosphatan literally means “freshly slain.”

ⁱⁱ In Revelation 1:8 the Lord God said, “I am the alpha and omega.” Jesus and the Lord God say the same thing. They are “the alpha and omega;” they are one.

ⁱⁱⁱ It’s rather bizarre that folks want to be raptured before the tribulation, when it’s in tribulation that you learn to wash your robe in the blood of the lamb.

Remember what God said through Hosea?

He would conquer his whoring bride in the valley of achor, the valley of trouble... and there she would learn to call him “my husband.”

^{iv} James 1:23-25

^v "She dare not come within a hundred miles of the Tree, for its smell, which is joy and life and health to you, is death and horror and despair to her."

Everyone was staring solemnly at the Tree when Aslan suddenly swung round his head (scattering golden gleams of light from his mane as he did so) and fixed his large eyes on the children. "What is it, children?" he said, for he caught them in the very act of whispering and nudging one another.

"Oh-Aslan, sir," said Digory, turning red, "I forgot to tell you. The Witch has already eaten one of those apples, one of the same kind that Tree grew from." . . .

"So we thought, Aslan," she said, "that there must be some mistake, and she can't really mind the smell of those apples."

"Why do you think that, Daughter of Eve?" asked the Lion.

"Well, she ate one."

"Child," he replied, "that is why all the rest are now a horror to her. That is what happens to those who pluck and eat fruits at the wrong time and in the wrong way. The fruit is good, but they loathe it ever after."

"Oh I see," said Polly. "And I suppose because she took it in the wrong way it won't work with her. I mean it won't make her always young and all that?"

"Alas," said Aslan, shaking his head. "It will. Things always work according to their nature. She has won her heart's desire; she has unwearying strength and endless days like a goddess. But length of days with **an evil heart** is only length of misery and already she begins to know it. All get what they want: they **do not always like it**. . . .

"And the Witch tempted you to do another thing, my son, did she not?"

"Yes, Aslan. She wanted me to take an apple home to Mother."

"Understand, then, that it would have healed her; but not to your joy or hers. The day would have come when both you and she would have looked back and said it would have been better to die in that illness." . . .

"That is what *would* have happened, child, with a stolen apple. It is not what will happen now. What I give you now will bring joy. It will not, in your world, give endless life, but it will heal. Go. Pluck her an apple from the Tree."

C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1955), p. 173-175

^{vi} Scientists are utterly perplexed by light. They say it's not one but two, a particle and a wave. But maybe light is one and we're two. Maybe we're trying to judge the judgment.

This is the judgment: The Light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light... In fact, we crucified the light and put him in a box—could there be a greater darkness? And we didn't do it just once, He died for the sins of the world, and sin is that way we take knowledge from the tree... like all the time... He died once and for all space and time.

vii In Genesis 3:22 The Hebrew (gam) can be translated such that the passage reads “take also” or “take again/ take again also.” I think it should be “take again.” The idea being that we need to continue to take from the tree to live. We don’t simply receive life and keep life for all eternity; we experience eternal life in a communion of life—the river of life that constantly flows from the throne, that is also a tree.

viii At this table we confess our sin—that we have taken his life to justify ourselves.
And we believe God’s grace—that God has given his own life that we would be forever justified

At this table God liberates us from the Evil Queen and makes us Snow White.

At this table God reveals the plot that changes the meaning of every moment in our space and time.

At this table God changes our knowledge of sin into the Revelation of His Love.

At this table God tells us the story of His Love.

At this table God creates in us a new heart—his own heart.

44

Worship God!

Worship God!

Revelation 22

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

January 27, 2019

Peter Hiatt

This document was prepared by Michael Hanna using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon (available [on our website](#)). Please let Michael know if you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document: themichaelhanna@thesanctuarydowntown.org. Thank you!

Prayer

So, Lord God, we thank you for who you are, and we pray now that you would help us to preach. God, I pray especially for those that are new, that you'd help them to preach. I mean...well, all of us, that you'd open the eyes of our heart...but we're getting, Lord, this is the last sermon from the Revelation in our series after a year and a half. And, Lord God, I am just overwhelmed by the picture and I despair sometimes thinking I cannot connect all the dots for people. And that's true. All the dots are not entirely connected for me. But you are the one who connects all the dots, Jesus. You are what everything means. So, when people think to themselves “what the heck?” I pray that you would remind them “it all means me,” Jesus. Would you remind our hearts, and would you help us to see? You are from the bosom of the Father, Jesus. You reveal the Father. So cause us to see through the power of your Spirit. It's in your name we pray, amen.

Message

Last week we preached about a mirror. And hopefully most of you have a mirror or someone near you has a mirror...

Hold your mirror so that you can see your face and both eyes. Look at your left eye. Now look at your right eye. Did you see your eyes move?

Now find a partner and look into your neighbor's face. Look at their right eye and then their left eye. Then watch as they look at your right eye and then your left eye. Did you see their eyes move?

Isn't that crazy? What's going on?

Well, you cannot see your own eyes move because of the way they're moving—the optics get all messed up. But instead of your vision getting blurry or fuzzy for a second, like when you move a camera—you see your eyes unmoved.

The problem isn't with the mirror. It doesn't lie. But your brain does lie. All the time. When it can't make sense of reality—it creates reality.

And that's not only true for that moment; it's true for all moments because your eyes cannot actually see now. They can't see now, for it takes time for your brain to process every image.

