

Communion

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Date: 20 November 2016

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[0 : 00] We look at the cup and the bread, and each time we do this, we ought to remind ourselves what is behind all this.

These are symbols, but what is it exactly that they are symbolizing? Because the value is not in these things at all. It's in what these things stand for.

There's nothing magical or mystical about partaking of these elements. You are not made a better person if you eat the cracker and drink some of the juice.

It doesn't produce any special effect in you at all. It's all about everything that lies behind this, and these are designed to simply be memorials.

They are a remembrance. Our Lord said, this do in remembrance of me. And I was just thinking just last night, where did this all begin?

[1 : 17] Let's think back and go back as far as we can as to what's the origin of this anyway. Well, I guess it's natural to go back to Calvary.

We tend to think of that as being the origin, but it isn't. It goes back further than that. It goes back further than Bethlehem.

It goes back further than that. Actually, it goes all the way back to eternity. Now, how are we going to phrase that?

What are we going to think about that? Call that. Every preacher needs a message title. So, we'll call it From Eternity to Here.

But that has a kind of a familiar ring to it. If you just change the words around a little bit, you get From Here to Eternity. Was it Burt Lancaster and Frank Sinatra?

[2 : 32] Made that movie that they all won Oscars for back in the 1950s? From Here to Eternity. So, we're not going from here to eternity.

We're going from eternity to here. And I would direct your attention for just a few moments to a couple of passages in the Revelation that we have referred to, I'm sure, at some time in the past as regards the reason for everything or anything.

And that question that has plagued philosophers for thousands of years is the age-old question of why is there something rather than nothing? And the only place that I can find in all of the Scriptures that give an answer to that question is here in Revelation 4.

Now, we have not arrived here yet. In our morning service, we have undertaken an exposition of the book of Revelation, verse by verse, but we are as yet still in chapter 3.

And we're going to look ahead a little bit. You'll get more elaboration on this passage when we come to it. That will be sometime next year. But for now, we want to look at Revelation chapter 4 and a very extraordinary thing that John witnesses as he has provided this vision, this vision in advance.

[4 : 04] It is as if John is being given a panoramic vision of everything that is going to transpire.

And then he is told, Now, John, everything that you have witnessed, everything that you have seen, write it down.

And he did. And that's what we're going to be reading, at least in part. The scene is described as taking place in heaven, and John is witnessing this.

And we'll have to just begin with verse 5 of chapter 4, which says, And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.

And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. We've defined these earlier, and we will later on again.

[5 : 11] 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.

Now, we're going to find what we would consider to be abnormalities, like these described here, all throughout this book of the Revelation, because, in the events that are going to transpire, which are yet future, there is going to be a super abundance of supernatural things, unlike anything that we have ever seen in our lifetime.

It's going to characterize the Revelation. There's going to be a great deal of angelic activity, the likes of which none of us have ever seen. And there will be an escalation of demonic activity that will be present with that.

And these elements will surface time and again throughout the Revelation, as the earth is subjected to cataclysmic events that will be taking place in the atmosphere and above the atmosphere.

It's going to be a time utterly unlike the world has ever seen before, or ever be able to imagine.

Certain creatures are going to be described that we look at the description thereof and we say, that sounds like a very extraordinary, ugly kind of thing, kind of ogreish or whatever.

[6 : 50] And it's only because we are so limited with what we call normal to our frame of reference and what we call normal with people and their appearance and animals with which we are familiar, we call those normal.

But there's going to be a whole lot of things that we would probably characterize as abnormality and yet they will not be abnormal at all to the one who created them and brought them into existence.

And part of them are described here. Verse 7, the first creature was like a lion and he doesn't say it was a lion, but he is going to use this word like over and over again.

And the reason he's going to use that word like is because that's what it reminds him of. And he isn't saying it's a lion, but he's saying, reminds me of a lion.

It's like a lion. And the second creature, like a calf. And the third creature had a face like that of a man.

[8 : 01] And 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, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.

And 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, I really wish I knew who these are.

all kinds of theories abound as to the identity of these 24 elders. But none of them can present what you might call an ironclad case.

The jury is still out on these 24 elders. But we are told what they will do. They 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 art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power.

[9 : 40] For thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they existed and were created. Now, as I mentioned earlier, this is the only reference I know of in all of the Bible that actually explains to us why there is anything.

