They shall see my face

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0:00] Now let's turn back in God's Word to Revelation chapter 22 and verse 4. Revelation 22, verse 4.

They shall see his face. The reference is to Christians who have gone to heaven.
And there in heaven they see their Savior. Not as they saw him here on earth, by faith, without the vision of sight, but they see him as he is, face to face.
The minister is asked to supervise the congregation as interim moderator.
And one of the responsibilities that an interim moderator has is to arrange preachers for each succeeding Sunday.
[1:36] Well, it so happened that although he had made his arrangements well in advance, that with just a week to go, the arrangement for a particular Sunday fell through.

And he had great difficulty finding somebody else. He phoned round, but unsuccessfully. It so happened that in his own congregation, there was a retired minister.
And so, at the close of the Sunday morning service, he asked this retired minister if he would preach in that other congregation the following week.
He refused.
He said, He said, And so he agreed to take the services.
[3:47] His servants, they shall see. They do see now his face. And I'd like to try.

It's only to try. But thank God we have the revelation of his word to help us. But to try to try to reflect with you on what it is that they see as they, Christians in heaven now, as they see the face of Jesus Christ, their Saviour.
Heaven, of course, far surpasses our imagination. We're told something. We're told something. We're told something. Just glimpses of what it's like.
But words, even the best of them, even the most eloquent and fluent and most spiritual of preachers, can never hope to portray all that heaven and Christ at the center of the heavenly throng really are.
You remember the words of Ezekiel. Ezekiel, after his magnificent vision in the first chapter of his book, we're told of the lightnings and the thunders.
[5:06] We're told of the flashing rainbows. We're told of so much, the whirling wheels, all of it giving an impression of grandeur and awe and majesty and mystery.

And at the end of it, Ezekiel, groping for words, he says this. He says, this, what I've described to you, this was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.
That's all, he said. I can't tell you anymore. Words and human experience fail me. Now it's true that where the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned, our weak understanding is helped by the incarnation. The eternal Son of God became man. He took our nature. And on the pages of the Gospels, we see him. We see something of what our blessed Lord was and is.
But even so, although we are helped through the incarnation, yet it is so feeble because of our weak understanding, the vision, the understanding that we can really have.
[6:24] So to help us, what I want to do is to take four key elements that you find in the book of Revelation associated with Jesus Christ in glory.

As he is now. As he is now. And as they. Our Christian brothers and sisters who have preceded us. As they see him now.
The first of these four elements is light. Where you read of Jesus Christ in heaven. You read constantly of light.
Of dazzling, brilliant light. Let me just read verses here and there. 21, verse 23. 22, verse 23.

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And that light which we read the Lamb is. That light which comes from Jesus Christ, the glorious, eternal, exalted one, is reflected in the city of which he is the king.
[7:59] Is reflected through all of heaven's glory. That's the whole point of what we read in verses 9 to 21 of the New Jerusalem. It uses human language.

It uses the most beautiful descriptions that we humans can imagine. All these marvelous, precious stones. With all their brilliant facets.
And all the uniting harmony of their glory. It all speaks of Jesus Christ. Who is the light of the city. Light of the city. And of course, when we're told that Jesus Christ is light.
Light excludes darkness. Inevitably, if there is light, there's no darkness. And that fact has at least two conclusions that we can draw from it.
It's only when there is light that you can appreciate beauty. You may have the most marvelous landscape and scenery in the world.
[9:05] But if it's nighttime, might as well not be there. You can't enter into the beauty of it. There may be seated in a room the most beautiful woman and the most handsome man that we might ever see.

But if it's plunged in darkness, they might as well be the ugliest persons that ever existed. We can't appreciate their beauty unless there is light.
And so the Bible stresses, can only use, because of our weakened understanding, metaphors, phrases that would at least give us some concept of the beauty and the glory of our blessed Savior.
He is taking, for example, the Song of Songs as one of our helps in this area. He is the fairest of ten thousand. He is the altogether lovely one. He is the rose of Sharon.
He is the lily of the valley. He is, as we read here, the bright and morning star. And Christian men and women there in glory, what do they do? They see the King in all his beauty.
[10:14] Land of far distances. And so light speaks to us, not just of the beauty of the Lord Jesus, who he is, his person, his attributes.

