When Our Faith Shall Be Sight — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 21:22–22:5 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, December 4, 2022 · *The Returning King*

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It feels a little bit awkward to have all of these Christmas decorations and these wonderful Christmas hymns that we've been singing and man you guys really got into it this morning. I could even hear you over the speakers in front of me. It feels weird to get all of that and then come up here and say, if you have your Bible, open them to the book of Revelation. Because when most people think of the book of Revelation, they think end of the world, Antichrist, one-world government, conspiracy theories, rapture, debate, controversy, and all of those things.

How many of you, when you think of the book of Revelation, that's at least what used to come to your mind? How many of you, when you hear Revelation, think Christmas? No, of course nobody does. And I wondered, you know, should I finish the book of Revelation during the month of Christmas? And I persuaded myself that it was actually a good idea because so much of that baggage that we attach to the book of Revelation— It's not that it's not in there, it is in there. Although the word antichrist is never used, the concept of it is implied in chapter 13.

But I think what happens is a lot of people get so inundated in the details about unknowable things in the future that are alluded to in the book of Revelation that they miss the forest for the trees. The actual word revelation, or the actual title of Revelation in the Greek New Testament, is the apocalypse, apokalypsis. It's a Greek word that means revealing. And so at heart, the book of Revelation is a book of revelation. It reveals something. And the thing that

it reveals is not these particulars about how the world ends, although it does mention that, but it reveals Jesus.

It is the revealing of Jesus. And ultimately, Christmas is that first revealing of Messiah come in the incarnation there in Bethlehem. But what we wait for in Advent is that revealing when he comes again and what will happen when that day comes. And it's important as you study the book of Revelation as we've been doing for the last two years that you never forget why the book was written and to whom the book was written. It was written to Christians who were in a culture that had gone mad— it was written to people who were suffering incredible persecution, some of them losing their lives because of their obedience to Christ.

And John sees this vision of the future and writes it down so that those Christians and those circumstances might be encouraged in their hope. And this is not the only time the Scripture does this. Scripture consistently attempts to paint a compelling picture of our future hope for the purpose of motivating faith in the present. We lit our hope candle last week. We talked about the power of hope. But there really is a relationship between hope in the future and faith in the present. Your faith and love and obedience to Christ in the present is motivated not just by looking back to what Jesus did on the cross, but it's also motivated by looking forward to what Jesus will do at his second coming.

And if you don't believe me, just go back through the New Testament and pay attention to how often the word heaven is mentioned or the idea of heaven is alluded to. You see it in the lips of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount when he talks about rejoice when you're persecuted, rejoice and be glad. Why? Great is your reward in heaven. Matthew 6, store up for yourself treasures in heaven where moth and rust don't destroy and thieves don't break in and steal. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus talks about heaven all the time.

We don't have time to go through all of them. Paul does the same thing. He talks about his future crown of righteousness. There's a reward laid up for me in heaven. That was motivation for his apostolic ministry going through suffering. Peter—I think I have this up on the screen—who is writing his letter to the suffering Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor. They were so persecuted they could not even stay in their homes. And he writes to them to encourage them in their present day faith by appealing to heaven. He says to suffer well.

Why? Because there's an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept where? In heaven. Over and over again, the New Testament gospel is not just looking back to what Jesus did on the cross, looking forward to what he will do in the future, because that future hope motivates present day obedience. Now what we see in Revelation 21 and 22 is a picture of heaven. A compelling painted picture of what life will be like when heaven comes down and meets earth. And a lot of people when they think of heaven, what they think of in their mind is not necessarily what the New Testament describes.

I met with my family this last week in Roby and in Sweetwater. We were meeting with the Williams side of the family. Those are the non-crazy— the Terrys are the crazy side. Then we have the sophisticated Williams family. I get all my attributes from the Terry side, obviously. But we were meeting with the civilized bunch. I'm totally joking if you're watching online. But we were meeting with the civilized side and they were talking about this— somebody had watched my sermon from the week prior or something, maybe two weeks prior. And they were talking about how so much of that information and that passage was like, I'd never thought about that.