We say, “keep your eye on the ball,” but no mere mortal can actually do that. When a professional tennis player “keeps his eye on the ball,” he's actually keeping his eye on where that ball was a moment ago (1/10th of a second). If the ball is travelling at 150 miles per hour as

it does for professional tennis players, it means a tennis player sees the ball about 22 feet from where it actually is, but the brain predicts where it would be now, and tells you that's where it is now.

And that's why professional tennis players can hit tennis balls travelling at 150 miles an hour but can't swat a house fly moving at 5 miles an hour. It's unpredictable; it has a mind of its own—it's alive.

Your brain tries to calculate where it is, and tells you where it is, so you think you know where it is—you think you even see where it is—but you don't. You're believing a lie and constructing a story in your brain.

That actually works pretty well if your world is full of tennis balls and not flies,
...if your world is full of things and nothing with a mind of its own.
...if your world is full of matter and energy but absent of people.
...if your world is dead.

Well this is all from a wonderful Ted Talk titled, ["Time and the Brain: The Illusion of Now."](#) This is how the researcher ended his presentation:

Clip from "Time and the Brain: The Illusion of Now"
Hinze Hogendoorn at TEDxUtrechtUniversity, 2016

Hinze Hogendoorn: So where does that leave us with the question of when is now in the brain? I don't know. And the one thing I *do* know is that when you open your eyes, whether these beautiful eyes are your own, when you open your eyes and look out into the world there's one thing that you are *not* seeing, and that is now.

We can't see "now." So I cannot observe who I am. That's weird, but modern physics gets even weirder.

Quantum Mechanics clearly implies that, at some fundamental level, nothing is real unless it is observed by a conscious observer. But I can't observe me, because I am the observer.

The "me" that I observe is not who I am. I am the "me" that is doing the observing. And that "me" does not exist, unless it is being observed by a person...NOW. Only that person could tell me who I am.

You can't see now. And it's interesting that God's name is "I Am that I Am," as if He is always Now.ⁱ

I can't see Him, but He can see me, and He does see me, right now.

"No one has ever seen God" writes John in John 1:18, "The only begotten God who is in the Bosom of the Father, He has made him known." (RSV)

He is the heart of God, nailed to a tree in a garden.

I can't make sense out of all of that, but maybe it can make sense of me. Well, I hope you see this much: that we each create our own reality. You just did it just now using a mirror, but the illusion was exposed with a second mirror.

The first mirror was dead, and so your brain could more easily manipulate the information, the knowledge. The second mirror was alive—you looked into a living mirror—on the surface of the cornea of that mirror you could see your own reflection just as you did on the surface of the glass. However, this mirror wasn't so easy to manipulate, because this mirror could talk. And more than likely, you trusted what it said.

Which brings up a fascinating point. Your ability to arrive at truth wasn't dependent on your intelligence, but your capacity for trust—in Greek, *pistis*, also translated faith. Your ability to arrive at truth was dependent on faith. And so, a little child could arrive at truth faster than a physicist or theologian.

I mean someone with greater intelligence is more likely to trust their own perception; and a little child is more likely to trust their neighbor's perception. And hopefully that neighbor is their mom or dad.

I mean the physicist would argue: "No, I'm sure that my eyes didn't move, I have empirical evidence that my eyes did not move." The child would say: "OK Mom, if you say my eyes moved, I guess they did move."

A little child trusts... and Jesus said, "You must become like a little child to enter..." But now, he said that to adults. And you can't become like a child if you already are a child. ⁱⁱ

There's a problem with little children. They're idiots (as we said last week). They naturally trust, but they really don't know who to trust. A little child might trust a talking snake, for a little child doesn't know who is good and who is not good—who is evil.

So we protect them... and yet we want them to learn who, and who not, to trust. We want them to live a story that includes encountering evil, so they will learn to trust the good. We want them to grow up, leave home, and come back, saying, "Mom, Dad, I've seen a lot and I trust you... you're good.... Kill the fatted calf. Let's party!" We want them to live a story, and then, love us in freedom forever.

And that's what stories do—they give you knowledge of good and evil, but not just dead knowledge—like a list or a law—they give living knowledge. Stories reveal people: they reveal who's evil and who's good. That's how we come to know the talking snake is evil, and the Word of God is Good.

Stories are rather remarkable things and reveal remarkable things about us.

As you're reading a story, you naturally create a reality. You try to connect the dots. You give it meaning. You read "they nailed him to a tree" and you think, it means all is lost. Then you read, "He rose from the dead" and it changes all the meaning—"all is lost," suddenly means "all is found." But that's not the meaning you gave, that's the meaning that was given by the author and his plot—his Logos, his Word.

If Scripture is right, we're all in a story and we're each trying to anticipate the plot... that is we're each trying to give everything meaning. We're each telling ourselves a story... and yet, we're a story being told.

If Scripture is right, the story you tell yourself is an illusion. But the story that's told is who you truly are. And the plot to that story will transform every event in the story that you have told yourself—the story of your own creation and all things with you.

That's just how stories work and how they work you. While you're reading a story, you try to anticipate the plot...even create the plot. But by the end of the story, the plot has created you...and transformed every moment in the story. And you're not just reading a story; you are the story that you're trying to read.

If Scripture is right, you are a character in a story being written, who is constantly tempted to re-write the story. When you do, you write yourself into nowhere and nothing. And when the Author writes you back in, nowhere and nothing become somewhere and something—it's a story of Grace.

Somewhere and something is inside the city.
Nowhere and nothing is the outer darkness.

Well, this is the point:

The “me” that I observe in a mirror is not who I am. To know who I am someone must observe me, and tell me who I am. And to trust Their Word, I need their story.

