

# Something Changed In Heaven...And It Changes Everything on Earth

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[ 0 : 00 ] Daryl, it's our pleasure to have you here this morning. Thanks for serving us, and we're looking forward to hearing the message. Lord bless you. Jason, thanks. Oh, we love you, buddy. I love you, too. That was so fun. Yeah. So good.

When I put my arms around you, I'm putting my arms around your generation. We're good friends. We're good friends. I'll give you anything you need so you can be everything you need to be for Jesus.

And he's been doing that. I've been stealing his sermons and preaching them for the last three years, and it's been really helping me. No, for real. So thank you. Thank you. And Stephanie and Hunter, maybe you're back here, you're down there.

I mean, that was just awesome. Thank you so much. I'm a pastor, and so I watch for the pastoral dimensions of worship.

And Stephanie, when you had people just slowly sing quietly, he is good, he is good, he is good. Because, as you know, people come to worship, and they don't feel that. And I felt as you led us in that, it just slowly rose, where we could lift up our arms and say that with authenticity.

[ 1 : 01 ] So thank you. And Tim, I loved what you opened up for us last night. That was really helpful. Slowly, suddenly. I think I got your line right.

In the times when God is moving slowly, he's preparing us for when he moves suddenly. I got it right? Yeah. He's done that for me a number of times.

I've been walking with Jesus Christ now half a century. And he's done that off and again, working slowly and then suddenly. And I sense that once again, he has me on the verge of another suddenly.

At the age of 71, another suddenly. Of course, of course, you all realize that he is working in each of us slowly, preparing us for the great suddenly, when Jesus decides it is time to fulfill his promise, and he comes to bring us into a new heaven and a new earth.

Well, I invite you now to think about and celebrate a mystery. It is a mystery that takes place every time we worship.

[ 2 : 22 ] When we human beings gather together to worship in the name of Jesus Christ, we participate in a mystery. That, of course, is true of all of life when you think about it biblically and theologically.

We are always participating in mystery, but especially so when we worship. The mystery? Worship of the living God does not begin with us, and it will not end with us.

Let me say that again. Worship of the living God does not begin with us, and it will not end with us. When we begin a service of worship on the Lord's Day, say 10 a.m., worship of the living God does not begin with us at 10 a.m., and it will not end with us at 1130 or whatever time our service of worship concludes.

Now, I'm not referring to the fact that people in the eastern time zone have preceded us, and that people in the western time zones will follow us, although that's not a bad way to think.

That can actually embolden our worship, to realize that as we in British Columbia step into our places of worship, folks like Tim Hughes in Birmingham have already been doing this divine work.

[ 3 : 43 ] I try to be aware of this on Easter morning. Long before we in our time zone proclaim, Christ is risen, millions have been saying it for a long time.

We join a chant that started long before we woke up, and realizing that helps me lift my spirit to respond, He is risen indeed. But that is not the mystery I have in mind today.

Nor am I referring to the fact that creation is always worshiping. The heavens are telling the glory of God, the psalmist says. All the trees of the field will clap their hands, says the prophet.

St. Francis sings to inanimate creation. Praise Him, sun and moon. Praise Him, all you stars of light. But that is not the mystery to which I'm referring today.

I'm referring to the fact that to enter into a time of worship in this earthly dimension of our existence is to enter into a service already in progress in the heavenly dimension of our existence.

[ 4 : 51 ] I'm referring to the mystery that to enter into a time of worship here on earth is to join a worship service that has always been taking place in heaven.

You see, things are not as they seem. Or more accurately, things are not only as they seem. More is going on around us than we ordinarily realize.

A whole lot more. From long before we humans in 2019 began to worship on any given Lord's day. Indeed, from long before we humans even came on the scene, worship of the living God has been going on day and night and night and day for a very long time.

And the mystery is that wherever and whenever we human beings enter into a time of worship, we enter into that always, already in progress worship service.

As the great hymn put it, joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, God of light, stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.

[ 6 : 01 ] If I ever write a book on worship, that's going to be its title. Center of unbroken praise.

Now, this participating in mystery can happen because of the way God has constituted his universe.

Heaven and earth are inextricably intertwined. The line between heaven and earth is very thin. Very thin.