I never knew that about heaven. And I was like, well you haven't been reading your Bible, have you? But a lot of people— They read their Bible. I'm not saying they don't read their Bible, but most people don't read the book of Revelation. And if they do, they don't get all the way to the end. And so they don't ever think about heaven. When they think about heaven, they think of these popular conceptions of heaven that are very present today in most people's minds, but it's not actually what the Bible teaches.

So what we've looked at when we talked about heaven, number one, heaven is a real place. Restored by God's glory. It's not clouds, it's not floating up in the air with cupids in a diaper and all that stuff. It's a literal place, kind of like this is a place, and kind of like America is a nation, and kind of like this world is real and tangible and concrete. Heaven is that kind of a place, but it's been restored by God's glory, which means it's perfected, it's beautiful, it's as it's originally meant to be.

But it's not just a place. Remember also heaven is a people prepared to experience God's presence. That we as his creation were actually made to enjoy him. We've talked about how the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, according to the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Well that's really what heaven is. It's the presence of God healing the world and the glory of God changing us to the degree that we're able to enjoy his presence eternally in this renewed creation, a new heavens and a new earth.

So what I want us to do with our time this morning is to finish the portrait in chapter 21 and 22 and then we will be very close to finishing our journey through this great book. So let's pick it up Revelation chapter 21. Starting in verse 22, John's going to describe two ideas. He's going to first see what was missing in heaven, what was absent, and then he's going to talk about what's central in chapter 22 and onwards. So what's missing? He says, verse 22, "I didn't see a temple" in heaven, "because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

The city doesn't need the sun or the moon to shine on it because the glory of God illuminates it, and its light"—or its lamp—"is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never close by day because it will never be night there. They will bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. Nothing unclean

will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those written in the Lamb's book of life."

So we're just going to focus on what's missing. There's at least three things he describes that are missing in heaven. There is no temple. There is no night. And there is no sin or sinners— there are no sinners. Get my English right. No temple, no night. And no sinners. Now when he talks about no temple, if you were here with us last week, some of this was alluded to. But in the Old Testament, the temple was the centralization of God's presence on the earth. God is omnipresent, he's everywhere at all times, but God manifests his presence in a kind of special, concrete way in the Old Testament, in particular places at particular times in particular ways.

And the temple in the Old Testament was the home of God's presence. And not the temple in general even, but the Holy of Holies, that inner temple of the temple that was cubical in shape and overlaid in gold, and so much of what we saw in Revelation 21 was alluding to the Old Testament presence of God. So when you see in Revelation 21 that there was no temple, but that the presence of God was filling the entire earth, what John is getting at is that in heaven there is no mediator for God's presence.

And in a way, that's true today that in Christ— Christ is our mediator. We don't need a priest, we don't have to go to the temple. Some people think of it that way in our culture, that I've got to go confess my sins to a priest or I've got to, you know, I've got to go talk to the pastor. If the pastor doesn't pray for me, then it's not actually going to work, or that kind of idea is a carryover from Old Testament kind of ideology that we needed the priest to be a mediator for us.

But all of those Old Testament types were pointing to someone else and somewhere else, and that someone is the Lord Jesus Christ and that somewhere is heaven. So in heaven the absence of a temple points to the unmediated presence of God. He is everywhere. And it doesn't just point to God's presence being everywhere in that manifest, powerful way. It also, I think, suggests that in heaven there is no split between the sacred and the secular. And again in our culture we kind of think about religion and put it in this what Francis Schaeffer called the upper story.

That we have two stories in our kind of life where we put our subjective taste and preferences about beauty and art and morality and spirituality, that all of that stuff is in our upper story, and it's in the upper story because we can't verify it, test it, prove it. It's not true knowledge like scientific evidence and historical evidence and empirical evidence is true knowledge. So we kind of live in these bifurcated worlds where what's really real is down here below and since God is spiritual and not historical or verifiable, we've got to put him in this upper story.

