



September 18, 2011

**Love God.
Love each other.
Serve the world.**

“The Permanence of Worship”

Revelation 5

¹Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” ³But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” ⁶Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders...

⁹And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

¹¹Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

¹²In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” ¹³Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”

¹⁴The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshipped.

Until recently the doctrine of heaven was enormously important to the church, a central, life-sustaining conviction.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.... And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Jesus promises heaven to us.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14:1-3)

God reveals enough about heaven to give us hope, wonder, courage and joy.

What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

All who die in the Lord are immediately in His presence. But more is coming... the new heavens and new earth which come at the end of the age.

See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (Isaiah 65:17)

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

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He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End."(Revelation 21:1-6)

The first two chapters of the Bible reveal the creation of the heavens and the earth. The last two chapters show the re-creation of the heavens and the earth.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us... We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (Romans 8:18-22)

You will be re-created as well, with a new body.

But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?"... The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body... If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body....And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man. (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)

It begins and ends with our Lord, Jesus.

The Bible begins with Jesus. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... Through him all things were made." (John 1:1,3, Genesis 1-2)

The Bible ends with Jesus. He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End... Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people." (Revelation 22:13, 20b-21)

"Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (words of Jesus, Matthew 25:34)

Heaven is our hope.

"Set your hearts on things above." (Colossians 3:1)

“As a theologian once said, ‘who chides a servant for taking away the first course of a feast when the second consists of far greater delicacies?’ Who then can regret that this present world passes away when he sees that an eternal world of joy is coming. The first course is grace, but the second is glory and that is as much better as the fruit is better than the blossom.”

(Charles Spurgeon, 19th century preacher of the gospel)

“Heaven, as the eternal home of the divine Man and of all the redeemed members of the human race, must necessarily be thoroughly human in its structure, conditions, and activities. Its joys and activities must all be rational, moral, emotional, voluntary, and active.. There must be the exercise of all the faculties, the gratification of all tastes, the development of all talent capacities, the realization of all ideas... Heaven will prove the consummate flower and fruit of the whole creation and of all the history of the universe.”

(A. A. Hodge, 19th century theologian)

“If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’; aim at earth and you will get neither.”

(C. S. Lewis, 20th century writer)

“We shall join the church triumphant, the great multitude that no one will be able to count, drawn from every nation, tribe, people and language, and we shall stand with them before God’s throne. The King of the universe will grant us refuge in the shelter of his throne, where we may see him and worship him day and night in his temple, and the Lamb turned Shepherd will lead us with the rest of his sheep to fountains of living water, where we may slake our thirst for ever at the eternal springs.”

(John Stott, British pastor and writer who died this past July)

“Every kingdom work, whether publicly performed or privately endeavored, partakes of the kingdom’s imperishable character. Every honest intention, every stumbling work of witness, every resistance of temptation, every motion of repentance, every gesture of concern, every routine engagement, every motion of worship, every struggle towards obedience, every mumbled prayer, everything, literally, which flows out of our faith-relationship with the Ever-Living One, will find its place in the ever-living heavenly order which will dawn at his coming.”

(Bruce Milne)