

The Glory of Christ (8): In His Majesty

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[0 : 00] Revelation is the most mysterious book of the Bible.

! It was the only book of the Bible upon which the reformer John Calvin did not write a commentary.! Famously, when asked why, he threw his hands up in the air and said,! Je ne sais pas. I do not know.

Revelation is many things, not the least of which is an almost cartoon-like representation of God's world as it is today, and it will be forever. But above them all, it is a pastiche of images emphasizing the glory of Christ in His exalted majesty, the glory of Christ in His exalted majesty, the Christ who made Himself nothing, is now enthroned in heaven, and He is worshipped by all of God's new creation. We may not understand everything about Revelation, but we can at least join with the song of the saints in heaven as they sing to Christ, to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

The book of Revelation is the vision of the glory of Christ in His majestic exaltation, the vision which at now we only see by faith, but then we shall see by sight.

We cannot and we do not see Him with the eyes we now have. And we cannot and we do not comprehend Him with the minds we now have. That's why we need new minds and new eyes.

That's why we need glorified bodies different from those we now have. But God shall give us glorified bodies with eyes minds capable of seeing the glory of Christ face to face and minds capable of understanding the heights of His majesty. We shall never see God the Father, and we shall never see God the Holy Spirit, but we shall see God the Son. We shall see Him, and we shall hear Him, and we shall touch Him.

[2 : 35] What a prospect. Over the summer together, we've been studying the glory of Christ. We've seen Him as the perfect representative of God. We've scratched the surface of this mysterious person as both God and man. We've traveled downward with Him in His condescension. We've been warmed by the glory of His love. We've seen Him in the Old Testament. We've been with Him in the resurrection, and we've gloried His relationship with the church. Tonight, we close off by beholding Him in the glory of His exalted majesty as King, Savior, and Shepherd of the new heavens and the new earth, the Christ who is today, the Christ we shall see tomorrow. We cannot in any sense do justice to this topic any more than a man who sees only in black and white can do justice to the beauty of a rainbow. We can but daydream about these things and fill our hearts with the hope that the reality we will then see will be greater than anything we can now imagine. Just like we cannot fathom the depths of the humiliation to which Christ descended on the cross, we cannot measure the heights of majesty to which Christ has ascended on the throne.

All we know is we shall see Him as He is, and we shall hear Him as He is, and we shall touch Him as He is. Out of all the available options for us to consider, I want us to focus our thoughts on four areas of the glory of Christ and His majesty. First, Christ as King, then Christ as Savior, then Christ as Shepherd, and then Christ as Present. Let's treat this evening as a spiritual sunbed, basking tonight under the warmth of this life-giving and enriching vision of our Master. First of all then, Christ as King, Christ as King.

The first three chapters of Revelation are mysterious enough on their own, filled with the vision of Christ as revealed to John, and then the seven letters to the churches in Asia. But Revelation begins proper in chapter 4 verse 1 with the words, Behold a throne in heaven. Behold a throne in heaven. The throne of God dominates the entire book of Revelation. This is the ultimate reality. There's a throne standing in heaven upon which God is seated in glory and majesty. Remember how so often we sing the words of Psalm 93 together, the Lord is King, His throne endures, majestic in its height. God is upon His throne, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the triune God. Well,

later in Revelation 7, 17, the vision resolves into greater detail because we learn in this verse, Revelation 7, 17, there's a lamb in the midst of the throne.

Now, in the midst of mesos, Beth, is not a phrase we use much today. We'd be better saying, in the middle of, in the middle of, in the middle of the majestic throne around which are gathered an innumerable multitude of heavenly beings, angels, and the redeemed of God is our Lord Jesus Christ.

He's in the middle of the throne. That's where kings sit. New Testament studies consistently show that the word Christ means king. The apostle John presents us here with a compelling vision and revelation of Jesus where He is now and ever shall be in the middle of the throne in heaven. King Jesus worshipped and adored by the multitudes of heaven.

[7 : 09] Contrast Revelation 7, 17, this vision of King Jesus with the account of His trial and crucifixion.

He stood before Pilate to ask Him, Are you the king of the Jews? Our king stood alone. Out of political cowardice, Pilate ordered that He be crucified, presented Him to the crowds and cried out, Behold your king. To which the Jews cried out, We have no king but Caesar.

A friendless Jesus stood alone, humiliated before the crowd. And we read, So Pilate delivered Him over to them to be crucified.

Bruised and tortured, they forced Him to carry His own cross to the place of execution. Then they forced nails into His hands and His feet and left Him there to die. Naked He came from Mary's womb. Naked He died on the cross.

And all the while the crowds passing by taunted Him and mocked Him. Even the soldiers laughed at Him. If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself, they said.

[8 : 24] Having endured the worst of all inhumanities, He breathed His last and died. His friends took Him down from the cross.

And they hurriedly wrapped Him in grave clothes and placed Him in a borrowed tomb. There could be no greater contrast between the vision of majesty of Jesus in John's revelation and the account of the misery of Jesus in John's gospel.

But it's the same Christ. As the hymn says, The revelation is not just a description of what shall be, but of what is today.