So as we as we have discovered:

When you look in the mirror and judge yourself—observe yourself—you create a false self, trapped in a reality of your own making.ⁱⁱⁱ

But when you are observed by someone you trust—you become real in a reality that is not of your own making. You wake up from the dream of your own sovereignty, your insanity.

We're talking about two mirrors:

One is dead, like the pocket mirror, and one is living, like the person sitting next to you.

They remind me of the two mirrors we talked about last week.

[image: Evil Queen looking into the Magic Mirror]

The Evil queen—the evil sovereign—had a mirror.

Because it was a cartoon, it spoke back to her, but we understand that it spoke her own thoughts...and her thoughts were death. The mirror was good but the way she took knowledge from the mirror was bad.

She looked in the mirror asking, “Who's the fairest in the land?” so she could make herself the fairest in the land. She wanted to be first by making other's last. She wanted to be a winner by making others lose. She wanted to be most beautiful by killing anything more beautiful than her. She wanted to capture the heart of snow white and put it in a box. She wanted to create her own reality... but everything in her reality was ugly and dead, and she was trapped forever alone as long as she took knowledge from her mirror.

She had a mirror... and Snow White also had a mirror

Clip from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
Walt Disney Productions, 1937

Snow White sings into a wishing well, which magically echoes back only those phrases less than four syllables in length.

Snow White: I'm wishing [*I'm wishing*]
For the one I love
To find me [*To find me*]
Today

We expect to hear Snow's high, warbly soprano echoing a descending major 3rd. But no! the face of the handsome prince pops into the picture next to Snow's, and his heroic tenor voice provides the echo. But it is not a true echo; he inverts the motif with an ascending 3rd, landing on the fifth scale degree (as handsome princes are wont to do):

Prince: Today!
Snow White: (*startled*) Oh!

The Queen wanted to take knowledge of the Good to make herself Good.
Snow White wanted the Good...to find her and make everything Good—that is beautiful.

The Queen tried to conquer the Good so she took knowledge of the Good.
And Snow white wanted to be conquered by the Good and so was known by the Good and became Good... in nine months she may have even given birth to the good. The life of her Prince.

They each had a mirror and we have a mirror.

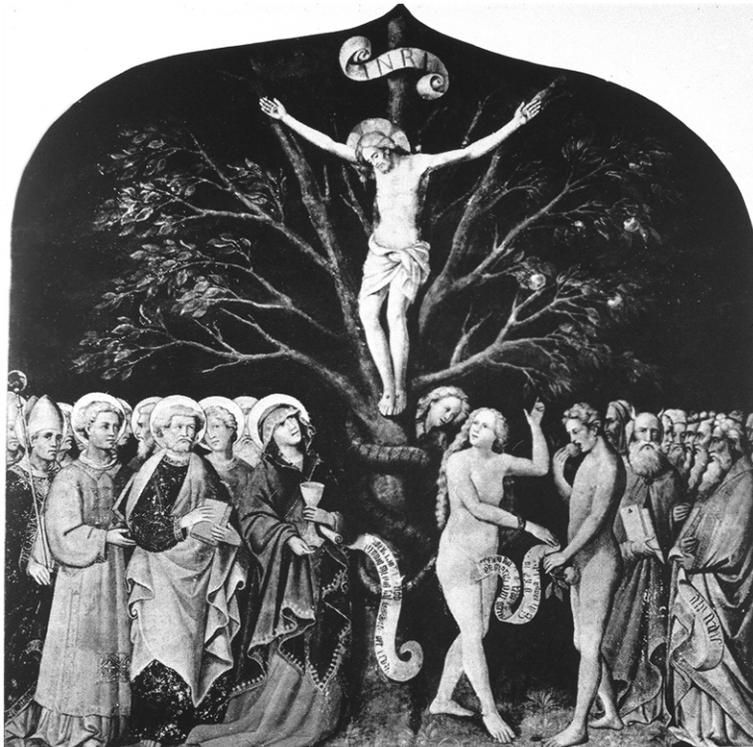


Figure 1 "The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

It's a tree in the middle of the Garden and upon it is "The Good in flesh" who is "the Life."

Is it the Queen's mirror, like the mirror you hold in your hand?
Or is it Snow White's mirror, a living mirror like the one sitting next to you?

See, maybe it depends on how you take it...or receive it.

According to Scripture there are two ways of knowing.
And according to philosophers there are two ways of knowing.

The first is like the Queen's mirror. It's how we know things that we can understand, that we can comprehend, that we can control, that we can judge, that we can test—*empeiria* in Greek—it means “to test.”

...*Empeiria* and that's where it gets its name: “The empirical method.”

It's an absolutely marvelous way to know about things—sometimes it's called “science.” And how we use those things is called technology. It's a wonderful way of coming to know about things...but it's a terrible way to get to know people.

If a scientist wants to know about a tree, he cuts it down and counts its rings—he knows about it, but he can no longer know it—it's dead.

If a man wants to know about a woman, he can cut her down and dissect her spleen, heart and brain, but he can no longer know her, for she can no longer know him.

If a Theologian wants to know about God...

Maybe he could chop him down and dissect all the pieces—hell he could nail him to a tree and then put him in a box...if that was possible. He might know something about God, but He could no longer know God. He just crucified God, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Good, and all things with him. So actually, he couldn't know anything for everything would be dead or just an illusion. He would've created his own reality in which he was trapped utterly alone—emperor of his own empire and utterly alone in Hell.

The empirical method: Great for knowing things that you have judged as less than you. And yet terrible for knowing things greater than you and your ability to judge, comprehend, or understand—like a wife.

