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Sermon Notes

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The Glory of God in Our Heavenly Memories

Earthly Kings Love to Show Off Their Glories

- Caesar Augustus: “I found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble.” Massive building projects designed to impress visitors with the overpowering grandeur of Rome.
- Kublai Khan: the successor to the great Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan, established Xanadu as the center of his glorious empire. It had staggering displays of the wealth and power of the Mongol Empire.
- Biblical examples:
 - Solomon and the Queen of Sheba... “There was no breath left in her”

Matthew 12:42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

- King Xerxes, who in Esther 1 put on a lavish display of the glories of the Persian Empire in his capital city, Susa, for 180 days.
- Nebuchadnezzar and his glorious Babylon

Daniel 4:30 "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

There is something very wrong about a human king saying this with no reference to God... but God himself will be putting his own glory on display eternally in his capital city—the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:9-11 One of the seven angels ... came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

- And God's glory will be on display not in the medium of marble (like Augustus) or polished crystal tiles colored vermilion, like Kublai Khan

- God's greatest displays of his glory will be in his people, redeemed from a sin-cursed world and made radiantly glorious.
- His incredible works in making that happen are almost limitless, and every one of them is worth studying

Book Thesis: A great part of the glory of God in heaven will consist in looking backward, in God revealing his mighty acts of redemptive history by which he redeemed a countless multitude from every tribe, language, people, and nation. This revelation of history will be for the amazement and joy of his redeemed and for the praise of his glory.

I. Meditation on the Heavenly Life

Colossians 3:1-4 **Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

A. My Method

1. Try to support everything I assert by both scripture texts and careful logical deductions from these texts (this is the usual procedure with all theology)

Westminster Confession of Faith: "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by **good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.**" 1.6.

2. Where I feel led to speculate (go beyond clear textual assertions), state it as speculation, but be willing to present it for consideration

II. Introductory Chapter: Heaven Illuminated by the Glory of God—Past, Present and Future

A. God's glory will illuminate heaven

Revelation 21:23-24 **The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.**

God's glory = the radiant display of his attributes

B. God's glory will be seen and savored by the redeemed

***Isaiah 43:6-7 Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth--
⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.***

The redeemed will both *see glory* and *be glory*.

C. God will not have the slightest beam of his glory lost

D. In heaven: God's glory in three senses: Past, Present, Future

1. Earthly Past, remembered in Heaven: the glory God deserves for his actions in this present age, especially in assembling the redeemed from every tribe, language, people, and nation
2. Heavenly Present: God's glory on display in himself and in the New Creation
 - a. By "present," I mean the world we will inhabit in eternity
 - b. Greatest display of God's glory will be in God himself; the redeemed will see the face of God

Revelation 22:3-5 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

c. In his new creation: the redeemed will see the glory of God shining in the New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem, and the Bride of Christ

3. Heavenly Future: God's glory on display in the unfolding history of events the redeemed will do in the New Heaven and New Earth

E. A Dynamic Heaven: Continual Education for the Redeemed

1. The redeemed will have perfect minds and hearts, including perfect memories
2. BUT they will not be omniscient... they will always be learning more and more of the details of God's glories—past, present, future

"Of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end" (Isa. 9:7)

F. Learning History in Heaven

1. No religion in the world so dependent on, interested in history
2. The limitations of human history
 - a. Not everything was recorded: John 20-21

- b. Many peoples had no written histories and their oral histories became extinct when the people died out
- c. Many hidden moments known only to God
- d. Human histories are biased, and often based on lies (Winston Churchill: "History is written by the victors"; Adolph Hitler: "the victor will never be asked if he told the truth.")
- e. "Fog of war"; what really happened at Gettysburg, at the Peach Orchard and Little Round Top?
- f. Humanity has systematically destroyed its history... the "Dark Ages"
- g. History is exceedingly complex... you could write a multivolume history of a single day; "With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years"
- h. AND ESPECIALLY: Most of God's people over two thousand have almost no knowledge of redemptive history, other than what was recorded in the Bible; most have had all they could do to survive, to keep themselves alive; to work hard with their own hands and had no leisure for academic pursuits

3. Therefore, God is robbed of his glory in his mighty acts in history

III. Our Perfected Heavenly Capacities

Hebrews 12:23 Spirits of righteous men made perfect

Perfect Minds: able to remember, track, focus, understand... attention span

Perfect Hearts: "heaven is a world of love"... loving what God loves, hating what God hates; delighting proportionately to the thing

Perfect Bodies: strength, energy, endurance, eyesight, hearing... able to "gaze at the sun" and live

- a. The "Circuit Breaker": we can't handle the full display!

Exodus 33:18-23 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." ¹⁹ And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

Daniel 10:16-19 I said to the one standing before me, "I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. ¹⁷ How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe."

¹⁸ Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. ¹⁹ "Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed," he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong." When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength."