And that's why a lot of people are very holy on Sundays, but you get them on a Monday through a Friday, and it's a totally different story because they're split. And in heaven there is no split, because in heaven you see God as God over the entire creation, just like he is now, but in heaven it will actually be seen for what it actually is. He's not just God of Sunday morning. He's not just God of your morality or spirituality. He's God over all of creation. There's not one square inch of this earth where God doesn't say, that's mine.

He is sovereign over it. And in heaven you'll see that. He's sovereign over all, and his presence is filling the entirety of the earth. There is no split and there is no mediator. Secondly, there is no night. Notice in verse 23, "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never close by day, because it will never be night there."

Yeah, I think it's important to note it says there will be no need for the sun or the moon to shine on it. A lot of people read this passage and they say, well, there's no sun in heaven. And there's no moon in heaven and there's no celestial bodies in heaven. And they come up with these fanciful ideas about it's a totally different type of reality, almost like virtual reality, and they come up with some really interesting, but I think unbiblical, ideas. There's no need, doesn't mean there isn't a sun and a moon.

In fact, I think there probably will be, if it's like this earth but made new. Maybe even have more beautiful stars in the sky and a more compelling solar system. And what he's saying is there's no need for it to shine. Not that it doesn't shine. There's no need for it to shine because the glory of God shines bright in that city. The idea of there being no more night, I think what John's trying to communicate is that there's no danger in heaven. God's people are unconditionally protected. Because at nighttime, that's when bad things happen.

My mom and dad used to tell me when I wanted to go out and circle the drag is what we called it in Roby— circle the drag— I wanted to stay out till midnight because all of my friends got to stay out till midnight and my mom and dad told me nothing good happens after eleven o'clock. And I didn't believe them, so I'd do it anyway, and I got in trouble for that. And turns out they were mostly right. Nothing good really happened after eleven o'clock. I actually got myself in quite a bit of trouble sometimes after 11 o'clock.

Bad things happen at night. Bad people prowl at night. Things that wouldn't be done in the daylight, secret things, unmentionable things happen at night. Thieves break in and steal at night. This whole idea that there's danger at night, that's why they're putting the gates up. They said in heaven there they don't put the gates up because it's always day. There is no danger. There is no secrecy. There are no bad people doing nefarious things. In heaven, God's people are unconditionally protected. So God's presence is unmediated. It is filling the entire earth, and his people never have to look over their shoulder.

They never have to wonder when the other shoe's going to drop. How long can it be this good? It'll always be this good because in heaven you're safe and protected in the presence of Almighty God. Jesus, the light of the world, is shining bright in the city. The Father of lights is filling the earth with his presence. So there's no temple, no night, and then finally there's no sin or there's no sinners. Verse 27: "Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those written in the Lamb's book of life."

Now I don't know about you. If you consider yourself a Christian, you're in the Lamb's book of life, but you've probably done some things that are detestable or false. But in heaven, it says if those things get erased, they come untrue. So I just kind of had a little thought experiment in my life. If I had never— what if? And I invite you to do this right there where you're sitting. What if you had never lied? What if you had never acted on those sinful impulses, base instincts that at the time you thought this was going to be great, but then it produced a whirlwind of devastation in your life.

What if you had never said those things, you had never acted on what are now your greatest regrets, would your life be any different today? If you had never sinned— and think not just the negative, if I had never done the bad things, what if you had always done the good things? You loved God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. You loved your spouse perfectly. You cultivated your children perfectly. You brought up their gifts and their love for the Lord. You did everything right. In your career you worked for the Lord and not for man, and you never just kind of phoned it in, you never kind of lazily did the bare minimum, but you did everything excellent all the time in all places.

Could you imagine what your life would be like if that was the case? And that I think is getting at what heaven is like. New heavens, new earth, new world, new society, new everything, but there's no brokenness. And so this absence of sin is pointing to the unmitigated potential of a world without brokenness. And imagine that kind of world. That's what heaven is. There you don't act on those worst impulses. You don't have any of those terrible regrets. You've done everything like you're supposed to do. And this idea of the glory of the nations being brought into it I think is pointing to the fact that God's people are actually living according to God's design.