There are two ways of knowing. The first I'll call “Empiricism.” (Most modern folks think it's the only way you can know anything, and so of course they have no idea who they are, what anything means, or why it is that they feel so utterly alone... and dead.)

Two ways of knowing: #1 Empiricism and #2 Revelation.

To receive a revelation is to worship. And to worship is to receive a revelation from God.

When we worship God, we observe the one who always observes us: the Author of our story. We see, because we are seen by “I Am.” (We cannot see NOW, but he is NOW and He sees us.)

When we worship, we wake up from the illusion of our own sovereignty.

When we worship, we lose our selves and find ourselves. If you reflect on this, it's only then that we are happy. Fake worship sucks but true worship is happy.

When we worship,
We comprehend, because we have been comprehended.
We know, because we are known.
We conquer, because we have been conquered by Love.

Genuine worship is absolute ecstasy.

We're at the end of the Revelation and we should ask, "what's the point?"

This is the point: "Worship God!"

"Who is He?" we ask. Well remember the titles of the book is the Revelation of Jesus.

What's the point of the Revelation, what's the point of history, what's the point of all creation?
Worship God in Christ Jesus. PERIOD.

Last Chapter of the Revelation:

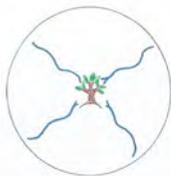
22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing [out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: ²in the midst of its broad place, and of the river on this side and on that, *is* a tree of life (YLT)] with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign [into the ages of the ages. (YLT)]

John looks and he sees himself (we saw this in the last chapter). His name is on one of the foundation stones. In fact, he would have been one of the 24 elders he saw around the throne in chapter five. He looks and sees himself. This is like a mirror.

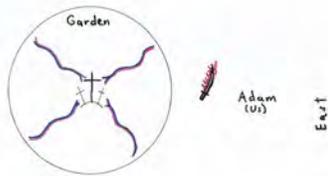
But it's a living mirror. It's a face. "The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it and...they will see his face," and worship Him. When John looks at the New Jerusalem, he's seeing himself in the eyes of God.

It's a living mirror. It's a face. And it's a story.

That's why I've showed you all of these beautiful high-tech graphics throughout this series, not so that you'd get all the details, but so that you'd understand it's all one incredible story.



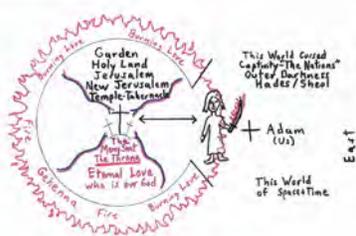
John sees the tree of Life in the Garden of Eden and from it flows four rivers.



He doesn't see two trees in the middle, but one.



And it looks like Jerusalem in the Promised Land.



It's a tabernacle and a temple and in the inner sanctuary there is a coffin that contains the law on tablets of Stone. It's like humanity wanted to know the Good and so took the life of the Good. And God said, "You want knowledge of the Good? Here's the Law. Keep it in this Ark, this coffin, keep it in this box." You see we've all lusted after the heart of God in a box.

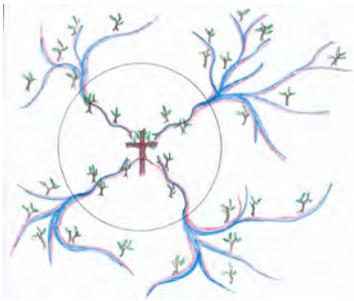


Figure 2 "Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" by Jan van Eyck, part of the Ghent Altarpiece (1432)

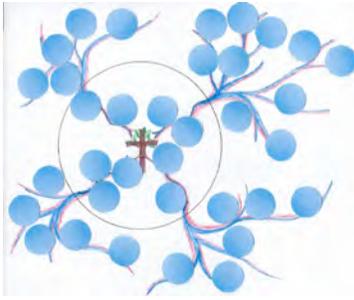
But now on top of this box, which is the throne of God, stands a slaughtered lamb: He is the Good in flesh and He is the Life—he is the living law of Love. The fulfillment of the Law. The content, the substance of the Law. He is risen from the dead and He is the judgment of God. He stands on the mercy seat, that is a throne, and He is Mercy. God consigned all to disobedience, that He may have Mercy on all.



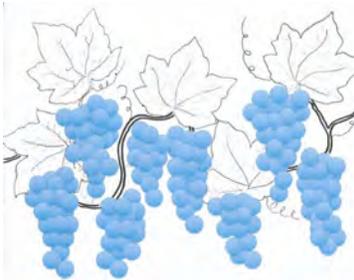
From the throne, that is a tree, flows the river of life. "The Spirit is life" and that life is in the blood of the lamb. It is the *nepesh*, the soul of the Lamb, the Eschatos Adam, and we are his bride.



It flows from the throne and out of the garden, until the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Is. 11:9, Hab. 2:14). And wherever the river goes it brings healing and it brings life (Ez.) John sees the tree of life everywhere.



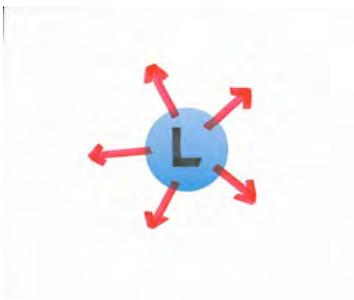
The tree is the decision of God from the heart of God. And his decision is to create souls—to create humanity in his own image.



