

---

# The Picture of Glory

Text *Select texts*  
Date/Series *2015.4.12/You Will Appear With Him in Glory*  
Author *Devon Berry*

## Introduction

As Ethan very helpfully introduced this morning, the title of this series is *You Will Appear With Him in Glory*. Glory, as we saw, is the character of God shining out of the person of Christ. The fullness of this glory will be experienced in a place - that place is sometimes also referred to as "glory" because it will be so dominated by this core element of the triune Godhead. More frequently, the place is referred to as "heaven." Tonight, and in future sermons, we are going to be considering the glory of the triune godhead in the place of glory, namely heaven.

Heaven... has been a popular topic at various times throughout history. And for many of us, it may conjure up many different ideas. If I asked you to take a look at, say, a picture of the tree of life (which will be in heaven<sup>1</sup>) and said, "Yup, there it is, the tree of life, you'll spend eternity with it," you might understandably think to yourself, "But I thought there was so much more!" And for many, perhaps most, your minds would wander to the light of God's glory<sup>2</sup>, the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven<sup>3</sup>, the river of the water of life with its 12 kinds of fruit<sup>4</sup>, the twelve gates made of pearl<sup>5</sup>, etc. And you would fill out a picture of many more architectural, geographic, and celestial features. This, for you, may be what you think of when you think of heaven.

I in no way want to take those things away from you for they certainly are plainly stated in the text of Revelation. As to whether or not we should expect a 1:1 correspondence between these descriptions and the actual conscience experience of heaven, we can save for a different sermon. However, what we are not saving for a different sermon is a challenge - a challenge to this idea of being in the presence of God's glory, that is heaven, as something that is primarily about being in a place.

Consider Jesus' conversation with Peter just after he has washed the disciples feet and Judas has left to go do his evil deeds... The sense of apprehension among the disciples is beginning to peak. Jesus has told them, ...

*'Where I am going you cannot come.'... Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now,*

---

<sup>1</sup> Revelation 22:2  
<sup>2</sup> Revelation 21:23  
<sup>3</sup> Revelation 21:10  
<sup>4</sup> Revelation 22:1  
<sup>5</sup> Revelation 21:21

but you will follow afterward... Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also<sup>6</sup>.

Are Peter and Jesus having a conversation about God the Father's uber mansion? Is that the emphasis? Is that what Peter really needs or wants to know? Jesus' response focuses on the key issue: Where, again, does Jesus say he is taking them? Verse 3, *I will come again and will take you to myself...* and why is he taking them? Verse 3, *that where I [Jesus] am you may be also (emphasis added)*. What Peter wants to know, what Peter needs to know is if he can be with Jesus... What about the Father's house then? It is first and foremost a statement of comfort - Jesus says that there is room for Peter and for all of those that the Father has given him. If you were to continue reading, you would see that Jesus emphasis on *himself* - not the mansion - continues into conversations with Thomas and Philip on the same topic.

In some ways I feel we could briefly clarify this point and call it a night. Our main point is captured in this short conversation recorded by John. Heaven is "a place" but just as has been true throughout all of redemptive history, all of Scripture, the place is not about "the place" it is about a relationship of worship with a person. "The place" is a reflection of what is true about that worship-relationship, but in and of itself, the place is not the point. [Illustration - Dad's 75th birthday]

The Scriptures have so much more to say and the picture that is painted is far more vast than this single conversation between Jesus and Peter. Tonight, I want to make a short survey of the whole canon of Scripture in attempt to give you the big picture when it comes to how God has used places with respect to his worship-relationship with his people throughout redemptive history. The beauty and consoling nature of this big picture is such that I pray you will brood over it for many hours to come to your soul's great benefit. Let's pray. [PRAY].

## Outfitting for the Journey

To prepare ourselves for this journey, I need to quickly give you a few basic understandings that will help you prepare you for the trip. The first is the Bible's view of history and time. Although God is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting<sup>7</sup>, the creation as we know it, is not. It had a distinct beginning<sup>8</sup> and some aspects of it will have a distinct end<sup>9</sup>. And time is flowing in one direction between these two points, from beginning to end. In other words, there is a linear chronology to God's providence. History, as we interface with it, is not circular, it is not dashes and dots, it is not a crazy random squiggle, it is as God has constructed it for our lived experience, a line with an

---

<sup>6</sup> John 13:33-14:3

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 90:2

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 1

<sup>9</sup> Revelation 21

arrow on one end. Just as you experience each and every day, so goes the history of this world AND the history of redemption in which it is embedded<sup>10</sup>.

