

“LOST”: More Than Must-See TV
“Let Go ... Move On”
July 3/4, 2010

PRELUDE – Instrumental

Worship Songs – Sweetly Broken / Hold Us Together / Greeting

Feature Song – “Heaven”

DVD Clip – ADDICTED COMMERCIAL (1.5 min)

Commercial-parody “Perspective”

B: black up to couch

E: Perspective” logo

If you were a fan of LOST, I’m sure you – or the people around you – can relate to that!

Good morning, everyone ... happy to see you on this July fourth. Thank you for hanging in there for this fourth and final week of our series “LOST: More Than Must-See TV” ... in which we are using one of the most-watched television series in history to help us see and comprehend biblical truth from a slightly different angle.

Today we’re going to take a look at the final show of the series which was broadcast on Sunday evening May 23rd. And, I’m curious, how many of you saw the final episode of LOST? Oh man, we’re in trouble this morning.

Actually, we’re not, because I’m going to explain it all – well, at least *all that you need to know for the purposes of this message*. Of course, if you *did* see the finale, I’m sure that you had some kind of reaction to it – especially if you were a serious fan of LOST. That’s because for weeks following the final show, forums and blogs were filled with commentary from viewers ... and some of those viewers went so far as to post their reactions to the finale on YouTube. We have a few of those here for you this morning – let’s watch.

DVD Clip - MONTAGE (0.9 min)

various YouTube clips

B: Guy: “They said ...”

E: “LOST” logo / boom

Those were some of the reactions, and I think some of those folks need a little *Perspective* too!

Anyway ... the reason we’re going to focus on the finale is because more than any other show of LOST’s six seasons, the final episode made a statement concerning ultimate spiritual reality: *the life that comes after this life* or, Heaven.

And the way LOST did that was highly creative. In fact, for the entire sixth season, viewers were actually seeing that “statement” without realizing that’s what they were seeing. Let me explain what I mean by that.

As Season Five came to a close ...

Jack had convinced the remaining survivors that their only hope was to blow up the center of the Island's electromagnetism ...

... and that, by doing so, everything that had happened to them – the plane crash, the Island experience, the leaving-the-Island-only-to-return experience ... all of that stuff would be undone. They would get a chance at “another life” (and we talked about *that* idea two weeks ago).

And, of course, Season Five ends with a cliffhanger.

At first the bomb that Jack wants to set off doesn't go off, then one of the characters hits it with a rock and there's a huge flash – *something* happens, but we don't have any idea of what that something is until the beginning of Season Six.

Actually, we don't really know then, either. Listen as the show's producers and actors describe the mystery of Season Six.

DVD Clip - SEASON SIX MYSTERY (2.2 min)

Season 6 Finale Pre-show

B: fade up to Juliette

E: Claire: "Thank you"

So, why *do* these differences exist?

As *I* watched the first few episodes of Season Six, *I* thought the writers were pulling a really long con on the viewers. I thought, at the end in the finale, the writers were going to communicate – “OK, we showed you three possible outcomes at the beginning of the season:

1. Jack's plan worked and everything was reset. (The plane didn't crash; the Island never happened for them; and they all lived happily ever after).
2. Everything blew up; the Island sank; everyone died instantly.
3. Jack's plan didn't work and they were stuck on the Island until they eventually died.

“We showed you three possible outcomes,” I thought the writers would communicate, “but now, because you have *free will* (which was a huge theme of the show), *you* decide which storyline *you* think happened. *You* choose how you want it to be. We're done. The end.”

Thankfully, that it is not how it ended because if it had ended that way I would not have been a very happy camper!

Why It Matters

Of course, at this point, some of you are probably thinking “ummm, Rick ... this is church ... we have a Bible ... so why do we care about how LOST ended?”

Well, we care – at least, I care, because, as I said, the ending of LOST made a strong statement about the nature of spiritual reality – specifically, a statement about the reality of life after this life; the reality about Heaven. And I think those of us who are Christians (and who understand that part of our calling is to point people to Christ) need to pay attention whenever there is a significant cultural statement about the nature of spiritual reality.

But I don't think that just because it seems like a good idea to me. I think that because that's what the Apostle Paul thought.

The book of Acts tells us that after he began to preach about Jesus of Nazareth in the city of Athens, Paul was then given the opportunity to speak at a large gathering of its leading citizens. This is what he said to them:

“Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’

This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about.”
Acts 17:22-23 (NLT)

Paul was paying attention to their culture. From all the shrines and altars everywhere, he realized that the people were highly attuned to spiritual reality. So, he used one of their expressions of that interest – the altar to the Unknown God – to tell them about *the* God and what he had done in Jesus.