King Jesus, in the middle of the throne of heaven, is today crowned with glory. All sovereignty and authority in heaven and earth belongs to Him.

It does not belong to the pilots of this world who claim it for themselves but have no more power than any other mortal. It does not belong to any president or prime minister.

[9 : 50] They have no ultimate authority. Only King Jesus and He will give it to no other. What a blessing it is to know that for all that may seem different, we're in the safest of hands because our world is in the hands of King Jesus, the Lord of Lords, the majesty of glory.

Christ is King. Second, Christ is Savior. Christ is Savior. One of the commonest pictures of Jesus throughout the book of Revelation is of Him as the Lamb.

The Lamb. In Revelation 7.17, it's He who is the Lamb who's in the midst of the throne. John was familiar with the imagery of Jesus as the Lamb of God.

Many decades earlier, he heard John the Baptist pointing to Jesus and crying out, Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. But what kind of Lamb is Jesus?

In Revelation 5 verse 6, John's vision reads this way. Between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain.

[11 : 15] I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain. King Jesus, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, in the center of God's throne, He bears the appearance of a Lamb who has been slain.

King Jesus, although glorified and exalted above all, still bears the marks of torture and death. He remains the Lamb of God, albeit the victorious Lamb.

His wounds shall be an everlasting reminder of His suffering and our salvation. There shall be no crosses in heaven, but the Lamb who hung upon the cross shall be there.

And He continues to bear its marks. For as long as we live here, He's been our Savior. And for as long as eternity lasts, He shall be our Savior.

We shall always be reminded by His wounds that the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me. I'm not sure to what extent we'll remember our sin and guilt in heaven.

[12 : 25] Certainly there will be no sin and no guilt in heaven. But to what extent we shall remember the feeling of standing condemned before God, I do not know. But to say that we shall not remember the feeling is not to say that we shall not remember at all.

What we shall know is, in the language of Revelation 7, that the reason we're clothed in white robes, the reason we're there in heaven, and the reason we're celebrating and singing is because our robes have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

We're enjoying the majesties of glory because our Savior endured the miseries of Golgotha.

Forever we shall look to the throne and sing, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

Back in Luke 23, with its vivid account of the cross, the soldiers who crucified Jesus mocked Him, saying, if you really are the King of the Jews, save yourself.

But you see, it was precisely because He was the King of the Jews, He did not save Himself. He remained on that cross and died to save us.

[13 : 48] Again, the rulers scoffed and sneered. He saved others. Let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One. But again, it was because He was the Christ, the Chosen One, that our Lord did not save Himself.

He hung and suffered there to bear the punishment of our sins and to die the death our sins deserved. In Revelation 5, we hear another of heaven's songs.

It says, our Saviour, Jesus.

Robert Murray McShane lived a very short, but a very full life for Christ. Minister of St. Peter's in Dundee in the late 1830s, he worked himself to death.

Few Scottish preachers have ever reached the height of how McShane expressed his desire for heaven. He wrote a hymn. I think we've sung it once, called, When This Passing World Is Done.

[15 : 18] In the third verse, he writes, When I stand before the throne, dressed in beauty, not my own, when I see thee as thou art, love thee with unsinning heart, then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how much I owe.

We'll be there in heaven by right. It will be our forever home, but not because of anything we did, but because, as we stare in wonder at our Lord, we shall see his wounds and remember that it was for us he died, and it was for us he rose, and it's for us he reigns.

What a day it shall be when our Saviour's face we see. Third, Christ our shepherd, Christ our shepherd.

We perhaps don't hear as many sermons about heaven as we ought. There are many reasons why this may be, chief among them being that, you know, we just can't picture the unpicturable, imagine the unimaginable.

Our minds just ain't big enough. But some things we do know, not so much in the positive, but in the negative sense. And some of these are revealed to us in our passage in Revelation 7.

[16 : 47] There'll be no more hunger, no more thirst, no more sun to strike us or heat to scorch us. There'll be no more tears. No more tears.

You know, we live in a world of tears. If we were to bottle up all the tears shed in a single day by the inhabitants of our world, we'd fill an ocean flow.

But heaven shall be a place with no tears at all. No pain, no death, no fear, no grief, no suffering, no loneliness.

All the things which cause us to weep here will be forever gone. Perhaps we shall not even remember them. No more tears in heaven.

But why, why shall all these things be absent from heaven? It shall be because the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd and he will guide them to springs of living water.

[17 : 50] Our glorious shepherd, our majestic king, he shall be our heavenly shepherd. We reflect on the immortal words of Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd and the final words of which are, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

At no point does our Lord hear a reference to Christ cease to be our shepherd. We shall dwell in the shepherd's house forever.

In John 10, Jesus says of himself, the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He laid down his life for us. He took it up again, but he never stops being our shepherd and we never stop being his sheep.

Throughout the New Testament, Christ is called the great shepherd, the chief shepherd. The word shepherd, it also means pastor. Poimen, Beth.

The glorious Christ shall be our heavenly pastor. Never again shall we be disappointed in the character flaws of our earthly pastors like me.

[18 : 57] For there we shall have the perfect heavenly pastor, Jesus himself. I do not know what we shall eat in heaven, but I know what we shall drink.