Second, it is important to call attention to the idea of pattern. It too is embedded in our lived experience, in all of creation. In his infinite wisdom, God has given us patterns to make accessible his purposes in both his general and special revelation. It begins simultaneously with the creation record in Genesis 1. Most simply we see it in literary approach of the author, *And God said... And God said... And God said...* but we also see it in myriad other ways - ways that we talk about all the time at the Chapel - disorder to order, darkness to light, word to reality, concealed to revealed, and we could go on and on.

It is at the intersection of these two ideas, history and patterns, that we want to approach our topic tonight. If God uses patterns to reveal his purpose and if redemptive history is moving from a beginning to an end, then we should be able to increasingly understand something of God's intention as we note patterns through the progression of time. Mark 12, in the context of a parable, is a very condensed, but helpful, example of what this intersection can look like again and again throughout Scripture:

12 Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. 2 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. 5 He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. 6 "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 7 "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8 So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. 9 "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. 10 Haven't you read this passage of Scripture: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; 11 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'"

In this short parable there is the passage of time, there is a pattern, and together this reveals something about the Lord's plans and purposes. Namely, that because of Israel's repeated refusal to have God as their king, there is a coming judgment and expansion of the kingdom. In our case, thinking together about what it means to be with him in glory, if we pay attention to the patterns revealed in the Scriptures over time, we should be better able to understand the Lord's plans and purposes.

## Time, Pattern, and Purpose

So, as we begin to move through time and notice patterns, particularly with regard to *where* God meets his people, keep in mind the main question that I framed earlier as a challenge: Is God's primary purpose in redeeming us to bring us to a place? Or is the

---

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 1:1-10

place a reflection of what God has ordained as being the “right” environment for our worship-relationship with him. Is heaven about streets of gold and gates of pearl or something else?

## Garden

Let’s start then at the very beginning, in the garden. In Genesis 1:26 and following we see God create man. Different than all the rest of creation, God creates him in his own image and gives him dominion over creation. Further, he places him in the Garden and enters into relationship with him as a personal God. He does not do this with any other part of creation. Only man. They talk, they interact, God gives Adam work, God gives Adam warnings, God gives Adam commands, God blesses Adam with Eve, God walks among them...<sup>11</sup> God is living with his people in a manner that is characterized by intimacy, access, and purity. There is no sin. There is no barrier. There is no separation. God and man are together in a right worship-relationship - face to face. For those of you who have taken the ABE or youth class called God’s Big Picture - this is God’s people in God’s place basking in the full benefit of God’s rule and blessing. *So, the garden is the ideal place to reflect this status of the worship-relationship between man and God - it is creation un-tarnished, relationship un-damaged and worship un-polluted.*

But man sins. This sin results in serious changes. The intimacy that Adam and Eve once enjoyed with God begins to deteriorate immediately as the effects of sin begin to spread - within one generation man is openly rebelling against God<sup>12</sup>. God banishes mankind from the Garden. And in addition to the blessing of God in creation, a curse is now added. Yet even in that curse are the seeds of an intended restoration<sup>13</sup>. But a restoration of what?

What we will begin to see as we move forward is that although the places that God meets his people change, the purpose of the meeting place remains the same - an environment that reflects and provides for our worship-relationship with him. So Eden, as awesome as it must be, is not where we are headed back to. In fact, in other biblical references to Eden we see that it becomes a kind of placeholder for an *idea*, even a memory, of when all was right between God and man<sup>14</sup>. God’s plan is not to get us back to Eden. It is to restore the purity, intimacy, and access of the worship-relationship that was enjoyed in Eden. But... it can never be Eden again for Eden was a place without a history of sin.

## Tabernacle

On our way to our next “place” we should note in passing another pattern, almost a mantra, a drumbeat that is set into motion with God’s promise to Abraham. It sounds like many variations on this basic idea, *I will be your God and you will be my people*<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 2:15 - 3:12

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 4

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 3:15

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 51:1-3 “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord... 3 The Lord will surely *comfort* Zion and will look with *compassion* on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. *Joy* and *gladness* will be found in her, *thanksgiving* and the *sound of singing*. (emphasis added)

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 17, Exodus 26:12

This resolve of God's to restore to himself a people drives the relentless progression of redemptive history - praise God for his persistence.