What he has done. But our appreciation, our full appreciation of the beauty and glory of our blessed Lord.
But the fact that he is described as light and surrounded by light not only stresses beauty, but it also, of course, stresses purity.
The writers of the New Testament use this figure constantly, taking darkness as symbolic of what is ugly and evil and wicked.
Flee, we're told, the hidden things of darkness. When we're urged to a life of vigilance as Christian people, we're told that those who sleep, sleep in the night.
[11:13] Those who are drunk, are drunk in the night. And we're told that we are children of the day. Children of the light. And so as we read of the Lord Jesus Christ, light and surrounded by light, it speaks to us, of course, firstly, of his purity.

He is pure and spotless. He is as he was. And because he is such, that purity of his becomes a property of his people also.
And so we've got some of these marvelous passages that speak of the shining purity, not only of the Savior, but of his people made pure through him. Chapter 7, verses 13 and 14.
One of the elders asked me, who are these arrayed in white robes and where did they come from? And I said to him, sir, you know. So he said to me, these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
19, verse 7. Let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his wife has made herself ready. And to her, that is to the church, to Christians, it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints.
[12:40] And also, of course, since light contrasts with darkness, purity therefore contrasts with wickedness, immorality, sin, unrighteousness.

And we have this constant, in the book of Revelation, referring to heaven, we have this constant contrast, the tension between the glory there and that which is excluded from that glory.
21, verse 26. There shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it, but there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles or causes an abomination or a lie.
And into the next chapter, 22, at verse 12. Speaking of the Lord Jesus, in verse 13. He, the Alpha, and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

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Blessed are those who do his commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter through the gates into the city. But this is a city of light. This is a city of purity and of holiness. And therefore, it is outside that there are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and whoever loves and practices a lie.
[13:57] Our blessed Lord was pure here on earth. Which of you convinces me of sin, he could say to his accusers.

But even he was surrounded by sin in this sinful world. Even he was, in some respects, affected by sin.
He suffered because of sin. When he was weary. When he was hungry. When he was discouraged and disappointed and grieved in his soul.
It was ultimately because of sin. Because sin had marred this glorious creation of God. But there, there is no sin.
All is light and purity. And therefore we read that they, his people, shall see his face. And his servants shall serve him.
[14:54] And nobody there is ever going to say in that sinless place, Oh, I'm too tired. It's too much of a chore. Oh, yes, I know that there's work to do for God.

But really, I need to take it easy for a while. No, we won't say that there. His servants will serve him. They will rejoice to serve him.
There will be no sin. There will be no excuses. There will be no holding back in our service for our blessed Lord and Master. One of the probably most striking memories that I have as a child of the wartime years, through which I passed as a child, was at the end, when the lights went on.
If you're not old enough to have gone through the war, you'll not know what it was like to live the blackout, where every window had to be absolutely chink-free, so that no light, not even the slightest sliver of light, might penetrate.
I remember on one occasion the local policeman, and we have to admit that in a little rural village in the north of Scotland, where we perhaps, I think once in the whole course of the war, had an enemy plane dropping bombs within any remote distance from us, it might have seemed perhaps a little over the top to be insisting along these lines, but I remember the local policeman coming once and calling our attention to the fact that we had left the bathroom light on without having put the blackout.
[16:34] And so we had to live in darkness. You learn to appreciate the stars and the moon. We never see it here in the city. There are other lights.

Then we knew what it meant to use the light of the stars and the light of the moon. And then, when the war was over, the lights went on, and people would throw open their curtains and throw away the blackouts, and the cars would go with their full headlights on, not the dipped headlights as they always had to do in the war.
And as children, we'd go out with our torches and wave them into the sky. The lights went on. It was a marvelous thing to rejoice, and you knew that there was peace because there was light.
Well, how petty, how trivial, that light, compared to the glory of the light that is there in heaven. The Lamb is the light, and they see him. The second element that I want to refer to is that of music.
Many years ago, we had a friend, a retired principal of an American school.
[17:47] He belonged to the Christian Brethren. And he used to say to us, you know, there's something that I want, that I long to experience in heaven. I want to hear God sing.