“This God who you don't yet know,” Paul went on to say ...

“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples.”
Acts 17:24 (NLT)

“He doesn't need your altar and your shrine because they cannot contain him.”

“And this God wants something,” Paul said.

“His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. Acts 17:27 (NLT)

“For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ And since this is true, we shouldn't think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. Acts 17:28-29 (NLT)

“God overlooked people's ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. Acts 17:30 (NLT)

“He has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.” Acts 17:31 (NLT)

What Paul is saying to this crowd is “you're on to something. Your altar to the Unknown God is evidence that you're picking up something within your spirit. And some of it you've interpreted correctly” (and Paul affirms that); “but some of it ... well, you're off just a bit” (and Paul gently corrects that – “this God isn't a sculpture that you can make”); “and some of it you do not yet know” (and Paul tells them what has been revealed through

what Jesus of Nazareth did in his death and then in his resurrection).

See, Paul takes a popular cultural expression of spiritual curiosity and interest and uses it to point people to Christ. And *that* is why I care about what LOST says about ultimate spiritual reality. LOST is like that shrine to the Unknown God in Athens. It is an expression of the spiritual awareness of people in our culture.

And specifically, in the finale ...

What LOST presents – in one of the most creative and moving forms of television ever seen – is what many, many people in our culture hope for, long for and believe about the afterlife.

So, I want to try to do what Paul did with the spiritual people of Athens: to affirm where the message of LOST aligns with what God has revealed in Christ and to gently correct where it does not, so that, some of us may be better pointed to Christ.

And I think it's important to do that with popular expressions of spirituality in general but, with LOST, I think it's even *more* important because a lot of people who watched the finale thought that what they were seeing was the Christian perspective on Heaven and ultimate spiritual reality. After all, as we'll see, the pivotal character in the final scenes is Jack Shephard's father who just happens to be named "Christian." *Christian Shephard* – I mean, you can't get much more symbolic than that!

In fact, if you watched the Jimmy Kimmel show which immediately followed the finale, you heard Jimmy very clearly connect what he had just seen with Christianity. Listen closely as he discusses his "theory" with Matthew Fox, who played the character of Jack Shephard.

Let's watch.

DVD Clip - KIMMEL THEORY (1.1 min)

Jimmy Kimmel Show (following the finale)

B: Kimmel: "I want to present you ... with my theory"

E: Applause.

Kimmel is right about LOST. It is Jack's "test" that determines where Jack will spend eternity.

But is he right about *Christianity*? Is life on Earth a test that determines where we'll spend eternity?

Another Life

We'll talk about that in just a bit, but let's *let go* of that for now and *move on* to the vision of "ultimate spiritual reality" that was presented in the finale. I want to show you several clips that illustrate it and then we'll assess it.

Now, in order to *understand* these clips you need to remember what we just heard the producers say: that there are two storylines running throughout Season Six. One takes place on the Island. One takes place in Los Angeles. The question is ... how are the two storylines related?

Let's watch a clip that will begin to answer it. In this scene (which takes place in the L.A. storyline) Jack is supposed to meet up with his teenage son at a concert but he's late and misses it. However, he *does* meet up with someone else ... someone he can't quite place ... someone who is obviously looking for him.

Here we go.

DVD Clip - DO I KNOW YOU? (1.9 min)

Season 6 Finale

B: Jack standing, female voice says "it's over."

E: Jack looking at Kate (fades)

Obviously, Kate is "enlightened" but Jack is not – at least, not yet. Somehow, *she* is completely aware of what happened on the Island but Jack is stunned to discover that he has memories of her and apparently even had a relationship with her.

So, in the L.A. life, some of the characters are aware of the Island life and some are not. Now, hang in here with me if this is a little confusing ... it's going to get real clear in this next scene where enlightened Kate takes unenlightened Jack to the church where his father's funeral is to be held. And this is significant because the reason Jack was on Oceanic Flight 815 in the first place was to bring his deceased father's body home to L.A. And in this storyline, he has accomplished that mission and now it's time for the funeral.

Watch what happens as Jack goes into the part of the church where the casket is ... and makes another amazing discovery.

DVD Clip - JACK REMEMBERS (3.4 min)

Season 6 Finale

B: Shot of bookcase with religious stuff

E: Shot of Jack's face embracing his dad

So what does Jack discover? That not only did his father die *he, too, died* ... which means that everything that takes place in the L.A. storyline is somehow happening after everyone has died. The plane landing; people going on with their lives in some form or fashion; the concert that Jack was going to ... *it's all taking place in the afterlife.*

Now, that's a little shocking to discover because, to the viewers, it seemed that both of those stories were happening simultaneously, but they were not.