This brings us to the Tabernacle. We now enter into an era where, due to sin, relationship with God is no longer characterized by the intimacy, access, and purity that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden. Instead, there is formality, ritual, impurity that must be continually atoned for, symbolism in the absence of the face to face. Rather than God's personal nature being emphasized as it was in the Garden, his holiness - that which now *separates* us from him - is emphasized. Yet, God does not shut his people out. He begins to make a way for them to approach him and be near him. *So, for a time, the tabernacle is the ideal place to reflect the status of the worship-relationship between man and God. Creation is now cursed through death, relationship is deeply broken, and worship must be continually mediated through sacrifice because it is impure.*

Of the tabernacle God says to Moses, *And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst... There [at the ark] I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel*<sup>16</sup>. Doesn't sound like the garden anymore, does it? God was no longer dwelling with his people naturally. Sin had destroyed the relationship. To put it bluntly, man was required to approach God through the gore of slaughtered animals - the smell of death and burning flesh was continually in the air of the tabernacle. The garden was no longer the right place - it was a place of life.

Yet, even in the the distancing of relationship that occurred, God's purpose remained the same. As God gives instruction about how the priests who would serve in the tabernacle were to be prepared, or consecrated, he states that in the midst of their performance of the sacrificial rites, *I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought the out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God*<sup>17</sup>. God - determined to restore relationship with us - makes a way. But this "way" reflects a new reality in a post-sin era. *But...* he is not done. His plan is to *fully* restore relationship. Hebrews 9:6-14 - which we will not turn to now - makes it completely clear that that this form of tabernacle-mediated relationship was not where God intended to leave things. Time would pass, the patterns would continue, and God's plan would unfold.

## Temple & Jerusalem

After the tabernacle came the temple. The temple in many ways is very similar to the tabernacle in its form and in the practices that took place there. And again, God makes it clear that the temple was to be a place where the worship-relationship between himself and his people could be mediated. In 2 Chronicles when Solomon is dedicating the newly built temple he asks God to dwell in the temple<sup>18</sup> and God responds in a dream to Solomon,

---

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 25:8, 22

<sup>17</sup> Exodus 29:45-46

<sup>18</sup> 2 Chronicles 6:41

12 Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. 13 When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, 14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.

This was very similar to the tabernacle excepting one significant difference. The tabernacle was mobile. It was designed for a people who had no place to call home. The temple, in contrast, was a fixed edifice of great proportions and it was located in the city of Jerusalem on Mount Moriah<sup>19</sup>. Now, Israel had a permanent home, a capital city, a great king, and a powerful nation. Despite this significant upgrade in "place" the main purpose of God's redemption had still not been accomplished. In fact, almost nothing had changed with regard to the way the worship-relationship between God and man played out. It was through the blood of thousands upon thousands of sacrifices that God's people were required to come to God. Furthermore, the seeming permanency of the temple was only illusion... while it did last a long time, several hundred years, it was eventually utterly destroyed and pillaged along with the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel<sup>20</sup>. The place designed for God's people to engage him in relationship was gone. *So, for a time, the temple was the ideal place to reflect the status of the worship-relationship between man and God. It pointed toward something far more stable and permanent than the tabernacle - yet, creation remained cursed through death, relationship remained deeply broken, and worship still had to be continually mediated through sacrifice because of its impurity.*

Would God keep his promise to Abraham? The tabernacle, the temple, the great city of Jerusalem had all proved to be places that could not ultimately deliver a return to a restored relationship with God. They were not Eden-like and there was yet no redeemer who could restore the worship-relationship God had created man to have with him. Something else, someone else, was needed.

## Church

As you are likely suspecting, when Christ comes on the scene everything begins to change. Early in his ministry, John records for us an interaction with a woman, a Samaritan, who was preparing to draw water from the well. A conversation about "living water ensues" and Jesus exposes her sin of adultery. In an attempt, perhaps, to quickly change the topic the woman attempts to enter into a divisive cultural discussion about *where* God was to be worshipped. Note carefully locations as Jesus takes an ages-old inter-ethnic debate and radically alters it:

[The woman says to Jesus] Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to

---

<sup>19</sup> 2 Chronicles 3:1

<sup>20</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:17-21

her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth...