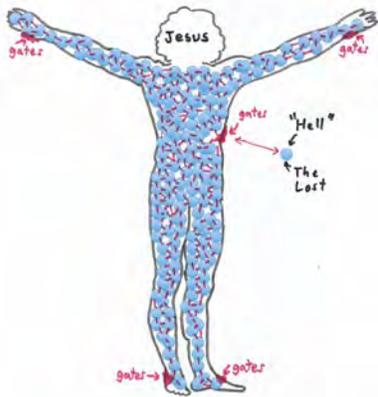
Each of us is a vessel of wrath (like a grape of wrath), that gets transformed into a vessel of mercy—a vessel of blood that's wine and wine that's blood.



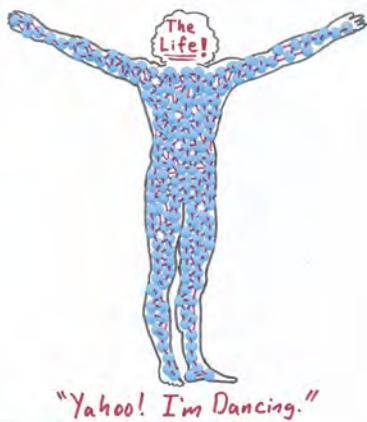
At the tree God crushes the soul that has damned itself, for it only takes and never gives.



And He turns it into a soul that freely chooses to love—freely chooses to lose its life and find it.^{iv}



The New Jerusalem is the Body of Christ, who is the Bride of Christ. And she is made at His bleeding side.



The New Jerusalem is billions of souls in a communion of life. She is entirely free and eternally happy. For the will of all, is the free will of each.^v



That's the judgment of God and it's eternal. It is eternal life and it is the Good. And it is who you truly are. Everything else is nowhere and nothing but a vain illusion.



This is the Judgment of God: When you judge the judgement of God, you trap yourself in Hell. And when the judgment of God judges you, you enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

You see the judgment of God is a story, revealed in a person, who is the Beginning and End; He is the Plot.

The Judgment of God is Good, and the Judgment of God is Life.

The Judgment of God looks like two trees at the start of the Story, but in the end you see only one.

And you know that the Good is the Life, and all evil works to reveal the Good, who is the Life, so you would come to freely love the Good, who is the Life.

The Judgment of God is Good, and the judgment of God is eternal life.

When you stop taking knowledge from Christ to judge and justify yourself and start worshipping Christ (for he has judged and justified you with His Life), then His presence transforms the meaning of all things.

“All is lost” turns into “all is found,” as you worship and find yourself unable to stop worshipping because you can’t imagine why you would ever want to stop worshipping—it is your hearts deepest desire.

You’ve been found and you agree with what you are—the eternal decision of God—and you rule in love over every moment of space and time into the ages of the ages.

v. 5 ...and they will reign [into the ages of the ages. (YLT)]

⁶And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.”

⁷“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

This vision is so amazing that John just starts worshiping the angel—the revealing angel. Angel means messenger and there are lots of revealing messengers. The book of the Revelation is a “revealing messenger” and lots of folks seem to worship it, rather than worship with it.

People think it’s the revelation of the future—that is a map. So they try to use the Revelation to save themselves, and they end up crucifying the savior. They use it to make themselves first and so crucify the last, when Jesus said, “whatever you do to the last, you do to me!” and “whoever seeks to save His life, will lose it.” Stop trying to save your life and worship the Savior.

It’s the Revelation of Jesus. That’s the name of the book. Use the Revelation to worship God in Christ Jesus.

In Luke 17 the Pharisees ask Jesus when the kingdom will come and he answers, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation...” (*parataresis*; I spent some time studying this. It means empirical observation.) “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹ nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

“Will there never be an end of all our ceaseless talk about the *delay* of the Parousia?” asks Karl Barth. “How can the coming of that which doth not *enter in* ever be *delayed*? The End of which the New Testament speaks is no temporal event... What *delays* its coming is not the Parousia, but our awakening.”^{vi}

I don’t think that means, that time as we know it will never come to an end. I think it means that it comes to an end at a torn curtain in the sanctuary of your soul. The sky really does roll up and all things become new, because everything you thought was real, was not real. And everything you thought was not very real like faith or hope, is far more real than anything you can see or touch. And Love... far from being unreal, Love is God.

Worship God! Not the revelation, not the revealing angel.

You know the Bible is a revealing angel. Creation is a revealing angel. Spirits are revealing angels. To worship the revealing angel is called idolatry. Idolatry destroys you and the one you idolize, for idols aren’t persons, but things.^{vii} Never turn a person into a thing.

And now this is wild, but this revealing angel—one of the seven bowl angels—looks like Jesus and talks like Jesus.^{viii} We’ve wondered if this is the Spirit of Jesus. The work of the Spirit of Jesus is to cause us to worship God in Christ Jesus.

Well This Bowl angel says, “Worship God!”

It was one of these angels that showed John the destruction of the Harlot and said, “Don’t worship me, worship God.” And now this bowl angel shows John the Bride and says, “Don’t worship me, worship God.”

We’ve seen that we each have been the Harlot and we each become the Bride. John can’t help but worship when he sees his old self destroyed. And he can’t help but worship when he sees his new eternal self revealed.

It’s just like the end of Isaiah: All people walk to the edge of the new Jerusalem for they see the corpses of all people burning in the valley of Gehenna, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. And they worship ceaselessly and ecstatically... why?

They Worship God for he has saved them from themselves and saved them for Himself—they are the New eternal Jerusalem, His Beloved Bride.^{ix}

¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. (*eggus*/ eng-goos: literally—“at hand”)

That means like “now.” In Daniel, it’s sealed up until the time of the end. Now it’s unsealed for the end is now.