They have submitted themselves perfectly to be obedient to his will in all things, and they've rebuilt a world, they've rebuilt a society in which all of those sad things and those broken things and those sinful things have come untrue. They've become erased because there is no sin in that place. The glory of the nations in verses 24 to 26 throws some of us for a loop. Well who are these nations and who are these kings? It says that the nations will walk by its light. I'm assuming that means the light of the glory of God that is shining in the city.

It says that the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, into the city. Its gates will never close by day because it'll never be night there, and they bring the glory and honor of

the nations into it. Some commentators say, well, who are these nations? Because I thought in heaven it was just, you know, God's people. You had the 12 tribes, which are the 12 gates; you had the 12 foundations with the apostles, that's the entirety of the new covenant people of God. Who are these people? And there are people who will read this and say, well, those are like sinful people in heaven, but outside of heaven, who come into heaven and become not sinful anymore.

Kind of like the position— like the premillennial position that believes in a thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, a lot of them will submit that they're actually unbelievers living during that time period who are going to be part of that kind of final battle of Satan. And of course, whatever your position, Christ destroys that offensive, but they say he doesn't utterly destroy it, and so some of these kings and nations will kind of come in and they'll bow the knee and kiss the ring and I suppose that's possible. I don't know that's what's going on here, though.

I don't think it's the evil nations. I don't think it's sinful kings because in chapter 15 and then again at the end of chapter 20, Jesus destroys those people. So if the nations are not sinful kings and sinful nations, I think it's just God's people. It's another way of describing the covenant people of God. They are nations. And they are kings and they are bringing their glory into it, meaning the diversity and the kind of unique strengths of every nation and tribe and cultures. We talk about America as a melting pot where we take the best ideas from the other cultures, which is usually their food, and we blend it into America and then we get rid of everything that we don't want.

I'm not saying heaven is America by any means, but in a similar way it's like the diversity of the world, the beauty of God's creation that spans the globe. If you go to other cultures, you just see the beauty of that and heaven is bringing all of that glory in and these kings, which there's no reason to think there can't be kingly positions in the new heavens and the new earth or millennial reign. There could be kings and people in authority. So they're bringing their leadership of their little parts of the world and they're bringing it into heaven and there heaven is becoming more glorious and more magnificent because of that diversity.

I think probably that's getting closer to what's going on. Just like in Revelation chapter 5, verse 9, it says that Jesus purchased people from every nation, every tribe, every tongue, every language. It says the same thing in chapter 7, verse 9. Over and over again John paints this relationship between God's promise to Abraham, "Through you the nations of the earth will be blessed," and the fulfillment of that promise in the New Jerusalem, where there literally are people from every tribe, tongue, and nation gathered around the throne, bringing praise to the Lamb.

That's what heaven is. It's the fulfillment of God's promise. All the promises in the Old Testament that he would restore his people, and through their restoration he would draw

people from among the nations to behold God's glory in the city that is to come. So the kings and nations point to the covenant people of God who were purchased by the Lamb, and this idea of walking in the light conveys their perfect obedience to God's will. They are shining bright. They are glorious because they are submitted to God's designs. And when you submit to God's designs in your life, you will begin to see the glory of God shine bright in your life.

If you do your marriage like God says do your marriage, your marriage will be a beautiful thing. If you do your finances like God says do your finances, your finances will be a wonderful thing. And people will look at your marriage and look at your finances and look at your children and they'll say that's amazing. That's beautiful. I wish my family was more like that. I wish my life was more content like that. That's the glory of God shining bright in your life. Well, heaven is that on steroids because all the nations over all the earth are perfectly submitted to God's design in all things.

It's a fulfillment of what God promised he would do in the Old Testament. One example of that is Isaiah chapter 60, which is in your notes. In Isaiah 60, this is where John's pulling from in Revelation 21 and 22. The Lord says through the prophet Isaiah, "Arise, shine, for your light has come." You remember that old song, "Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory"? I think that comes from this. Maybe not, I don't know. But "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord shines over you.

