

The New Song of Heaven

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[0 : 00] I'm going to sing to God's praise from Psalm 73. Psalm 73 and verse 23.

Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me. Thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide, and to thy glory afterward receive me to abide.

Whom have I in the heavens high but thee, O Lord, alone, and in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none. And so on. And sing to the end of the psalm.

Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.

Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

[1 : 30] Thou with thy counsel while I live with me all night.

And to thy glory, O Lord, receive me to die.

Thou with thee, O Lord, alone, and in the earth whom I desire besides thee, Thou with thee, O Lord, alone, and in the earth whom I desire besides thee, Thou with thee, O Lord, alone, and in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none.

My flesh and heart that filled unto him, And God forgive me For all my heart God is the same And for the forever For all my heart For all my heart For all my heart For all my heart And I am the only

Comfortable That has been All in love But surely it is Good for me That I am Lord Here to all And Lord For all my heart And all my heart And I am I believe in him I am Lord Can we turn again to the passage that we read in the New Testament Scriptures, Revelation of John, and we can read from chapter 5 and at verse 9.

[4 : 56] Revelation chapter 5, reading at verse 9. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof.

For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and town and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.

And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand.

And thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.

And so on. How much thought have you given to the question, How will I be occupied in heaven?

[6 : 06] If indeed you expect and hope to be amongst the number who will be occupied in this way.

For some, when they think about what heaven would be like for them, their focus is more upon the things that they leave behind in this world.

Perhaps their thinking will hone in on one word, which is quite legitimate. The rest that is set before them in heaven.

And it is a place of rest. And it is a place of rest. But sometimes the thinking develops into a form of rest and repose and rest and relaxation in the sense that you are no longer occupied in any of the ways in which you might have been occupied in the world.

However, that may not be a truly healthy attitude to have.

[7 : 29] When we read these words, we noticed that the apostle John was given an invitation at the beginning of chapter 4.

And a door is opened in heaven. And a door is opened in heaven. And he hears a voice. And the voice said to him, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

And in the passage, and throughout the book, we are confronted with many strange elements belonging to the vision of John.

Or the vision that is given to him. Many of the things that John is enabled to see are not easily understood.

Because their inclination is to try and understand the meaning, forgetting that these words are words that are describing to us a vision and symbolism that may not readily be understood by those who are reading these words.

[8 : 57] In fact, John himself may have struggled to understand some of the things that he was invited to see. Because some of the things that he sees are indescribable in human terms, at least.

But it is intended to describe a glory that is unsurpassed. And I am not sure that many of the commentators draw attention to the fact that John as an apostle had many experiences that were themselves indescribable.

He had many experiences in the company of the Lord, where he was introduced to the awesome power of God.

He was one of the privileged few who was with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. He saw many things that he perhaps could not begin to explain.

But one thing is sure, he is convinced of the fact that what he was being given, what he was privy to seeing is the glory of the triune God.

[10 : 25] And he is able to see some of the divine God. And he is able to see some of the activities of heaven. And not only is he able to see some of the activities of heaven.

He is able to see the activity of heaven, not just from the point of view of seeing the activity of the believer, but also the activity of the Lord himself.

For example, if we read on into the next chapter, we see in chapter 7 there, the description given to us of the activity of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is shepherding the saints in glory who are his sheep.

And he is leading them and feeding them. Now that is the activity of the Lord in glory. And there may be some similar passages that describe to us what the Lord is doing and what he is doing for his people who have gone to heaven.

We imagine that once the believer is finished with the world, that it is as if you enter into a situation where almost everything comes to a standstill.

[12 : 03] Or if you are invited to talk about it, you are very reluctant to do so because you are not really sure what you are meant to make of what the scripture describes to us.

And John speaks sometimes within this epistle, within this revelation, using similar language that we find in the prophecy of Ezekiel.

And some of what he observes is quite similar to what the prophet Ezekiel observed there. But just because they had a similar experience or a similar vision doesn't make it any easier to understand.

Principal Donald MacLeod speaking about, in another situation, he's talking about the graces that the believer possesses in this world.

And he argues for the grace of faith to be a grace that still finds occupation in glory.

[13 : 17] And this is the argument he makes. Surely one of the glories of heaven is the great prospect of the consummation of trust.