Heaven is not a faraway place. Heaven is another dimension of the created order very close at hand, very close, surrounding the earthly dimension, intersecting, penetrating, infusing life on earth. And this line between these two dimensions is very thin. Very thin. So very thin. Which means that when we disciples of Jesus die, we do not go to a far place.

We simply pass through the very thin veil. We simply pass through to the other side. We say of our loved ones who have died, they passed away.

[ 7 : 22 ] Not true. They've not passed away. Yes, they are away from us, but they did not pass away. They are alive as never before in that other dimension.

It's better to say our loved ones passed through. They passed through this very thin veil, not far away, close at hand, so very close.

I'm going to be coaching my children and grandchildren at my funeral. Do not say dad and grandpa passed away. He didn't pass away. He passed through.

And the mystery is that whenever and wherever we disciples of Jesus enter into a time of worship on this side of the thin veil, we are in some mysterious way joining in that worship that is already in progress on the other side of the thin veil.

Now, this suggests to me that the question to ask after a worship service is not, what did I get out of it? Far too egocentric question.

[ 8 : 33 ] Rather, the question to ask after the worship service is, did I enter in? Did I enter into this worship that is already in progress?

Did I enter into the worship of the living God that never ends? Lo, I tell you a mystery. Now, of that already in progress worship, Scripture gives us a number of pictures, a number of snapshots, a number of dramatic video clips, and does so so that we in this earthly dimension can know how to worship in a way that pleases the living God.

Not that we are to copy what we see. That would not be possible. But that what we see and hear in the heavenly worship helps shape and empower earthly worship on earth as it is in heaven.

The two clearest pictures of heavenly worship are given to us by the prophet Isaiah and the apostle John. By Isaiah in the sixth chapter of his massive work and by John in the fourth and fifth chapters of his massive work.

Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4 and 5. Isaiah 6 happening in 740 B.C. Revelation 4 and 5 happening in 92 A.D.

[ 9 : 58 ] So I'd like to read those sections for you, about 32 verses of Scripture. Isaiah 6, 1 to 8, and then all of Revelation 4 and 5. Now, this is the word of God we're going to hear, so I'm going to invite you to stand.

Yeah! What an awesome sound.

1,800 people in the heart of Vancouver standing to hear the word of God. In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.

Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings. With two He covered His face, with two He covered His feet, and with two He flew. One called out to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of His glory. And the fountains of the threshold tremble at the voice of Him who called out while the temple was filling with smoke.

[ 11 : 13 ] And then I said, Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I'm a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in His hand, which He had taken from the altar with tongs. And He touched my mouth with it and said, Behold, this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? And I said, Here am I. Send me. After these things, I looked, and behold, a door standing open into heaven.

And the first voice which I heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking to me, said, Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things. Immediately, I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and someone sitting on it.

He who was sitting was like a jasper stone, and a sardis in appearance. And there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Around the throne were 24 thrones. Upon the thrones, I saw 24 elders sitting, clothed in white garments and golden crowns on their head.

[ 12 : 30 ] From the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And before the throne, there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal.

And in the center and around the throne, four living creatures, full of eyes, in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion. The second creature like a calf. The third creature had the face like that of a man.

The fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within. And day and night, they do not cease to say, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and who is to come.

When the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne, to him who lives forever and ever, the 24 elders will fall down before him who sits on the throne and will worship him who lives forever and ever and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive power and honor and power, for you created all things, and because of your will, they existed and were created.

And I saw on the right hand of him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book and break its seals?

[ 13 : 58 ] And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or look into it.

One of the elders said to me, Stop weeping. Look, the lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.

And I saw between the throne with the four living creatures and the elders a lamb standing as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

And he came and he took the book out of the right hand who sat on the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb, each one having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are you to take the book and break its seals, for you were slain and you purchased for God with your blood men and women from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

[ 15 : 04 ] And you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God and they will reign upon the earth. And I looked and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders and the number of them was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and riches

and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing and every creative thing that is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them I heard them saying to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb be blessing, honor, glory, dominion, power forever and ever.

And the four living creatures kept saying amen and the elders fell down and worshiped. Spirit of God, take us into this mystery in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. Now, as you heard these two heavenly worship scenes read, you no doubt notice how similar they are.