Now, first time I heard it, I wondered, is that very reverent? But of course, being a good member of the Christian Brethren, he had his Bible text to support everything he said.
And he quoted from Zephaniah. We haven't time to read the whole verse, Zephaniah 3.17, but it ends in this way. God shall rejoice over them, his people, with singing.
And as you read through the book of Revelation, you find that there is an emphasis on song, largely true, the song of the redeemed. But that song stems from the Redeemer, from the Lord Jesus Christ.
When John had that marvelous vision of Christ in chapter 1, at verse 15, after describing his purity and his dazzling beauty, he goes on to say, his voice was as the sound of many waters.
[18:59] That's actually a quotation from Ezekiel 43. It goes on in chapter 14 to describe that voice from heaven as being like the sound of many waters and as harpists, thousands of harpists, playing their harps.

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What does that convey to you? The sound of many waters. Power, no doubt. The breakers beating incessantly on the shore. There is the mighty power of the waves.
But there is melody. It's not just noise. Harpists, thousands and tens of thousands of them playing their harps. The power and the melody of the music of heaven, led by our blessed Redeemer himself.
And so we read of how this voice, the sound of many waters, becomes the voice not just of the Lamb of God himself, but of all his redeemed people.
Chapter 19, at verse 6, you'll see that again there is a talk of the sound of many waters. But this time it is the chorus of the people of God. And what do they sing?
[20:11] Well, we know what they sing. They sing of the glory and the majesty of the God who has redeemed them, of the redemption that is theirs through Jesus Christ.

Chapter 5, verse 8. There we read of the, verse 9, they sang a new song saying, You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals. For you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation and have made us kings and priests to our God.
and we shall reign on the earth. You can go on into chapter 15. You'll find something similar. The great song of the redeemed people of God. What music there in heaven.
The best concerts here on earth have to come to an end. Some of you are very musical. You can enter into the sublimeness of even earthly music.
The glory and the wonder of concerts and singers. I have to confess that it's one of my desires that's never been fulfilled here on earth.
[21:20] But it will be there to appreciate music. To be able to sing even the limited degree that others can. There, there will be no limitations.

And the concert there, the music there, will never, ever end. And there's something else. You may go to a marvelous concert.
You may be transported, if you're able to appreciate it, transported ecstatically by the sublimeness and the beauty of the music to which you listen.
And yet, though you might be tempted to say, what wonderful people. these people who play and who sing in that way, who lift my soul so high, how wonderful they must be.
But the musicians are sinners like everyone else. And I'm told that if we knew them, we would find among them as among any other group the same backbiting, the same envy, the same greed, the same jealousy, the same pride, but not there, not there.
[22:35] For those who sing, they've been redeemed. They're pure. They're sinless. And they sing sinlessly the praises of the Lamb. There's light.

There's music. The third element that is constantly brought before us is that of victory. they see his face, the victorious, all-conquering Christ.
That note is struck again and again. John, in his opening vision, verse 13 of chapter 1, describes for us one like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, girded about the chest with a golden band.
His head and his hair were white like wool, and he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword, and so on. And the majesty, the authority, the triumph of this Christ seated upon the throne is brought before us in many of these great passages of Revelation.
Chapter 5, verse 5, the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open the scroll. Chapter 12, verse 10, there we read of the nations of the world having become the nations of our God.
[23:54] Salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ have come. For the accuser of our brethren who accused them before our God day and night has been cast down and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.

And then you go on to that magnificent passage in chapter 19 from verse 11 onwards, which ends in this magnificent way. He has in his robe and on his thigh a name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
He is the victorious Christ who has defeated sin and Satan and all his enemies. Oh, it's true that here on earth there is still rebellion against Jesus Christ.
You and I go about the streets of this great city and we see rebellion all around us. We feel it, we sense it, we hear it. We know that his authority is not acknowledged by this world but he is still the victor.

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He has conquered sin and Satan. He has destroyed the devil and all his works. However much God in his sovereign wisdom allows Satan a little time yet to wreak his havoc.
[25:00] But there, what do those who see his face, what do they see? Well, we're told all about it. We're told of the great red dragon, the symbol of Satan himself. We're told of him being cast down into the depths of hell.