Then we shall trust him implicitly. We shall follow because faith is the bond. The trust between the soul and the saviour.

And that bond shall never be broken. Now he goes on at greater length to discuss that. Not everybody agrees with them. They believe that the place for the graces of the believer is this world.

And once you are taken out of this world, these graces and their function are nullified. But looking at the words before us, we also see here what the hard activity of heaven entails for the believer.

Now there is, as we said, there is no doubt that the believer enters into rest when they go to heaven. And that is promised.

[14 : 33] But it is not the rest of the rest of the rest. But it is not the rest of inactivity. It is not the rest of lethargy. As we spoke about even this week already, we know that the believer enters into rest.

We have the secure, the word of promise concerning what awaits the believer. The psalmist in Psalm 107, he writes there, Then are they glad because at rest and quiet they be.

So to the heaven he then brings which they desire to see. We can't argue with these words. There is a rest that awaits the people of God.

But when they enter into that rest, when they are brought home to be with the Lord, when we have already heard it mentioned in prayer this evening, when the believer goes to the house of many mansions, it is not to put on carpet slippers or to take their eaves.

The picture that we have here is a picture of the believer in the presence of the glory of God.

[15 : 59] And being in the presence of the glory of God, however it is described, even in language that we may not be comfortable with, the response to that presence, the response to that glory is as it were a response that cannot but be made.

Where the believer enters into the experience of praising and lauding and applauding even the Lord.

Some of you will know the name David Pranehart. He is associated with Jonathan Edwards. And he was a missionary to the North American Indians.

He died at a very young age. I think he was only 28 or 29 when he died. But he was speaking about the activity of heaven.

And he corrected himself because he said, I thought of dignity in heaven. And what he was thinking was, you know, the movement from what he was in this world to what he would become in glory.

[17 : 19] And so on. But he says instantly the thought came.

I do not go to heaven to get honor, but to give all possible glory and praise. And you see where he is coming from.

It is as if realization came to him. And we are so like that. Our consideration of what it will be like for us in heaven is all too often one-sided.

This is what it is going to be like for me. This is what I am going to enjoy about it. This is what is going to be pleasurable about it.

But here, what we are reading about again and again, there is an experience where being presented with the glory of God brings the response of praise.

[18 : 29] Now, it is hard. You read these words. They sung a new song saying, though what worthy to take the book. That is harking back to what we read at the beginning of this passage.

The book that is sealed and no one can open. And there is grief, as it were, on the part of the apostle when he sees this. And he discovers that God has prepared one to open the book and the seals cannot keep the book shut and so on.

But there is praise as a result of that. There is worship. And whether it is the praise and the worship that we carry out in song, or in songs of praise, or in some other way, it doesn't really make much difference.

There is a sense in which being in the presence of God is something that draws from us the praise that he is worthy of receiving.

And that is, just as you in this world, when you are in the presence of God, as you always are, you are reminded of the need that you have to acknowledge that God.

[19 : 55] And only when he is willing to make you aware of his presence does that praise freely come from your lips.

But even then, when that presence is made known to and you are made conscious of it, in places of worship such as this, in private, by the fireside, or in company with other saints, there are always barriers, there are always hindrances, there are always things that keep you back from bringing to God what he is worthy of receiving.

Now when you survey the description of John's vision, you confess it as incomprehensible, but you appreciate why the angels are a symphony of praise.

And it's strange that we have the angels beginning this symphony of praise, and they are joined by these saints, and that's what they are.

Saints who appreciate the glory of knowing their Redeemer, knowing a Saviour who has taken them from their sin.

[21 : 17] Their sin, because you notice that this song that they sing has that element in it. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.

That is, he is the one who has redeemed us to God by the blood, out of every kindred and town and people and nation.

And it is a worthwhile exercise asking yourself the question, how much time do I spend in this world meditating upon what will take up my eternal destiny, will take up my experience of eternity.

The worthiness of Christ to receive the praise is without question. Another place, Don't McLeod makes the point, and it's a point which we can't escape.

When we look at the praise of heaven, it's not a cacophony of praise, but a symphony. A melodious gathering of people with the one thought, one heart, one mind.

[22 : 48] A symphony of grace. Unlike this world, because in this world we may disagree over many things, and how we praise God is but one of them.

And because we can't agree, then it is inevitable that when we praise God, our praises will often be amiss. There are always disputes and debates about what's right and what's wrong.