And I think some of you probably have a King James reference and I think it says something to the effect that thou didst create all things and because of thy good pleasure they were and are created. And that simply means the word pleasure, of course, related to the word please, simply means that God was pleased to do this. Why was he pleased to do this?

We haven't a clue. All we can say is he thought it was a good idea. It was according to his good pleasure to bring anything that he wanted into existence.

So, we're talking about the beginning of eternity in a time when there was absolutely nothing or no one, no earth, no planets, no universe, no solar system, no starry heavens, none of these things existed, no humans, no angels, no animals, no nothing.

[11 : 01] No materiality. No materiality. Nothing physical even existed. But there was God.

And this God is a spirit being. He is immaterial in his essence and his character and his makeup. He is spiritual.

He does not occupy time nor space. He created time and space because he needed those to accommodate materiality.

So, here we have this God, this being, this infinite one. And by the way, we use the word infinite in the sense that he is without limitation.

That's infinite. Without limitation. Existing in a tripartite being. Father, Son, and Spirit.

[12:10] All were Spirit in their essence. God is not material. He is not made of flesh and bone. He is immaterial.

And no materiality existed at all. The Father is the Spirit being, the Son. was a Spirit being. Jesus Christ did not always have a body. He existed in Spirit form with His Father and with the Holy Spirit. I do not know the difference between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Father or of the Son. But I know there was no materiality there. We just cannot conceive of a time like this. And we are told that this God inhabits eternity.

That's where He dwells. And eternity is not materiality. It is immaterial. And again, we just cannot get our brains around that because we are such creatures of time and space we can't imagine existence without it.

[13:24] And yet, Jesus wasn't even Jesus then because He wasn't Jesus until He became a human being and the angel said, You shall call His name Jesus or He shall save His people from their sins.

So, prior to the incarnation, He wasn't Jesus, but He was always the eternal Son with the eternal Father and the eternal Spirit.

And all three of these beings are going to be active participants in the creation of materiality. It's in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

And the word for God's there in the Hebrew Bible is quite literally a plural. It is Elohim. But the Jews, because of course they are committed to the idea and the concept of there just being one God, and there is just one God, but this one God subsists in three persons, and He is a compound unity. They could not bring themselves to render God in the plural, so they put it in the singular. God created. But in the Hebrew, it's Elohim, and it's a plural, and it involves plurality of persons, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the earth.

[14:47] So the Father and the Son and the Spirit are all operative in creation. And this is that for which these twenty-four elders are praising God.

You are worthy to be worshipped, honor, power, glory, because by your great power you created all things, and by your pleasure they were and are created.

So God brought something that pleased him into existence simply because he wanted to do it. Beyond that, we have no other rationale.

He hasn't told us anything else. But then questions automatically surface in the minds of I think probably all thinking people. Well, when God decided to create and create human beings and create this planet earth for them to live on and created angels.

I mean, there was a time when there were no angels. These angels are spirit beings as well. And when he created them and brought them into existence, he did so for his own good pleasure just because it pleased him to do it.

[16:09] And very often the question has been asked, did God have any idea what he was getting into? Didn't he know that this angel that he...

Do you realize that Lucifer was God's masterpiece? Didn't he know?

I mean, he's supposed to know everything, right? That's part of his job description. Didn't he know that Lucifer was going to rebel against him and recruit a third of the other angels that God had created to do likewise?

Didn't he know that? And if he did, why did he create him? Or why, why did he create Lucifer with the capacity of rebelling against him?

God? But consider the alternative. He could have created Lucifer and the other angels with a built-in compliance factor where they couldn't do anything but comply with the wishes of the Almighty.

[17:29] They would not be able to go astray because they would not have a free will. they would be pre-programmed to obey just like automatons.

And he could have created human beings the same way. What kind of a world would that be? Can't imagine a world with six billion robots, everybody doing everything they're supposed to do and nobody's doing anything that they aren't supposed to do.

What kind of a world would that be? Well, it would probably be a peaceful world. It would be a world without chaos. It would be a world without crime. It would be a world without death and all of those things that accompany it.

But is an obedience that is involuntary, is it worth anything?

Every parent wants their child to obey obey because they choose to obey, not because they're afraid you're going to beat the stuffings out of them if they don't obey.