John 12:31 “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world cast out.” No wonder satan doesn’t want us to live in the now, in the light of God: “Now will the ruler of this world be cast out...”

v. 50 [The Father’s] commandment is eternal life...

Eternity touches time now. Eternal life is now, when you worship. That’s when you make decisions, or decisions make you.

“Now is the Judgment,” says Jesus

“Now is the day of salvation.” Says Paul in 2 Cor. 6:2

“... On [us] the end of the ages has come.” 1 Cor. 10:11

“He appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself... Hebrews 9:26 and now listen to Hebrew 12:18:

“...You have not come to what may be touched...” (That is maps and charts and earthly governments like the nation state of Israel.) “...You have not come to what may be touched...”²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking...”

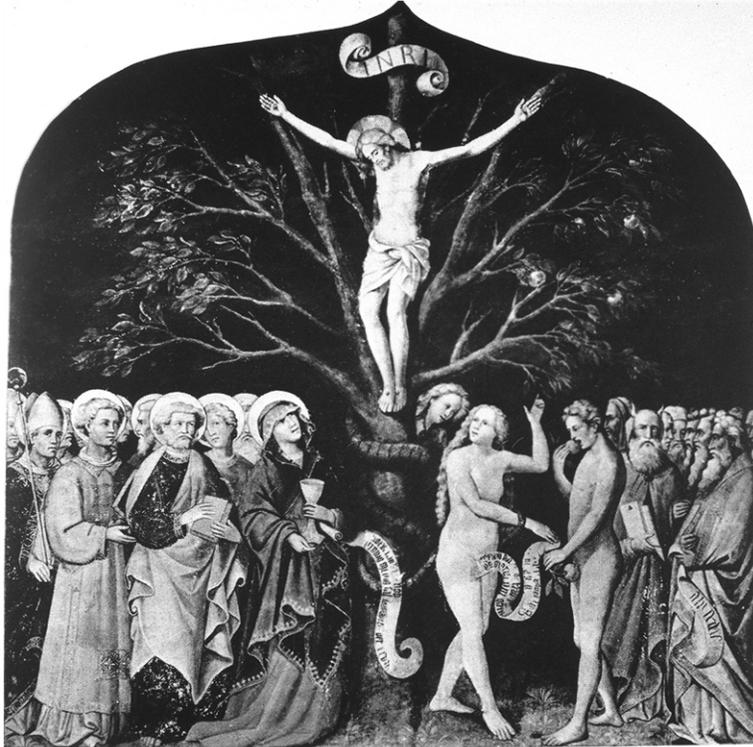
...who is speaking.

Why do we occupy ourselves with laws and procedures and earthly governments, maps and charts, numbers and cycles, and the secret meaning of dates, seasons and years supposedly extracted from the Word of God?

Why? Maybe it’s because we’re running from the Living Word of God?

We’re running from Him who *is* speaking now...

We’re running from the Word, to escape His Judgment.



Something in us knows that we took His Life on the Tree. But if we would stop, and hear the Judgment spoken from the tree, by the very Word that we all have nailed to that tree, we might hear, “Father forgive them. They know not what they do.”

Don't judge the judgment. Look at the judgment and listen to the judgment, and you will worship God for His Judgment, His Word in broken flesh—your Prince.

v. 9 “Worship God!”

¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. ¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

Let. Jesus is sending this to seven little churches in Asian minor. In some of those churches people are being seduced and trapped by evil spirits. In some folks are about to be slaughtered in the arena. In some there is heresy, betrayal and apathy... and Jesus says, “Let it be...”

“Worship God!”

We worship the one who speaks all things into existence with His Word. Changing all of space and time, is not a problem for him... But to change your heart into that of a worshiper, He suffered and died and descended into hell—every hell—in order to know your sin and sorrow, fill it with His Grace and Joy, rise from the dead to show you his face and let you put your finger in his wounds.

Worship God in Christ Jesus!

12 “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.^x 15 Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root (that’s the source) and the descendant of David (that’s the fruit of David... as if Jesus has made David a tree of life—His Life.), the bright morning star.”

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.”

They could be calling to Jesus, or the people in the outer darkness, or both. Jesus descends into the outer darkness, shows us his wounds, and makes us thirsty for him. He has “numbered himself with the transgressors.” (Is. 53:12)

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Let. There’s a whole lot of “Let.” You know the word in Greek for “forgive” can also be translated “let”?

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues [wounds] described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

In other words, they’ll still be under the curse—just as all who don’t believe the revelation of Jesus remain under a curse^{xi}, until they learn to trust the Revelation of Jesus, who is the Judgment of God and Blessing of God.

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.”

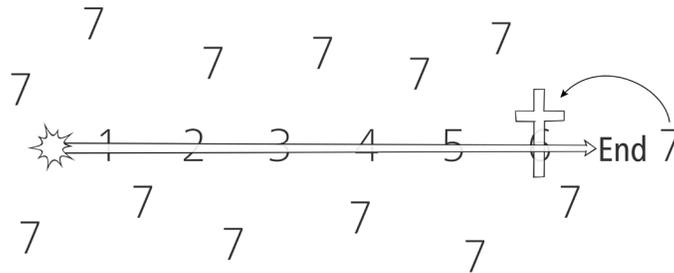
He’s not a thief in the night; He’s your husband. He wants you to know him, when He comes. And maybe He’s coming all the time...

“Surely I am coming soon.”