But here, the divisions will be at an end. Why does he emphasize this if not to make that plain to us?

Every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the land forever and ever.

Go back to verse 9. For thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.

[24 : 02] Wherever they come from, whoever they may be, if they are in heaven, they are in heaven by reason of one thing and one thing alone. Not their creed, not their culture, not their color, but the fact that they know the Lord Jesus Christ that took them to this place.

Professor Fundison writes, the bond that binds the Christian to his brothers and sisters in Christ is the common indebtedness that we all have to the Saviour that redeemed us.

And when in heaven they are together because they are inspired by that same love for him that he himself kindled within their heart and brought to the fullness of fame.

Now it is not a waste of time to contemplate the mystery of heavenly worship. It is not a waste of time.

We may not understand the finer detail of it. We may not understand how we are going to play our part in it.

[25 : 30] If we believe that we are going to be one of those who will partake of it. But it is only the response of those who are redeemed.

It can only be the response of those who are redeemed. It can't but be a response of the redeemed. You can't, you know, I love singing.

I love singing in church. I'm not embarrassed to sing in church. Whatever it is, whoever may be there. And I'm often dumbfounded when I'm sitting in the company of Christians.

Whoever they are. However, whatever thoughts they may have about their ability to sing when they sit silent. For whatever reason.

But you won't be silent in heaven. You won't be silent in the presence of Christ in glory. You will be singing in the company of the angels to the full gusto of your heart.

[26 : 51] A response to that can only be given by the responsive. Someone once said about heaven and what it was, you know, he was just asking the question, what is this song of heaven?

What is this song of heaven? Well, his own answer was, I don't know. I can't wait, he said, to sing it.

And I can't wait to hear it sing. Is that you? Is that, are you like that? The apostle John speaks the truth as God revealed it to him.

He speaks the truth as Christ himself revealed it to him. He believes and he knows that all who are his will get to be with him.

And that they will be like him. And they will share in his glory because, as John begins this epistle, remember how he begins to describe his experiences.

[28 : 11] The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show, unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.

For the time is at hand. John to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto you and peace from him which is and which was and which is to come. From the seven spirits which are before his throne of Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead, the prince of the kings of the earth, and to him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, made us kings and priests and to God and his father.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. John doesn't take very long before he's almost taken up with this chorus of praise.

It shouldn't be simply something we're waiting to sing when we get to glory.

It shouldn't. We mentioned David Brainerd, and I think at the same time that he was thinking about what heaven was going to be like.

[29 : 41] It was his heart's desire, he said, as a missionary of the cross, to hear and to see and to experience those who are in the world give God the glory.

Here in this world, not in the next, although he believed that that was what he would be doing. But to see them in this world do that very thing.

And it's our desire also to join with those who have that knowledge of God in Christ that would want us to praise him, no matter what.

May he bless to us these thoughts. Let us pray. Lord, our God, we know that for your people the day will come when they will join the heavenly host in the presence of the one who sits upon the throne, the one who is described in such an awesome wonder, the one whose voice is like thunder, lightnings flash from the middle of the throne, things that are spoken of throughout the scripture for the presence that is yours is made known to mere dust.

We give thanks that these are the very things that your people will see. They will see Christ as he is and they shall be like him. And that is the greatest wonder of all.

[31 : 16] We give thanks that that is the prospect that lies in store for all who have put their trust in him, only those. And we give thanks that not one of them will be deprived of that privilege.

Grant mercy for our sins in Jesus' name. Amen. Our closing psalm is Psalm 103. We're singing these verses this evening in English.

Psalm 103, verse 19. Psalm 103, verse 19.

O bless the Lord, all ye whose works, wherewith the world is stored, in his dominions everywhere, my soul, bless thou the Lord.

These verses the Lord prepared us as his throne, in heaven's freedom to stand. The Lord prepared us as his throne, in heaven's end to stand, His death, who will come into salvation, beyond Jesus' name, and God spared us, and everything that we are being heard, in His kingdom that ■■■■em, O against the rest of the Lord withering us, the plural truth of your ■■■■■■ globe is already olika oung, ZANG EN MUZIEK

[33 : 47] ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK

ZANG EN MUZIEK ZANG EN MUZIEK from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all now and always Amen