We thought what we were seeing was this:

<Life on the Island>

<Life in L.A.>

Time ----->

It looked like life on the Island was happening at the same time as life in L.A. Somehow the people existed in both places at the same time.

But, what we were really seeing was this:

<Island life> <death at some point for everyone> <L.A. Life>

Time ----->

We were seeing what happened in Island life – where Jack’s bomb did *not* work – and *also* what happened many years later after all of them died and together wound up in the afterlife; a place that looked a lot like L.A. where they didn’t really know each other – at least, not at first, but eventually, they discovered they knew each other.

As to how and why that happened ... that’s explained as Jack questions his father in this next scene. Let’s watch.

DVD Clip - WHERE ARE WE? (1.8 min)

Season 6 Finale

B: Jack: "Are you real?"

E: Christian: "... let go." (fades)

Ok, now we’re getting somewhere. Now, we’re beginning to understand LOST’s take on “ultimate spiritual reality” ... the afterlife, Heaven, whatever you want to call it.

In fact, in the interest of clarity, let’s put a few of the ideas we heard on the screen.

1. Everything that happened on the Island was real (not purgatory as many fans believed).
2. His Dad said, there is no such thing as “now” here (wherever “here” is).
3. The afterlife is a place where people somehow make that together (people who were connected in the most significant part of life) so they can find one another. (“Nobody does it alone”).
4. The goal is to remember and to let go so you can move on.

Now, of that list, only the first two statements could be described as being consistent with Christianity.

Specifically, this life that we live right now, on this little island called earth ... is real. It’s not an illusion. It’s not a consciousness experience. In addition, the life immediately after this life – the experience in God’s presence right after we die – is outside of time. There is no such thing as “now” in eternity ... which is why God “knows the end from the beginning” as the scripture says. He is outside of time. He is not constrained by the beginning and the end.

Those two statements are pretty consistent with what Christianity teaches. But, the idea that we somehow make an afterlife with people who were the most significant and that the goal in that afterlife is to remember and let go so you can move on to whatever is next is *most definitely not* a Christian idea. It actually comes from Tibetan Buddhismⁱ if you really want to know.

But, “moving on” is the way it all ends in LOST. Jack tells his father that Kate said that once he “understood,” then they would be leaving. But Christian says, “No, not leaving ... moving on.”

“Where are we going, Dad?” Jack wants to know.

“Let’s go find out,” Christian says, and he leads Jack into the church sanctuary.

And what happens next is one of the most amazing things I’ve ever seen on TV, not only because it weaves the afterlife scene with the scene of Jack’s death on the Island (after he saves it and makes it possible for the remaining survivors to escape). It’s amazing because it captures so well the emotion of the moment I think we all long for in the end.

Get your Kleenex ready. Here we go.

DVD Clip - INTO THE LIGHT (3.9 min)

Season 6 Finale

B: Jack's hand reaches out to Desmond

E: LOST title fades to black

Isn’t that what we all hope happens at the end? That we’re reunited with the people who mean the most to us; with our “Christian Shepherd” – who is Christ the Lord, who is also our Heavenly Father – leading us into another life?

But as wonderful as that scene is, I think what God has in store for us is even better than that.

As the Apostle Paul once put it:

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 (NIV)

And, so, as we close out this message and this series, let me share a few things with you that have been revealed by the Holy Spirit and written in the scriptures for our encouragement and our benefit as it pertains to this particular issue. And as we go through these things, I think you’ll see where LOST really gets it right and where it kind of misses. The good news, I think, is that much of what we saw here is consistent with the hope that we have in Christ.

First of all – and LOST definitely gets this right.

1. No one goes to Heaven alone – it’s a communal and community experience.

And that’s a theme that goes all the way back to the very beginning of the show: we have to learn to live together or we’re going to die alone. And in Heaven, according to the Bible, we’re going to live together with all the other redeemed of Christ.

The Apostle John, writing the vision of the end of time granted to him by the Spirit describes the opening scene like this:

I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like

loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride [the church; the fellowship of all who believe] has made herself ready.

John continues:

Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (Jesus)!'" Revelation 19:6-8 (NIV)

A great multitude ... a great feast and celebration ... and what follows into eternity ... all of that is done *in community* ... which is why, I think, there is such a great emphasis in the NT on learning to live together with other people because that's how it's going to be in the life after this life, specifically, when Jesus returns. It's going to be community.