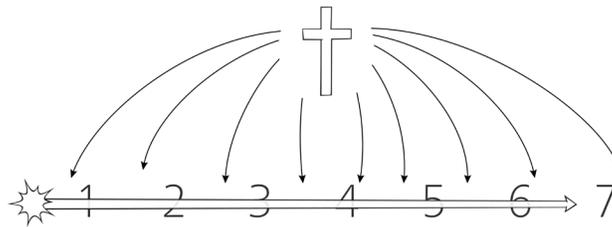
That’s the third time he’s said that in this chapter and that was 2000 years ago... Research this if you need to, but “soon” means “soon.”

Maybe He’s coming all the time: Maybe he came on Easter morning. Maybe He came on Pentecost.^{xii} Maybe he comes in the last and least of these. ^{xiii}

Maybe he is the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Love you encounter every day in the people all around you.



He is the End and the Beginning that was revealed to us on the tree in the garden. He is the Plot. He is the Revelation of God, who is Love.



And maybe He is coming all the time.

I keep thinking about a scene in a movie—you've probably seen it. It's from the movie *A Beautiful Mind*, the true story of John Nash, the brilliant mathematician from Princeton.

He was able to recognize patterns where no one else could. And so, he began to ascribe meaning where no one else would.

The whole cosmos became his mirror—his own mirror. At one point, he thinks he can comprehend everything, which means that he can be comprehended by no one—he trusts no one, but himself—and goes insane.

He is entirely sovereign over his own reality, and so, utterly alone...utterly alone, until a woman enters his insanity and shows him what's real. She enters his world and writes a story of Love with her own broken heart.

And he begins to look into a new mirror...or maybe, he looks into an old mirror in a new way.

Clip from *A Beautiful Mind*
Universal Pictures, 2001

A key moment in the film. Alicia Nash (portrayed by the beautiful Jennifer Connelly) approaches her husband (John Nash, played by Russell Crowe).

Alicia: You want to know what's real?

John nods silently.

Alicia: *(touching the side of his face with her hand)* This.

She takes John's hand and presses it to the side of her face.

Alicia: This.

She moves his hand from her face and holds it against her chest, over her heart.

Alicia: This. This is real. Maybe the part...that knows the waking from the dream, maybe it isn't here.

She gently caresses his head, then places her hand over his heart.

Alicia: Maybe it's here.

He went on to win the Nobel Prize in 1994. He ended his acceptance speech with this statement:

"I have made the most important discovery of my career, the most important discovery of my life: It is only in the mysterious equations of love that any logic or reason can be found."

He surrendered to Love, and Love made his shattered world new. The Logic of Love is the Word of God, who makes all things new.

And maybe, He's coming to you all the time, so you wouldn't run and hide at the End of time, but would joyfully surrender to Love for all eternity.

V. 20 "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

If you said that in Aramaic, it would be pronounced "Maranatha." In the early church it was that practice to say, "Maranatha" at the Lord's table. So some have postulated that the Revelation was used as a call to worship at the Lord's Table.

Remember, they didn't have TV in that day, and most didn't read, so they were happy to listen to the whole thing. We chop it up and use it to sell books and scare pagans, but they'd just sit and listen to the Revelation of Jesus.

It begins like this: ³ Blessed [happy] is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is at hand."

Then they'd read it to the end and say "Maranatha, come Lord Jesus."

Communion

Then someone would take a piece of bread, break it, and say, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat." And that person would take a cup and say what Jesus says, "This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you."

Say this after me: "Maranatha... come Lord Jesus."

We invite you to tear off a piece of the bread and dip it in the cup.
It is the heart of God, given to you, put it in you...
Then worship and may you never ever stop.

Benediction

We still haven't read the last verse of the Revelation.

²¹ **The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all** (not "some" but "all"). **Amen.**

Some ancient manuscripts add the word "saints" after "all." But these are later manuscripts...

It even appears that the most ancient manuscripts didn't, and don't, even include the "Amen," which means, "For sure!"

And so the Bible ends with the word "all."

Father Gillick was visiting an elementary school when he struck up a conversation with a child. A few moments into their discussion, she blurted out, "You're blind."

That was true. Due to an illness, he had lost his sight as a small child.

With tenderness, he replied, "My dear that's not news to me."

But before he could say more, she quickly moved from shock to sorrow, sadly replying, "But you don't know what you look like."

That statement caught Father Gillick off guard, and before he could respond, she ever so softly said... "You're beautiful."^{xiv}

That was the news from heaven... Good News.

The world can see, or is coming to see, that they are blind.

But you have news from heaven... and you can share that news with the world now.

The Revelation is the Revelation of Jesus

And when we look at Him, it also becomes the Revelation of who we are.

The New Jerusalem has the Glory of God—She's Beautiful... and she is you.

If you don't believe you're beautiful, you've been looking in the wrong mirror.

Believe the Gospel. Amen

All Bible verses from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted. All images by Peter Hiatt unless otherwise credited.

Endnotes

ⁱ God is Light wrote John. No one seems to be able to comprehend Light... to us it is a contradiction—a wave and a particle—We can't judge light. But According to physicists Light is always Now—it doesn't age, it doesn't change... and yet, even time, changes relative to Light, somehow. We judge Light and think it's two (like two trees in a garden), but maybe Light judges us and we're two, like Good and evil.