Both pictures having shaped the church's worship for centuries. Yet, although similar, I trust you notice there are some major differences. That is, from the time of the Isaiah 6 picture to the time of the Revelation 4 and 5 picture, something changed.

From 740 B.C. to 92 A.D., something changed. From the time of the Isaiah 6 video clip to the Revelation 4 and 5 video clip, something changed.

[16:52] Something in heavenly worship changed. Although worship in heaven has been going on since long before we came on the scene, between 740 B.C.

and 92 A.D., something changed. In the move from B.C. to A.D., something changed, and it changed heavenly worship. And when we begin to grasp this change in heavenly worship, earthly worship changes.

Now let me show you what I mean. I do so by asking two questions of these two pictures. Question number one, what is the same?

Question number two, what is different? That's the outline of my talk. Two questions. Question one, what is the same? Question two, what is different?

The difference is what makes Christian worship Christian. Christian. First question, what is the same? 740 B.C., Isaiah 6, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne.

[18:01] 92 A.D., Revelation 4 and 5, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and look, a throne was standing in heaven. What is the same? A throne. The same throne.

740 B.C., 92 A.D., 830 years, the same throne. defying all assaults against it, surviving every coup attempt, standing while thousands of other thrones have collapsed around it.

A throne. Now, what else is the same? 740 B.C., Isaiah, I saw the Lord sitting on the throne.

92 A.D., Revelation, behold, a throne with someone sitting on it. Sitting. The throne is occupied. There is a headquarters for the universe, and it is not vacant.

It is not up for grabs. Someone is sitting on the throne. 740 B.C., King Uzziah dies. A terrifying year.

[19:04] Judah is the next nation state in the line of Assyria's marching advance. And then Uzziah dies. No other prophet dates anything from the death of a king.

It's always from the Xth year of the king. Isaiah does not say at this time, he does not say the 52nd year of Uzziah. Instead, in the year that King Uzziah died.

Why? Because that year, 740 B.C., was a terrifying year. It was full of fear. Ever had one of those kind of years? And the king's death only made it worse.

92 A.D., this is the year that the persecution intensified. This is the year that the Roman emperor Domitian heated up his reign of terror. This is the year that the thought police came and arrested the beloved apostle John and shipped him off to the prison island of Patmos to bleach on the rocks.

Look, a throne with someone sitting on it. King Uzziah dies, but not the king of glory. Emperor Domitian asserts his rage, but he cannot overcome emperor, the emperor of glory.

[20:15] Since the first picture of the throne in 740 B.C., China has gone through ten major dynasty changes, ten enthronings and dethronings.

Since 740 B.C., Japan and India have gone through even more. Since 740 B.C., history has witnessed the coming and going of empire after empire, kingdom after kingdom, government after government, administration after administration.

Samaria rose and fell. Egypt rose and fell. Assyria rose and fell. Babylon, Persia, Greece, then Rome, all the Caesars rose and fell.

Then the Byzantine Empire, then the Ottoman Empire, the Inca and the Aztec. In the past century ago, alone, in the 20th century, we've witnessed the dethroning of the Spanish, Portuguese, Austro-Hungarian, and Dutch empires.

And of the German Reich of Kaiser Wilhelm and Adolf Hitler, the Italian Empire of Benito Mussolini, the Japanese reign of Emperor Hirohito, the reign of Haile Selassie of Egypt.

[ 21 : 25 ] We have witnessed the rise and fall of Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev, Mao Tse-Sung, Idi Amin, Paul Pot, Ho Chi Minh. In just the last 30 years, since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, we've witnessed the dismantling of the once mighty Soviet Union and the apartheid reign of South Africa.

Hong Kong is now part of the People's Republic of China, further dismantling the once mighty British Empire. And need I point to the fact that we see empires around us collapsing?

Isaiah 6, 740 B.C. I saw the Lord sitting on a throne. 92 A.D., Revelation 4 and 5. Look, a throne with someone on it, the same throne, fixed and unmovable.

While other thrones disintegrate, this one remains, and we have every reason to believe it will continue to do so. Now, what else is the same?

740 B.C., Isaiah 6, holy, holy, holy. 92 A.D., Revelation 4 and 5. Holy, holy, holy.

[ 22 : 35 ] Always three. Always three because the one who sits on the throne is three. The Lord on the throne is the triune God of grace. And always three for emphasis because the essential nature of the character, the one who sits on the throne, is holy.