B. Radical Christ-Centeredness...

1. Loss of fanatical commitment to self which plagues us FROM INFANCY
2. Fanatical commitment to self: staring at a mirror while visiting the Grand Canyon
3. To be SET FREE! Piper: "God's love is not shown in making much of you. It is shown in him freeing you from yourself in order that you may make much of HIM!"
4. Heaven is about drinking in the infinite greatness of the glory of God in the face of Christ... delighting in all that God is through Jesus Christ

C. Heaven is a World of Love

Jonathan Edwards, "Heaven is a World of Love":

"There is undoubtedly an inconceivably pure, sweet, and fervent love between the saints in glory; and that love is **in proportion to** the perfection and amiableness of the objects beloved, and therefore it must necessarily cause delight in them when they see that the happiness and glory of others are in proportion to their amiableness, and so in proportion to their love to them.

Those that are highest in glory, are those that are highest in holiness, and therefore are those that are most beloved by all the saints; for they most love those that are most holy, and so they will all rejoice in their being the most happy. And it will not be a grief to any of the saints to see those that are higher than themselves in holiness and likeness to God, more loved also than themselves, **for all shall have as much love as they desire, and as great manifestations of love as they can bear; and so all shall be fully satisfied;** and where there is perfect satisfaction, there can be no reason for envy."

1 Corinthians 15:41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

Not everyone is equally glorious in heaven, or equally honored in heaven... every saint in heaven will be fully satisfied in God but not equally satisfied in God... some vessels will have a "larger diameter" in heaven, but all vessels will be submerged in the infinite oceans of God's glory.

D. Proportional Reactions to Various Levels of Glory

E. Other People's Rewards Will Bring Us Delight as though they were our own

1 Corinthians 12:26 if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

IV. Scriptural Evidence that We Will Remember This Age for Eternity

A. Why people often recoil from the idea that God will reveal earthly history in heaven

Revelation 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

1. Shameful and painful memories

a. Our sins

b. Our sufferings

c. Our lost loved ones, damned to hell for eternity

2. Revelation 21:4 seems difficult to harmonize with perfect, full, detailed memories of this present age

3. Specifically with our sins, God has openly promised to remember them no more

Hebrews 8:12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

4. Scriptures that imply looking backward will be obsolete

Isaiah 65:17-18 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create

B. Ten Scriptural Evidences That We Will Remember Earth's History in Heaven

1. The God of Abraham... The Feast with Abraham

Matthew 22:31-32 But about the resurrection of the dead-- have you not read what God said to you, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

If our memories of this present age are wiped away, then people will lose their individuality and personality; their "names" will mean nothing. "Abraham" or

“David” will just be anonymous glorious beings in radiant robes if there is no memory of what they did on earth.

God’s promise to David:

2 Samuel 7:8-9 *"Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth.*

A “great name” = a great reputation... to be famous for mighty deeds and character

It is sinful for human beings to seek to make their own name great:

Genesis 11:4 *Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves...”*

But it is not sinful for God to make someone’s name great... and millennia later, God’s people still remember David’s victory over Goliath and the other great events of his life. That’s what makes David who he is, different than others. Why would all that history (name) be wiped away in heaven?

Jesus will be eternally remembered as the “Son of David”

Revelation 5:5-6 *Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne...*

Revelation 22:16 *"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."*

Therefore David is eternally remembered too.

2. The covenant promise to Abraham concerning the land; Hebrews 11... they died not receiving the promises

Genesis 13:14-15 *The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.*

Hebrews 11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.

There are unfulfilled promises... God will most certainly keep those promises. But in order for God's faithfulness to those promises to be celebrated, those promises and their earthly circumstances must be remembered in heaven.

3. Ephesians 2:7... Continual display of grace

Ephesians 2:6-7 God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

We cannot celebrate God's grace to us as sinners without remembering that we were sinners. How can we thank God for redeeming us by the blood of the Lamb without remembering what "redemption" is, and that our sins needed to be covered by that atonement?

Look at the celebration of that grace in Revelation 1:

Revelation 1:5-6 To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father-- to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Look at the word "redeemed" ascribed to those in heaven:

Revelation 14:3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

If the record of our sins is completely lost, than how can we thank God for his grace? How can we understand "redemption"?

4. Rewards

a. All rewards in heaven are based on works done on earth

Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 10:42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

Luke 14:13-14 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

- b. If there's no story, there's no glory!!
- c. Olympic medals are given for achievements in specific events at specific times; an Olympic medal severed from that history is meaningless
- d. So also a Congressional Medal of Honor is tied to a specific story of valor; the actual actions of the soldier are written down in a testimony

For example, Pfc Desmond Doss, a combat medic with the U.S. Army who showed astonishing courage in saving the lives of between 50 and 100 fellow soldiers during the Battle of Okinawa, received the Medal of Honor from President Harry Truman on October 12, 1945. Here is his citation:

Pfc Doss was a company aid man when the 1st Battalion assaulted a jagged escarpment 400 feet high. As our troops gained the summit, a heavy concentration of artillery, mortar and machinegun fire crashed into them, inflicting approximately 75 casualties and driving the others back. Pfc. Doss refused to seek cover and remained in the fire-swept area with the many stricken, carrying them one by one to the edge of the escarpment and there lowering them on a rope-supported litter down the face of a cliff to friendly hands. ...When an American was severely wounded by fire from a cave, Pfc. Doss crawled to him where he had fallen 25 feet from the enemy position, rendered aid, and carried him 100 yards to safety while continually exposed to enemy fire. On 21 May, in a night attack on high ground near Shuri, he remained in exposed territory while the rest of his company took cover, fearlessly risking the chance that he would be mistaken for an infiltrating Japanese and giving aid to the injured until he was himself seriously wounded in the legs by the explosion of a grenade. Rather than call another aid man from cover, he cared for his own injuries and waited 5 hours before litter bearers reached him and started carrying him to cover. The trio was caught in an enemy tank attack and Pfc. Doss, seeing a more critically wounded man nearby, crawled off the litter; and directed the bearers to give their first attention to the other man. Awaiting the litter bearers' return, he was again struck, this time suffering a compound fracture of his arm. With magnificent fortitude he bound a rifle stock to his shattered arm as a splint and then crawled 300 yards over rough terrain to the aid station. Through his outstanding bravery and unflinching determination in the face of desperately dangerous conditions Pfc. Doss saved the lives of many soldiers. His name

became a symbol throughout the 77th Infantry Division for outstanding gallantry far above and beyond the call of duty.

- e. So all heavenly rewards are specifically tied to actions done by the people of God in specific places and times and in specific ways
- f. Furthermore, since God himself prepared and orchestrated these good works, and since he is specifically displayed as a glorious God by them, the saints all give him full credit for their works and he wants them displayed forever in heaven

John 3:20-21 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

Isaiah 26:12 LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.

Revelation 4:10-11 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ¹¹ "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

5. The Words of Christ

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

6. The Wounds of the Lamb: Christ's redeeming works will be known and celebrated eternally

Revelation 5:12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

7. The Consistent pattern of studying the works of the Lord now must not end in heaven (Ps. 111:1-2)... "Come and see what God has done" (Psalm 66:5)
"Come and see the desolations" (Ps. 46:8)

Psalm 150:1-2 Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!

[Note: Psalm 150 shows the two great ways God shows us his glory: 1) direct revelation of his person... by seeing his face; 2) indirect revelation of his nature by his actions (deeds) in history. In heaven the saints will “see his face”, and soak in his glory directly. But in heaven, the saints and angels also praise God for his mighty deeds as well.]

Psalm 9:11 Sing praises to the LORD, who sits enthroned in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds!

Psalm 40:5 You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

Psalm 66:1-4 Shout for joy to God, all the earth; ² sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! ³ Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. ⁴ All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.”

Psalm 77:11-14 I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. ¹² I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. ¹³ Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? ¹⁴ You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.

Psalm 111:1-4 Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. ² Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. ³ Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. ⁴ He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

8. The Makeup of the redeemed in Revelation 7... their stories travelled with them; ethnicity retained; “Who are they, where did they come from?” (Rev. 7:14)

Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Revelation 7:13-14 Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes-- who are they, and where did they come from?” ¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

9. "In Memory of Her": why would it stop in heaven? Mary in Bethany who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume

Matthew 26:13 "I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

10. Thanksgiving consummated in heaven... Revelation 4 (living creatures give thanks); Ps. 103 "forget not ALL his benefits"; Jas 1:17 EVERY good gift; the Samaritan leper came back and thanked the Lord

Psalm 103:2-3 Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases

Luke 17:15-18 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him-- and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

11. Romans 9 and the full display of the reprobate

Romans 9:22-24 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction? ²³ What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- ²⁴ even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

Job 21:7-13 Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? ⁸ They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes. ⁹ Their homes are safe and free from fear; the rod of God is not upon them. ¹⁰ Their bulls never fail to breed; their cows calve and do not miscarry. ¹¹ They send forth their children as a flock; their little ones dance about. ¹² They sing to the music of tambourine and harp; they make merry to the sound of the flute. ¹³ They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace.

So... when does God display his power over the reprobate?

The Eternally Glorious Backward Look

Chapter Titles

Chapter 1: Lost Treasures Reclaimed

Chapter 2: Biblical Proof of Heavenly Memories

Chapter 3: God Alone Knows the Past

Chapter 4: Resurrected Bodies, Minds, and Hearts

Chapter 5: Better Than Virtual Reality

Chapter 6: A Difficult Judgment Day

Chapter 7: Rewards: Unequal Capacity for Heavenly Glory

Chapter 8: The Grand Plan Explained At Last

Chapter 9: Hero Stories and Amazing Providences

Chapter 10: Spiritual Warfare Reviewed and Celebrated

Chapter 11: God's Control and Conquest of Hostile Rulers

Chapter 12: Obscure People and Events Finally Revealed

Chapter 13: Of Personal Interest: Our Spiritual Heritage

Chapter 14: Our Sins and Sufferings Redeemed

Chapter 15: Memories of the Damned

Chapter 16: Our Education in Evil Consummated

Chapter 17: Applications: How Much Heaven Do You Want?