“This is the judgment,” said Jesus in John 3:19, “The Light has come into the world.”

ii Paul wrote: “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor. 13:11-13)

iii A wonderful but painful sign that you’re not simply creating your own reality is that you suffer. And when someone makes you suffer, you can know that they’re real and not simply a figment of your own imagination—they are a person capable of loving and being loved. Insanity can be a defense mechanism against suffering, which is also a defense mechanism against Love. Sin is insanity... but not all insanity is sin.

iv “Call the world, if you please, *“the Vale of Soul Making”*. Then you will find out the use of the world.... There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions—but they are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. Intelligences are atoms of perception— they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God. How then are Souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them— so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each one’s individual existence. How, but in the medium of a world like this? This point I sincerely wish to consider, because I think it a grander system of salvation than the Christian religion...” –John Keats

How sad that John Keats did not know, and was not told that Scripture teaches, and indeed, the Christian Religion should teach: that this world is “The Vale of Soul Making,” and that a soul is a vessel containing the Breath of God—an earthen vessel that becomes a blood vessel in the Body of Christ, a vessel of wrath that becomes a vessel of Mercy, a vessel that bleeds the Life of God in the image of God.

∇ God is free. God is Good. Jesus is God’s Will. Jesus is God’s Good free will.
Jesus is God’s Decision to be Himself. Jesus is the Judgment of God in flesh.
God is Love. Jesus is Love in flesh. Jesus is free-will in flesh.
Jesus is freewill in our flesh.
Jesus is the image of God and God is free.

Look: There’s Jesus hanging on a tree.

- If I take freewill as a possession, if I crucify the Christ, if I break the bread and spill the blood, I kill freedom, life, logic, the Good and I choose non-being, I am utterly enslaved and unable to love—I’m dead.
- If I receive freewill as a gift—as grace, as a lover that has been romanced by her groom, if I perceive body broken and blood shed as a gift given when I am utterly unworthy of the gift, I become impregnated with freedom, life, logic and the Good; I bear the fruit of good free decisions—I begin to Love. I have the knowledge of Good and evil, and I choose the Good in Freedom; I live; I am the image of God (the one who loves in freedom)

Look: There’s Jesus hanging on a tree.

- If I use him to make myself in the image, everything dies.
- If I worship him, for he is the image, everything lives and I become the image of God.

Look: There’s Jesus hanging on a tree.

- If I try to justify myself, by taking knowledge of good to make myself good, everything dies.
- If I see that I am justified, for God has given the good, everything lives.

“I know that the Father’s commandment is eternal life,” said Jesus (John 12:50)

^{vi} Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, page 500

^{vii} "Concepts create idols... only wonder understands." —Gregory of Nyssa

^{viii} Maybe we can "idolize" Jesus, and by that, I mean turn him into a thing for our own consumption. I think that's, actually, what we did at the cross. Instead of worshipping Him as he truly is—our Creator, we reduced Him—or tried to reduce Him—to a thing that we can use to construct our own creation, our desecration. When Israel chose an idol, they chose a calf. Calves are very safe and useful, but they cannot create you or recreate you... but they can help you create the "abomination of desecration."

^{ix} "From new moon to new moon,
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship before me,
declares the Lord.

And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled [pasha] against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." — Isaiah 66: 23-24

This is such a terrifying passage . . . until you believe it. Who are "the men who have rebelled [pasha] against me"? If you read all of Isaiah, noting that "pasha" is translated with various English words—that in Hebrew are this one word—you realize that "the men who have rebelled against me" are all men, INCULDING the Messiah, who has numbered himself with "the transgressors [pasha]." They worship for they see their corpses being consumed in the valley of Gehenna—they worship in new bodies. "All is lost" has become "all is found" in Christ Jesus.

"Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors [pasha];
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors [pasha]." —Isaiah 53:12

^x There are 7 blessings, 7 beatitudes, in the Revelation. I think they are all a form of worship. So they mean, "happy are those who worship." When you worship you forget yourself and find yourself in that which you are worshipping. If you reflect on it, you'll realize that you are always most happy when your worshipping—you probably just didn't call it worship, but cheering for the Broncos, praising one of your kids, or making love to your wife.

You can worship God in the Broncos, your kids and your wife, just by saying "thank you." You can and should use them as means of worshiping God.

Only one is truly worthy of our worship and that's God. Anything else is idolatry. If you idolize the Broncos, your kids or your wife—you will destroy them, destroy yourself and crucify the Christ—you will worship the creature rather than the Creator.

Blessed, happy are you, when you worship God in every moment.

These are the seven blessings:

1. Blessed is the one who *reads aloud* the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those *who hear*, and *who keep* what is written in it, for the time is near. (1:3)
2. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are *the dead who die* in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" (14:3)

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3. "Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is *the one who stays awake*, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!" (16:5)
 4. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are *those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb*." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." (19:9)
 5. Blessed and holy is *the one who shares in the first resurrection!* Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. (20:6)
 6. "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is *the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book*." (22:7)
 7. Blessed are those *who wash their robes*, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. (22:14)

^{xi} See: John 3:18, 36

^{xii} If we find in the coming of the Resurrected, His coming in the Holy spirit and His coming at the end of the age three forms of His one new coming for all their significant differences, there need be no artificiality in explaining that these passages refer to the first and immediate form in which His coming did really begin in that generation as the Easter event and in which the two remaining forms are plainly delineated and intimated. . . .

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is also the parousia. In this it has not only taken place but is still taking place to-day. And as it has taken place in the resurrection and is taking place to-day in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it is also true that it will take place at the end of the days in the conclusion of the self-revelation of Jesus Christ.

Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (a compendium), p. 242-243

^{xiii} The King says not that the sheep have compiled a splendid moral record, but that they had a relationship with himself: "Amen, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." Or to put it even more precisely, they are praised at his final parousia for what they did in his parousia throughout their lives.

Robert Capon, Kingdom Grace Judgment, pp. 509-510

^{xiv} Chris Heuertz, The Magnolia Journal, fall 2018, p. 49