For look, darkness will cover the earth, and total darkness the peoples; but the Lord will shine over you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to your shining brightness." It's so fascinating. We don't have time to go through Isaiah 60, but I made a little chart that shows you the relationship between Isaiah 60 and Revelation 21. Over and over and over again, John is pulling from this text to describe the beauty of the eternal state that in heaven God's made good on that promise.

We kind of today live in this already not yet tension of God's kingdom being here already, already I'm forgiven of sin. Already the nations are coming to Christ. Already I can overcome the brokenness in my life. I can recover and restore God's original design for my marriage and my children, all these things. But not yet is it consummated. So not yet has death been destroyed. We still got to go to funerals, and not yet has the creation been redeemed because we still have cancer and brokenness and disease and not yet are all of God's promises made true, but Isaiah 60 is saying there's coming a day when that will happen.

And the way he describes it is the same way that John describes it. There's no need for sun or moon in both cases. The Gentiles come into your light in both cases. Kings will minister to you. The glory of Lebanon, that beauty of theirs, is going to now be heaven's beauty. "Your gates will be open all the time"—same thing in Revelation 21:25. "The wealth of the Gentiles will come to you," in verse 5 of chapter 60. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into you. Your people will be righteous.

There will be nothing unclean. Everything God promised in the Old Testament will be fulfilled in this eternal heaven. We talk about the already not yet tension. In heaven there is no more not yet. It's the end of not yet. We're waiting, we're wondering, when's it going to finally be better? When's it finally going to be like it's supposed to be? And we have this angst in the waiting. We wait on the Lord. The beauty of heaven, the promise of heaven is that there will not be any more not yet. It's the end of not yet.

Not yet will be over, and we will finally be home. You'll finally be able to breathe a sigh of relief. You'll finally be able to sit down and rest because it's finally come. It's the end of the temple, the end of all night, and the end of sin. God's people will be protected. They will be in the fullness of his presence, and the potential of a life fully submitted to God will be realized and shine brightly for all to see. That leads us to what is central in chapter 22, verse 1: "Then he showed me the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the city's main street.

The tree of life was on each side of the river, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations, and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him"—or serve him. "They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more; people will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever."

If you're really into English poetry, you know there's a poem by T. S. Eliot called the Four Quartets.[1] Has anybody ever read that poem before? That's about right. That's okay. I haven't read it either. But it's got this really beautiful line at the very beginning of the poem. It says, "In my beginning is my end." And then it goes on for like a day and a half with all of this poetry. Some of us don't love poetry, but it's okay. But at the very end of the line it says, "In my end is my beginning."

That's the best part of the poem. "In my beginning is my end." And then at the very end it says, "In my end is my beginning." And that's Revelation 22, verses 1 to 5. It is a— I don't know if you picked up on it, but it is a throwback to the beginning. It's a throwback to Genesis. In Genesis chapter 1 and 2 and 3, paradise was given, but then it was lost, right? They had everything. They were in the garden. They were walking with God. They could eat from any tree of the garden that they wanted to eat from, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

"Don't do that one. But everything else is yours." Paradise given, but lost, because they broke the one rule they weren't supposed to break. But in Revelation, you see the garden show back up. You see paradise regained and restored. Two trees of life, two rivers, sun and moon, all of that language is there. It's like you finally come home. It's like when you read Revelation 22, it's like, well, that sounds familiar. I've heard this before. It's kind of like

coming home when you finally get to where you belong and you can finally relax and sit down and be.

You don't have to be for anyone else. You can just be there in the moment with the Lord. That's what heaven is. Again, since I already did one chart, I'll do one more, but I just want to show you some of these parallels. Here's Genesis and here's Revelation. And you can do this for yourself. Just go back and compare. You have to flip your Bible around quite a bit. I suggest getting two Bibles, one open in Revelation and one open in Genesis. And you can see in Genesis 1:1, God created the heavens and the earth.