And, I think LOST gets that right.

However, that said ... I think it also needs to be said that,

2. Heaven is not a small group experience (and there is no such thing as an “individualized heaven”).

I mentioned this before. The idea of a Heaven or an afterlife experience that you and I and our little circle of friends somehow magically create ourselves is not found in scripture. And *thank God* for that because given what a mess we've created here in *this* life, I'd be happy to let God create the afterlife!

Anyway, what comes after this life is not a small group experience. If we do get to be part of that, the Bible says that we will join in with every person of every nation of every time who knows and trusts him.

Another thing that I think LOST gets right is that ...

3. Heaven is not an experience of “the spirit.”

It's not an experience in which our spirit is forever separated from our body, as if our body is somehow a prison from which we must be set free.

Remember when Jack asked his father “are you real?”

“Yeah, I'm real,” Christian said.

And with everyone Jack saw there were tears and embraces and words and hearing and touching ... all activities of the physical realm, which is different from what a lot of people – Christians, especially – believe. A lot of people believe that they're going to live as a “spirit being” (whatever that is) in some completely different realm for all of eternity.

But the Bible paints a very different picture. When Christ returns and the true afterlife begins, the Bible says that we who have trusted in him are going to be raised in new physical bodies that can live forever.

Paul writes:

Our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Then, [when this happens] when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” 1 Corinthians 15:53-55 (NLT)

See, death isn't beaten by a resurrection of the spirit (which is a logically meaningless statement). Death is only swallowed up *if* what death destroys is renewed and restored and regenerated to be as it was meant to be when God first created us. Death is only swallowed up if the life after this one is a physical existence.

And I like that in LOST you get a glimpse of what that might look like. Remember the scene? Jack dies terribly wounded from his battle on the Island, but then in the afterlife he is completely restored physically. And, the Bible says that's the way it's going to be for us.

But, that said, one thing I think that LOST doesn't show us very well – not that we would expect it to because it's not a Christian TV show or a sermon – something it doesn't show us well is that the ultimate destination of the afterlife is this Earth. I mean, it's really cool how in that last scene the church fills with light and Christian Shephard steps into the light and all the characters are enveloped in light ... *but ...* being enveloped in the light (even though the Bible says that God is light) is *not* the ultimate state of being. The Bible does *not* teach that we're going to become one with the Cosmic Mind that is God and subsumed in him. Instead, the Bible says just the opposite is going to happen.

John writes:

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 ...

"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live 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."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"
Revelation 21:1-4 (NIV)

In the ultimate life after life we don't get enveloped into the light that is God. The light that is God comes to live in the realm of humanity and makes everything new. We get the ultimate do-over in a world He creates without the curse of sin. What a wonderful day it will be!

Was Jimmy Right?

Now, there are other things that could be said about this, but I think you get enough of the picture here. I think you can see where LOST really does get it and where maybe it – and, more importantly, our culture – is a little bit off.

Of course, practically speaking, the most important issue right now in this moment is whether or not Jimmy Kimmel was right. *Is our life a test we have to pass in order to go to Heaven?*

I guess it depends on how you look at it. If there is a test, according to Christianity, it's not a test of what we *do*, which is a good thing because if that's the test, we would all fail. If there is a test – and I'm not sure that's the best way to put it, the test is a test of faith – will we put our trust not in what we have done, but in what God has done in Christ?

Listen to how the Bible describes “passing the test,” if there is such a thing:

When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:4-7 (NIV)

If we pass this test, we pass not because of us, but because of Jesus.

In other words ...

Redemption in the life to come is possible not because of what *we do*, but because of what *Christ did*.

And if there is a test ... it's a test of whether or not we will give our hearts and our lives and our faith to him, instead of trying to do it ourselves.

As we close today, I want to give some of you a chance to say yes to what Jesus has done for you, because, I suspect that maybe some of what Paul was trying to do in Athens, preaching about the “unknown god”, maybe that's happened for some of you as you've seen this LOST thing. It's kind of different, not straight Bible teaching, and maybe you're hearing the message in a different way and you're thinking, “I get it.” So, I want to give you an opportunity now to turn to Christ and accept him as your Savior. Let him pass the test for you.

And some of you have done that years or months ago, so I want to give you an opportunity, as I pray, to reflect on that and celebrate that and remember “this is why I'm accepted in Christ.”

Let's pray.

Feature Song – “All Things New”

Endnotes

ⁱ See <http://jezebel.com/5546559/lost-finale-recap-case-closed>