[18 : 41] You want willful obedience, intelligent obedience. And it's no different with God. The same way with love. Love and obedience are two sides of the same coin, really.

Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. Reflect your love by your obedience. And it is a voluntary, willful thing.

So God created us as volitional creatures that has the power to obey or disobey. And yet, even that is somewhat skewed because of that sin factor that was implanted in our first parents and passed on to us, it's called a propensity, an inclination, a natural bent to sin and selfishness because as I've often said, the first and perhaps the most startling consequence of the fall is our self-centeredness. That really came to the surface. And we are all in our fallen nature essentially self-centered creatures. And in a sense, that's a good thing because that's where self-preservation comes from also.

The desire to survive and to stay alive because we are essentially self-centered. So God knowing full well that this whole thing that he created, which he originally was able to pronounce very good.

[20 : 17] The end of chapter one makes that clear. God looked upon everything that he created and he said, it's very good. But he couldn't say that after chapter three. Because everything came crashing down.

The fall occurred. And from that fall, death, ruination, sin, heartache, war, everything that comes from man's fallen nature.

So God knowing full well that all of these things were going to transpire, he did it anyway. He created the world anyway.

And the angels and people anyway. Because along with that, he also provided for for cure.

He provided for redemption. And that's in chapter five. And if you look at Revelation chapter five, and we've got these 24 elders again in verse eight.

[21 : 27] And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song. Now they were singing a song in chapter four. The song they were singing there was the song of creation. But now in verse nine, they're singing a new song.

And it is, Worthy art thou to take the book and to break its seals for or because thou was slain and didst purchase for God with thy blood.

This is speaking to the son in regards to the father. You did purchase for God with thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

And thou has made them to be a kingdom and priest to our God and they will reign upon the earth.

So the first phase of worship in chapter four, they were worshiping God because of creation, that he created all things for his pleasure.

[22 : 45] And here in chapter five, they are worshiping him because in that creation, he also built into it the reality of redemption that would buy back that which was lost.

This is what Christianity is all about. This is the essence of the Christian faith. It is redemption. It is the buying back that which was lost.

It is paying the supreme and ultimate price to recapture what was forfeited. And it is the most glorious thing in all the world. The Bible calls it the gospel, the good news.

And the good news is Jesus Christ made a way for all to be redeemed. He made a way for us to get back to God, to regain that which was lost.

That's what these elements symbolize. That whole story, the drama of redemption, is actually symbolized and wrapped up in a little piece of a cracker and a little bit of grape juice.

[23 : 56] Isn't that something? It is amazing. And I'm never able to come and partake of these elements without thinking in terms of from eternity to here.

Just amazing. Absolutely amazing. Wow. Infinite God.

Would you open your hymnals, please, to number 305? Jesus paid it all.

I'd like to sing those first three verses. And elders, if you would, please, make yourselves available as we sing the fourth verse, and we will prepare for communion. I hear the Savior say, Strength indeed is small.

Child of weakness, watch and pray. Find in me thine all in all. Jesus paid it all.

[25 : 29] All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.

Lord, now in deep find thy power and thine alone can change the leper spots and build the heart of school.

Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. sin had left a crimson stain.

He washed it white as snow. For nothing good am I whereby thy grace to claim.

I'll wash my garments white in the blood of Calvary's land. In the blood of Calvary's land. Jesus paid it all.

[26 : 50] All to Him I owe. Sin left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.

And when before the throne I stand in Him complete.

Jesus died my soul to save. My lips shall still repeat. Jesus paid it all.

All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain.

He washed it white as snow. Amen. Amen. Amen. We invite you to partake of the Lord's table with us if you have a personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ and you are a member of His body, which is the church.

[28 : 02] And membership in Grace Bible Church is not a requirement. But as we said in the bulletin, membership in His church, the body, certainly is. And partaking of these elements will not transform anyone into a Christian.

But it simply is an indication that you have already been transformed as a believer. And in memorial for who Christ is and what He did, you are partaking of these elements in a corporate sense here with other members of the body of Christ, members of like precious faith.

So it is both an occasion of great solemnity that we partake because we reflect upon that which made it possible.

And that was the substitutionary death of the only truly sinless person who ever lived. That was the greatest miscarriage of justice from a human standpoint that ever occurred.