Revelation 21:1, there was a new heavens and a new earth. In chapter 1, verse 16 of Genesis, God made the two lights, the sun, the greater light, and the lesser light, the moon. But in Revelation 22, you see the sun and the moon are mentioned, but they don't really need to shine. It's like it's like home, but it's better than home. Chapter 2, verse 24, Adam and Eve get married. Remember Adam, he's like, "Whoa, man! Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. This is awesome." And God marries them and says, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

But in Revelation 21, the angel tells John, "Let me show you the bride of the Lamb." This is an even better bride. This is an even greater marriage. This will be an even greater consummation where people populate and they fill the earth. Chapter 2, verse 10 in Genesis, a river goes from Eden, it waters the garden, it divides into four other rivers. In Revelation 22:1,[2] there's a river of life; it flows from the throne of God himself. In Genesis 2:9, God causes every tree to grow out of the ground, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life.

In Revelation chapter 22, you see the tree of life again. And the river of life again. In Genesis 3, they see God's face and they hide from him because they know they've sinned against him. But in Revelation 22:5, they see God's face and they behold him and they are healed by the vision of the glory of God. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. It's Genesis restored, it's paradise restored. So I want to unpack that just a little bit and then we're going to be done.

The tree of life— I'm sorry, the river of life I think points to the end of our thirst. You ask, is there going to be a literal river in the literal heaven? I think so. Probably. I mean, we got to drink water somewhere. Our bodies may need water. Maybe they don't need water, I don't know, but I kind of like to think of the idea of there's a river, it says there's a river. Ezekiel chapter 47 talks about the future heaven as a river, this big river that goes through the main road of the city.

But even if it's a literal river, don't lose sight of what John's trying to communicate through the literal river, which is the end of our thirst. You can see Jesus in the Gospels when he

says, "Come to me, all of you who are thirsty," and I will give you what? Living water. I'll give you living water to drink from, and you'll what? Never thirst again. Because from deep within you will flow a living water— I botched the verse, I can't remember, but basically living water flows from deep within you. You're satisfied in Jesus.

It's the end of yearning, the end of longing. The tree of life, I think, points to the end of the curse because it's followed and it talks about the tree of life bearing fruit in every season, the leaves are the healing of the nations, and there will be no more what? Curse. If you go back to Genesis, the tree of life was a tree of immortality. They lived forever because of the tree of life, and they could eat from the tree of life, but whenever they ate from the other tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by the way, it wasn't an apple.

Might have been an apple. It could have been— I think it was probably a pear, because pears are kind of gross and they shouldn't have done that. They eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and what happens to them? You remember. They get kicked out of the garden. "You can't be here anymore." Why? "Because if you eat from the tree of life in your brokenness, you will be forever broken. So you've got to die, because I'd rather you die in your sin than live eternally in your broken state."

And God began his project of redemption, of neutralizing death and bringing new life in Christ. But the whole game originated with them eating from the tree they shouldn't eat from, and so they lost the tree of life. But in heaven the tree of life is restored. We can eat from the tree again. And this tree gives us immortality, this whole idea of living forever with God. But there is no brokenness anymore. We won't eat from the forbidden tree and the forbidden fruit because we will be transformed and healed as we were originally meant to be.

We will be unable to sin. Adam and Eve were sinless but able to sin. We will likewise be sinless, but not able to sin. We will never sin again. That's the idea, I think, of the curse being removed. All of the things that the curse makes difficult in our world will go away. It bears fruit in every season. It talks about the leaves being the healing of the nations. When I think about every season, in our day and age, you have trees that bear fruit in the spring and then they dry up in the winter.

And it's kind of like that cycle that we all are familiar with where things can be really awesome and great for a season and then that season putters out. Right? You buy a new car and it's super exciting for a season. And then it wears off after about six months. Right? Because now everybody else has that car. And I need to put some little running boards that are automatic on the bottom. It kind of renews the newness for another six months and then it fades again. New marriage. Whew, so exciting, so great.

Love of your life. It'll never be different. And then about six, eight, ten months that wears off. And then you go another six, eight, ten years, and then it's really wearing off and it's starting

to need some maintenance and fan it into flame and recreate, rejuvenate, restore what's fading because that's the curse. New kids get old, you know. They get born, they're so awesome, cute little things, especially if you don't have to change their diaper very often. But then they get older and the curse is there. And they get an attitude and they start saying things you never thought you'd hear them say.