With Jesus comes the possibility of worshipping God with an intimacy that has not been known since the garden. He will be the once for all sacrifice that eliminates the need for physical temples and tabernacles and altars and arks. And the place of worship is moved - it is transferred to God's people, the church, which brings us one step closer to the ultimate restoration of relationship promised to Abraham. Listen to how Paul's letters to the Corinthians capture this shift. In discussing unity in the church he asks the Corinthian Christians, *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you*<sup>21</sup>? See, we are no longer talking about a physical temple or tabernacle. Just as Jesus told the woman at the well - it is no longer about Jerusalem (or the temple mount) but about spirit and truth.

The plan becomes even clearer when Paul makes this Old Testament connection in his second letter to the Corinthians. He is warning against being unequally yoked with unbelievers. One of the reasons he gives is that *we are the temple of the living God*; and then he goes on to quote Leviticus and Exodus making a full connection as to the implications of that statement, *...as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people"*<sup>22</sup>. God's purposes have remained the same - to restore the worship-relationship with his people. And now, through his son Jesus Christ, he has eliminated the need for temples and tabernacles, altars and arks. God would meet his people wherever they gathered and be with them, wherever they were, through his Spirit. "We" are now the place that God meets his people.

*So, in the church, God's people, is the ideal place to reflect the status of the worship-relationship between man and God following the cross-work of Christ. Much of the intimacy, purity, and access of Eden is restored - but at great cost and without the elimination of sin. Although moving closer, God has not fully completed his work. We are not yet on "face to face" terms. He intends to take us to a place that is all that Eden was and so much more: For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened - not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee*<sup>23</sup>.

## Glory

Eden, tabernacle, temple, Jerusalem, church... the purpose has not changed - God is getting for himself a people! He will be our God, and we will be his people. So is heaven, or being with God in glory, primarily about streets paved with gold, mansions with many rooms, and never-ending day? Was Eden primarily about creation unspoiled by sin? The

---

<sup>21</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:16

<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:16 quoting Leviticus 26:12, Exodus 29:45

<sup>23</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:4-5



tabernacle and the temple about arks and mercy seats and inner chambers and exquisite craftsmanship? The church about gatherings or baptisms or communion? No - all of these different "places" were about our worship-relationship with the God of Heaven and his son Jesus Christ. They reflected and supported our engagement with the Holy of Holies. Heaven is about the full restoration of our relationship with God, the unbridled worship of Jesus Christ his son who has made that restoration possible. The focal point of heaven is not the stuff - it is the magnificent redemption of ourselves that has been accomplished through the Lamb of God. If we are to truly look forward to heaven as Paul did, we must comprehend and dwell on this truth.

It is amazing to see how systematically the book of Revelation demonstrates that in Jesus, we have the complete fulfillment of all that has been happening throughout redemptive history with regards to where God's people were to worship and engage in relationship with him...

See the garden?

Then the angel[a] 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[b] with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, *but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants[c] will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads*<sup>24</sup>. (emphasis mine)

So as it was in Eden, it will be in glory. But even better as the entire plan of redemption will be fully realized - his image-bearers will have filled the Earth with his glory, the curse will be removed, and we will see his face.

See the temple?

22 And I saw no temple in the city, *for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb*<sup>25</sup>.

So as it was in the tabernacle and temple, it will be in glory. But even better as our temple will no longer be filled with rooms which we cannot enter, rituals we must partake in, the gore and stench of slaughtered animals, no, our temple will be a person, a person who loves us and brings us close to himself without hindrance... for the Lamb was the once for all sacrifice.

See the city, Jerusalem?

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God... 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. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never

---

<sup>24</sup> Revelation 22:1-4

<sup>25</sup> Revelation 21:22



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. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

So as it was in Jerusalem, it will be in glory. But even better as this city will never be destroyed, never have night, never know evil, and it will not have a temple - save the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. In this city we will bask in his light.

See the church?

As for the church, she shall have all she needs just as God shall have all he wishes - Revelation 21:3 says [And I hear a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God... for the former things have passed away.](#)

[Pray]