It implies beauty, awesome, beauty. It implies purity, awesome purity, consuming purity, beauty and purity undiminished by time.

Just as beautiful in 92 A.D. as he was in 740 B.C. And just as pure in 92 A.D. as he was in 740 B.C., holy. It also implies holy other.

Although we are made in his image, he is not made in our image. Holy other. Holy, holy, holy. What else is the same?

740 B.C., Isaiah, there were seraphim, each having six wings. 92 A.D., Revelation, around the throne, the living creatures each have six wings.

[ 23 : 46 ] In both pictures, there are creatures attending the throne. Day and night, they do not cease, says John, never tiring the repetition, over and over, holy, holy, holy, kadosh, kadosh, kadosh, sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, day and night, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, day after day, night after night, week after week, month after month, decade after decade, century after century, holy, holy, holy.

So, what is the same in these two pictures? A throne, someone sitting on it, beautiful, and pure, beyond description, beyond our imagining, attended by creatures who cannot but help keep singing.

But, in the Revelation picture, a number of things have changed. Between 740 B.C. and 92 A.D., something changed. So, second question, what is different?

Note, first of all, that after John is brought to this throne scene, he sees to his surprise 24 other thrones. He sees the capital T throne and then 24 small thrones around it.

What gives? Are rival thrones moving in to take over? No. The living God has chosen to set up these thrones around him. The living God has chosen to bring others in on his governing of the universe.

[ 25 : 32 ] 24, 2 times 12. Ring any bells? 2 times 12. 12. 12. Representing the redeemed people of God. 12.

Representing the redeemed people before Jesus' death and resurrection. 12. Representing God's people after Jesus' death and resurrection. The fulfillment of Jesus' promise, you will reign with me. Indeed, it's the fulfillment of God's original creative intent that we exercise dominion with him over his good world. The capital T throne cannot be toppled and neither can the small T thrones.

Throughout all of history and the ups and downs of history, the church remains. Jesus promises, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

The gates of hell have tried, they are trying and they will try, but they did not win, they are not winning and they will not win. 24 other thrones.

[ 26 : 40 ] What else is different? Ah, those attending to the throne, they are different. They act differently.

Watch this. 740 B.C., Isaiah, seraphim with six wings and with two they cover their faces. They cover. Why?

Because of the awesome beauty of the one who is on the throne. Because of the awesome purity of the one who is on the throne. As mere creatures, they could not handle this beauty and purity, which is why Isaiah himself says, Woe to me for my eyes have seen the king and I am ruined.

A mere creature and a sinful mere creature at that, not able to handle the presence of such beauty and purity. 92 A.D., Revelation, each having six wings, but note, there is no mention of covering their faces.

There's no mention of covering their eyes. Instead, John says that the creatures with the six wings are full of eyes around and inside.

[ 27 : 55 ] I don't know what that means, but they're full of eyes. 740 B.C., they cover their eyes. 92 A.D., they're full of eyes.

What gives? In 740 B.C., they could not handle the sights, so they cover their eyes. In 92 A.D., they not only do not cover their eyes, they're full of eyes.

Goodness gracious, something must have happened, something must have happened to allow creatures to behold holiness. Something must have happened to allow creatures to stand in the presence of holiness and not be undone.

Whoa! What was it? What happened? Did they somehow work this spiritual program and they became more spiritual? Was it that they achieved a higher level of spirituality?

No! Ah! We come now to the heart of the change in worship.

[ 29 : 05 ] Every time, every time I see this, my heart begins to break with joy. Revelation 5, 6. Revelation 5, 6.

And I saw in the middle of the throne, the version we read said in between the throne. No, no, not accurate. You got to look at your little margin and it says literally in the middle of the throne, not on the side, not nearby, but in the middle of the throne.

And I saw in the middle of the throne a lamb. The lion has triumphed. He can open the book. I turned to see the lion and I saw a lamb in the middle, in the middle.

You're going to hear me say it a hundred times, in the middle, in the middle, in the middle. In the middle of the throne, a lamb. Now, there are two words that the Greek New Testament translates as lamb.

One is amnos and it means adult sheep. This is the word that John the Baptist uses when he sees Jesus of Nazareth coming down the road and says, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The other word is arnion.