I liked you better when you were a baby and you couldn't talk, you know. That's the curse. We all feel it. We all know it. It's all good for a while and then it putters out. Not so in heaven. In heaven it's fruit in every season. Winter's always coming in our culture, but there is no winter there. It's the end of everything the curse made bad. Everything the curse broke is untrue in this new heaven and this new earth. The leaves are the healing of the nations. Some say we're going to eat from the leaves as if our bodies need sustenance.

And I think, well I'm not a vegetarian, so I guess I won't enjoy heaven. But I don't know that our bodies will even need food. You know, Jesus ate fish in his resurrected body, but I don't know that he actually needed it. Which brings a question: do you have to take a potty break in heaven? Are there digestive systems in heaven? These are things that we don't need to talk about today, but things that we raise. Is a potty break part of the curse? Some would argue so. Everything the curse broke will be undone.

And notice it says at the end there, his servants will serve him or his servants will worship him. Heaven is not floating around singing songs all day. Heaven is labor. There was labor in the garden before the curse. You guys know this, right? Adam and Eve toiled, they worked in the garden. So heaven is not like perpetual vacation mode, but heaven is work mode but enjoyable. There's nothing that feels quite as good as a mowed yard. You look at your yard that you just mowed and it just feels nice. You got to sweat a little bit to do it, but that feeling of enjoyment and pride and "I did something valuable"—that's heaven without the brokenness, without the toil, without the curse.

They will serve the Lord and they will enjoy serving him because they will enjoy creation as it was originally meant to be. In heaven, we finally make it home where we belong. It's the end of our thirst. It's the end of the curse. We will enjoy creation as it was originally meant to be, and then finally we will see the face of God. They will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. We will see the face of God, and seeing the face of God points to the end of our searching.

Everybody's searching for something in this world. Oh, it's Johnny Lee[3] saying we're looking for love in all the wrong places. Your eating disorder stems from a search and you not being able to find what you're looking for. Your addiction to alcohol or prescription painkillers or whatever it is that has you in the throes of addiction, is motivated because of a search that you've been on since you've been born, but you can't find what you're looking for. Going to man after man or woman after woman or marriage after marriage and never being content is

because you're searching for something that you are trying to find in those people, you're trying to find it in sex, you're trying to find it in all these things, but it's not satisfying you because you weren't made to look upon that person or those things or that experience to be healed.

You were made to look upon the face of God and be healed. You were made to look upon his face and to see that he knows you and he loves you and he's redeemed you and you belong to him and he's with you and in that moment you will be healed from every angst and every desire and every yearning and every unsettled, restless spirit you'll finally be able to rest because you were made to see his face. It'll be the end of your searching. As the old hymn says, face to face with Christ my Savior, face to face, what will it be when with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ who died for me?

Face to face I shall behold him far beyond the starry sky. Face to face in all his glory I shall see him by and by Only faintly now I see him, with the darkling veil between, but a better day is coming when his glory shall be seen. John says,[4] "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure." This is where our treasure is. There was a time probably 30 to 40 years ago where people would talk about Revelation and they would talk about heaven and they would debate the timing of the rapture, debate the nature of the millennium, debate the antichrist and the one-world government and all of that stuff.

And it got messy. It got so crazy. In fact, I listened to one guy on YouTube, this was early on in my study of the book of Revelation, but he had changed his view on the rapture, and he was telling his congregation, because he taught the view, and his congregation got kicked out of their association— of their state association. They got kicked out of their state association because he changed his view on the rapture. And he basically told his congregation, you guys can either keep me as your pastor and let's get out of the association or you can stay in the association and get rid of your pastor.

What's it going to be? They didn't have the answer in the YouTube video. I've always wondered what happened to that guy. But the point is we got so wrapped up in details that ultimately are secondary. It's not that they're not important, they're just secondary. And what happened is to a lot of younger people like my generation, we looked at that and said, I don't want to touch Revelation, I don't want to look at the future, let's not talk about heaven. That's kind of the crazy part of our faith anyway. And you know, we want to lead with what's reasonable, and we stop talking about our hope.