But in addition to the solemnity, it is with great jubilation and rejoicing because of who He is and what He did for us and the fact that He's coming again.

[29 : 18] And we know not the hour, but even so, come Lord Jesus. So, with these thoughts in mind, let us partake of the bread. Let us partake of the bread.

It was a common piece of bread, much like our pancake, that Jesus would have used the night that He was betrayed and breaking off a piece of it.

He handed it to the one next to Him and said each of them were to break off a piece of that loaf because this represented His body that would be given for them.

You may be sure, that night of the betrayal and the institution of the Last Supper would have been a time of great perplexity for those apostles because they had no idea what was going to transpire a mere 12 hours into the future.

But, of course, He did. And even though what He was telling them at the time did not fully register with them at all, it would come back in a very vivid fashion after those events had transpired and they would be able to recall with great detail that night.

[31 : 03] They would be saying to themselves, So, that's why. So, now we understand. So, it didn't make much sense then. We couldn't figure out exactly what was going on.

But now, it all comes together. And when He said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, I'm sure that was additionally perplexing to them because they had no idea that He was going to pay the price He was going to pay in order to provide for their redemption.

But then again, later, of course, it all became crystal clear to them. Do you open your hymnal, please, to number 310? Let's sing that first stanza, Lead Me to Calvary, number 310.

Amen. Lemme read, and Romans, oiled me to pay In prelude Draft.

King of Thy life, Thy crown me now, Thy shall the glory be, Bl s I forget Thy born found lead me to Calvary.

[32 : 29] Lest I forget the assembly, lest I forget thy agony, lest I forget thy love for me, lead me to Calvary.

Then he took the cup. Jesus said, As often as you eat this bread and drink of this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death until he comes.

Would you pray with me, please? Father, we are truly grateful and blessed people to be able to be together for an occasion like this, to be unhindered by any authorities, such as are often present in other parts of the world, where believers do not begin to enjoy the freedoms that we do.

We do not take these for granted, and we thank you once again for those valiant individuals who fought long and hard to preserve the liberties and freedoms that we so richly enjoy today. We do not take their sacrifice for granted. Thank you for their devotion and their consecration. We are happy beneficiaries of it.

[34 : 05] We ask now that as we depart and go our ways, you will allow us to enjoy to the maximum the Thanksgiving season that is before us, being mindful that for those who are in Christ, our Thanksgiving is every day, all year long.

But even once a year, those in our world here in the USA are brought to a time of reflecting upon a time of Thanksgiving, and we are grateful for that.

We trust that it may lead some of them to ponder the ultimate meaning of Thanksgiving. Thank you for the presence of each one here today. Thank you for your own presence, and thank you for providing us the information that you have in your word that gives us answers we otherwise would never have.

We rejoice in it. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen. I'm going to ask the elders to pass the offering plates.

We do this in conjunction with our elders' benevolent fund, and it's entirely possible that you may not be prepared to respond to that today, but we would advise you that any time during the year that anyone would like to make a contribution and designate it for the benevolent fund, all you need to do is put it in an envelope and just mark on the envelope the benevolent fund, and we will see to it that it is channeled in that direction.

[35 : 37] One hundred cents of every dollar that is given is used expressly to meet the physical, material needs of people, if not in our congregation, in our community, as the need arises and at the discretion of the Board of Elders.

It is a discretionary fund that has been established for their use, and we appreciate it so very much. So thank you for your generosity. And let's sing that last stanza as they are passing the plates, please.

If you can do that and handle the hymnal and the plates and all the rest. Number 310 and the fourth stanza. May I be willing, Lord, to bear daily my cross for Thee, Even the cup of grain to share, Thou hast borne all for me.

Lest I forget Gethsemane, Lest I forget Thine agony, Lest I forget Thy love for me, Lead me to Calvary, Lest I forget Thine agony, Lest I forget Thine agony, Lest I forget Thine agony, Lest I forget Thine agony, Lest I forget Thy love for me,

Lead me to Calvary. The Scripture said, And after they had sung an hymn, They went out.

[38 : 17] I met Malcolm JonBen speaking out. I know that went by that period. I've got my hand on Bul break now. Choosing an hymn. I Lord pent ob Air mosquito, Loesper my pad ■■■■.