[ 30 : 12 ] Maybe related to Narnia. The other is arnion and it means little lamb. Ha! I saw in the middle of the throne a little lamb.

Mary's little lamb. The virgin Mary's little lamb. In the middle of the throne.

In the middle of the throne. which can only mean that he is in the middle of the one who sits on the throne. I say that again.

If he is in the middle, it means he's in the middle of the one who sits on the throne. In the middle of the Holy One who sits on the throne. In the middle of all that awesome beauty and awesome purity. I saw in the middle of it all a lamb as if slain. That is what has happened. The lamb was slain. Jesus Christ was slain.

[ 31 : 15 ] The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world has been slain. That's why there are 24 other thrones. They represent the lamb's people. The people bought with the price of his blood.

And that is why those attending to the throne no longer have to cover their eyes. Something has been done for creation. Something's been done for creation to enable mere creatures to come into the presence of this blazing beauty and blazing purity and not get fried.

Jesus Christ, the lamb of God has taken away our sin. And that changes the dynamics of heavenly worship. The whole tone changes.

The whole field changes. 740 BC Isaiah creatures hide their eyes. 92 AD Revelation 4 and 5 creatures open their eyes and they point humanity to the one who stands in the middle of the throne.

Which accounts for another difference. A critical difference. The change in human language in the two pictures.

[ 32 : 25 ] 740 BC Isaiah 6 when ushered into the presence of God the cry is woe. Woe is me. Woe.

92 AD Revelation 4 and 5 having been ushered into the presence of God the cry is worthy. Worthy. Worthy is the lamb who was slain.

Before the death and resurrection of Mary's little lamb the posture and language of worship is fear. Woe. I'm such a miserable sinner. I've fallen short of the glory of God. After the death and

resurrection of Mary's little lamb the posture and language of worship is joy. Worthy. Worthy are you. You made it possible for me to be here. Oh yes. Oh yes. When we enter into the unveiled presence of all that beauty and purity our immediate instinct might be woe. What? Remember when Peter met Jesus on the Sea of Galilee? Depart from me because I'm a sinful man oh Lord. But when we see in the middle in the middle in the middle of all that purity and beauty when we see the crucified Jesus before woe can take over worthy comes from deep within side.

[ 33 : 45 ] Worthy are you. My debt you paid my death you died that I might live. Isaiah 6 at the center of the universe is holiness unspeakable beauty and purity.

Revelation 4 and 5 yes but at the center of all that holiness is unspeakable mercy and grace. Grace greater than all our sin.

For in the middle in the middle in the middle in the middle of all that holiness is the Lamb who died to take away the sin of the world. Worthy.

Revelation 5 12 Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. Why does John put it that way? Receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing because John is making a statement to his contemporaries.

He's making a statement about the Roman throne which in its arrogance thought itself to be the throne of the universe. By 92 AD the Roman emperors were thinking and speaking of themselves as divine.

[ 34 : 58 ] The emperor Domitian wanted to be called Dominus et Deus Lord and God. So when the emperor entered into the senate chambers all were to rise and they were to sing to him worthy are you to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and power.

No says John and all of creation joins him no no no no no. There is only one worthy of such adoration and unqualified allegiance.

The one who sits in the middle of the one who sits on the throne that cannot be moved. 740 BC Isaiah woe is me. 92 AD Revelation 4 and 5 worthy are you worthy are you the lamb who died for me before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea.

A great high priest whose name is love whoever lives and pleads for me. My name is graven on his hands my name is written in his heart I know that while in heaven he stands no tongue can bid me to depart.

No tongue can bid me to depart. No one can say Daryl you do not belong here. When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within upward I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin because the sinless savior died my soul is counted free for God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me to look on him and pardon me behold him there the risen lamb my perfect spotless righteousness the great unchangeable I am the king of glory and of grace one with him I cannot die my soul is purchased by his blood my life is hid with Christ on high with Christ my savior and my God with Christ my savior and my God lo I tell you a mystery worship does not begin with us and it will not end with us so the question to ask after worship is not what did I get out of it the question to ask after a service of worship is did I enter in did I enter into the mystery did I enter into the worship that never ends did I enter into the change that has taken place in heavenly worship did my heart cry worthy vault