And in neglecting those things, I think that's why we suffer from a lack of power and motivation and living in the present. We were made for this future. This future is our hope. And there's a relationship between your future hope and your present-day obedience. And so we've got to stop neglecting these things and start meditating on these things. Because in them we'll find the motivation we need to live the lives that God has called us to live. In

heaven we will be healed by God's glory, in heaven we will be a people prepared for his presence, and in heaven we will be given what our hearts have always deeply desired, and that's God himself.

What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see. I will look upon his face, the one who saved me by his grace. He will take me by the hand and lead me to the Promised Land. What a day, glorious day that will be. So as we conclude our time and Taylor comes up, you may be here this morning and you're not ready for that day because you're not in Christ. It's only for those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. And the way you get written in the book of life is to repent of your sin and put your faith in Jesus as Lord.

There are people who say Christians are judgmental and mean and narrow-minded because they only believe that Christians go to heaven. But if you read the Bible, the only people who would want to be in heaven are Christians. Because the main attraction of heaven is Jesus Christ. He's the biggest deal. Like we're going for him. So if you're not about Jesus, you don't want Jesus, you don't want heaven. And C. S. Lewis said, there will be people on this earth who say to God, "Thy will be done," and they repent of sin and trust in Jesus as Lord.

And then there will be those to whom God says, "Okay, thy will be done." If you want to reject him, reject him and suffer the consequences eternally, and you'll live forever separated from the God who made you in the heaven that's been prepared for you. The only way in is by repenting of sin, recognizing Jesus is King, I'm not. And I can't save myself, but he has already done the work. He's already died for your sins. He's already raised from the dead. He's coming again. What's required of you is faith to repent of your sin and to trust him in the meantime.

And to live the life he's called you to live in the power of the Holy Spirit with the hope of heaven as your motivation. So if you've never made that decision, I would invite you to make that decision this morning. There'll be a time of response that we're going to enter into after I pray. You can use the phone to scan the QR code and give us your information and say I want to talk to a pastor. You can come down to the front if you want and say I want to decide today.

I want to give my life to Jesus. Most of us probably in the room are believers, but I want to challenge you to start thinking about heaven again and to start thinking about the second coming. And to not, in an overreaction against some bad excesses, deny the power of the gospel. And the power of the gospel isn't just in looking back to what Jesus did on the cross. It's in looking forward to what he will do. You need both. You look back to your redemption, your sanctification, your justification, but you look forward to a glorification, the renewal of all things, and it will give you motivation and hope to endure through the present.

So as we respond, would you just ask the Lord to give you a compelling picture of the future so that I can live as you call me to live in the present. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time and your word. And we thank you for the Scripture which gives us true knowledge about what will one day be. And we repent for being embarrassed by it or just avoiding it altogether, not reading our Bibles in general and not reading to the end in particular. Would you help us to recover the hope that first-century church had and how it enabled them to live sacrificial obedient lives, even in the face of great persecution and suffering, because we need to be that kind of people in our day and age today, not just so we can survive, but so we can point others to the life giving power that is in Jesus' name, and the contentment and satisfaction that comes from having him as our living hope.

And so would you work in us now by your spirit as we respond and we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: the lines "In my beginning is my end" and "In my end is my beginning" open and close "East Coker," the second of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, rather than the whole work. Left as spoken. Source: T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, "East Coker" (fadedpage.com edition). ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "Genesis 22:1" and "Genesis chapter 22"; the river and tree of life he is describing are in Revelation 22:1–2. Source: Revelation 22:1–2 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "Tanya Tucker"; "Lookin' for Love" ("looking for love in all the wrong places") was recorded by Johnny Lee (1980, *Urban Cowboy* soundtrack). Source: Wikipedia, "Lookin' for Love." ↩
4. Transcript note: spoken as "Peter says"; "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure" is 1 John 3:3. Source: 1 John 3:3 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