Our heavenly shepherd leads us to springs of living water. In Revelation 22, the spring is described in more detail. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

Also, on either side of the river, the tree of life. These springs of living water spoken of here in verse 17, they flow straight from the throne of God.

They are life, crystal clear in its purity, and to drink it gives life. Drinking dirty water brings death. Drinking the waters of heaven brings life.

And our heavenly shepherd leads us to these waters and invites us to drink our fill. As citizens of heaven, we dress in robes washed white in the blood of our glorious Savior, and we drink living water supplied by our glorious shepherd.

[20 : 17] The sea of human tears is replaced by the Lord's springs of living waters. What a prospect, what a hope. Can our imagination stretch any further?

Christ is king, Christ is savior, Christ is shepherd, and then finally, Christ is present. Christ is present. In Revelation 7, verse 15, we read the most amazing words.

He who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. He who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. The majestic Christ shall be with us forever and we shall be with him.

His presence will shelter us. No more shall we be separated from him by the limits of our senses. No more shall our sins and our doubts separate us from him.

We shall be with him forever. Sometimes, here and now, Christ might seem close to us, but sometimes he might seem very far away.

[21 : 30] We know in our minds that he's always with us, but that doesn't always translate into a sensible feeling of his presence. The clouds of our sin and doubt so often hide him from us, but there are no clouds in heaven.

All our doubts and all our sins and all our weaknesses will be a thing of the past replaced by the eternal joy of his everlasting presence with us. We can hardly wait to see Christ with our eyes and touch him with our hands, to hear him with our ears and to bask in the glory of his presence, which will fill us to overflowing with joy and praise and peace.

And you know, as I was studying for this sermon, I'm sitting back in my chair and thinking, we will hear his voice, the voice of Jesus, that voice which sometimes sounds like mighty waters and other times like a gentle whisper.

And we shall touch him with our hands. And falling down at his feet, we shall drench him with our tears. And we shall see him with our eyes. He shall talk to us.

And he shall call you by name. And he shall say to you, I love you. I always have. And I always will.

[22 : 58] for us to be with Christ is what it means to be in heaven. But this is an amazing thought.

For Christ to be with us is what it means for him to be in heaven. For Christ to be with us is what it means for him to be in heaven.

In his great high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus prays these words, Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory.

In that verse, he is revealing an essence to his father saying, I cannot conceive of heaven without my people. Their presence in heaven will complete my glory.

I want them to be there with me. The ultimate glory of our Lord is in our being found there with him. He found us lost in sin and guilt.

[24 : 07] He washed us clean in his blood. He raised us to heavenly places. He gave us eternal life through his death. His love for us is so intense that it's unthinkable for him to be in heaven unless we're there with him and he's with us.

And he exults and rejoices over us, proclaiming to the angels, behold I and the children God has given me. By his wounds he healed us.

All our iniquity was laid upon him. For our transgression he was cut off out of the land of the living. But in heaven he shall see us for whom he suffered and be satisfied.

If ever any of us look forward to being in heaven with Jesus, he looks forward far more to us being there with him. For we shall be the crown of his glory.

For us not to be with him is unthinkable. Such is his love for us. Nothing makes me happier than when those I love the most are with me.

[25 : 11] And I see them smiling. And I see them laughing. And I realize they're happy. Nothing shall fulfill the glory of Christ more completely than when those he has loved the most shall be with him in heaven.

We shall be his glory. Me, you ask? Me? Yes, you. You shall be his glory.

I don't claim to understand much about the book of Revelation, but this I do know. The Christ we find there is unspeakably glorious in his majesty. In the new heavens and the new earth, Christ shall be unspeakably majestic in his being our shepherd, our king, our savior, and having us with him as the crown of his glory.

Briefly then, as we close this series, how do you apply all this truth? Well, first, we want to bask in the beauty of this doctrine.

We want to bask in the beauty of this doctrine, not just what we've heard tonight, but throughout the whole series on the glory of Christ. We want to allow these truths to wash over us like a pleasing shower on a hot day.

[26 : 35] We want to take them into our hearts, and we want them to renew our minds. Secondly, we want to praise Christ.

We want to praise Christ. The Irish singer-songwriter Enya has a song where she asks the question, how can I keep from singing?

How can I keep from singing? singing? In light of the glory of Christ, how can we keep from singing to Him, about Him? How can we keep from praising Him, and from living for Him?

Putting all that we know to be wrong in our lives, putting all that won't fit in heaven with us, behind us, we want to glorify and enjoy Him forever.

And lastly, we're going to share the good news of the glory of Christ. If people could see, if those people, I can see them, you can't, but I can now see people walking up and down Crow Road through these windows, and if they could see Christ the way that we do, they'd want to follow Him also.

[27 : 50] So our God-given task is to proclaim Christ in all the glory of His person and work, to engage in mission so that in that great and final scene, pictured here in Revelation 7, some will be there because we told them about Jesus.

No wonder the earliest Christian creed of the church was composed by Christians who longed to be with Christ. Christ. They spoke of Him and said, Jesus Christ is Lord.

In light of this series can we say that too? Amen. Amen.