We're told of the beasts, the first and the second beast who take his authority and serve him and seek to deceive the nations. We're told of their being struck down and of their being sent also to the lake of fire that burns forever and ever.
Christ, victorious. And his people enjoy and know and triumph in his victory. Here, isn't it true, the church advances.
We know times of blessing, even times of revival. And we pray for these. We wait for such times to come again. But even in the greatest revival, that is that of man and of sin.
And so the church often has to retreat and there is an ebb tide. No doubt we're living in an ebb tide in our own land in this day. But God can bring in again the tide of his great blessing.
[26:07] But there, it will not be advancing and retreating. He conquers forever and forever. And lastly, we find this element constantly referred to.

And that is love. Or the word concept is debased in this world in which we live. We hear it sung about.
Supposedly, we see it exalted and read about it in the world's press. But in this world it's so debased. Even though among ourselves it is true, as Jesus said, that there can be great expressions of love.
A man can lay down his life for his friends. A mother's tender care towards the child she bears is a marvelous thing. And we find these and many other expressions of love. But there it is love poured out.
poured out from Jesus Christ who loved his people from the foundation from before the foundation of the world and loves them still. And so we read of the wonderful expression of the love of God through Jesus Christ to his people there.
[27:17] Chapter 7, verse 15. There before the throne of God day and night they shall neither hunger any more nor thirst any more. The sun shall not strike them nor any heat for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.

Go on to chapter 21, chapter 22. Read further of the great love of God shepherding, caring for, bringing his people into ever more wonderful experiences of his grace and his mercy and his love.
And what's at the heart of it? Well of course there we're reminded that the title that is given most of all to the Lord Jesus in this book of Revelation is that of the Lamb. And the Lamb of course is the one that was slain.
Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And this is what these people who right now while we're worshipping God here in the city of London, others they're worshipping them there and at the heart of their worship is this.
They worship the Lamb. The Lamb who died for them. Who shed his precious blood that they might be redeemed. You are worthy to take the scroll for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood.
[28:31] Or once again in another of these great songs in chapter 7 these are the ones who came out of great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Is it any wonder that Samuel Rutherford in his letters an exile he a prisoner he but looking towards glory he said the Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land and in a poetic form in which we've come to know some of Samuel Rutherford's writings there is this climax isn't there that there more than the victory more than the light more than the music there is Jesus himself and his servants serve him.
They see his face the bride eyes not her garment but her dear bridegroom's face I shall not gaze on glory but on the king of grace not on the crown he giveth but on his pierced hand the Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land they shall see his face and you and I should long for heaven it's not escapism it's not shutting our eyes to the reality of the world in which we live if you and I have our gaze set upon heaven upon our inheritance there then we will be better servants of God here on earth but I must say this two brief comments before I close firstly this we long for heaven we shall see him then as we've never seen him here we shall experience the light and the music and the

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victory then as we have not been able to experience it here but my friends all that we shall know there we have in bud even now then the flowering but now we have it all in bud and in the bud you have the full flower it's not yet fully opened out but we have it did I speak of light
God has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light now did I speak of music he put a new song in my mouth our God to magnify can you sing that song did I speak of victory God gives us now the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord we are more than conquerors now through him who loved us and did I speak of love God commends his love towards us in that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners Christ died for us and if I've read of the shepherd there shepherding his people leading them to fountains of living waters doesn't he do it now doesn't he now as a shepherd shepherd his flock taking each one the young the sick the weak taking them into the shepherd's arms and can't you sing the Lord's my shepherd
I'll not want our second week of our holidays was spent in Cornwall we visited a little chapel built by Billy Bray the Cornish tin miner of the last century converted from a life of drunkenness and violence to become a great creature of the grace of God he was a very exuberant extrovert kind of Christian he delighted to call himself the son of the king and the son of the king is a prince and must exercise all the privileges of the prince well after a life of great witness and service for the Lord in his early 70s he began to weaken he found himself short of breath little able to do what once he'd done he was confined to bed he sent for a doctor not a doctor had attended him before but just a doctor in the vicinity and asked him to examine him he said doctor
[33:06] I've asked you to come because they've told me you're an honest man you'll tell me the truth so the doctor examined him and Billy Bray there in his bed said well and they said you're going to die he was in an advanced stage of tuberculosis and typically Billy Bray his response was glory glory hallelujah I'll be with my saviour soon but then after getting breath he looked at the doctor and he said to him doctor when I get up there shall I give them your compliments and tell them you're coming too the doctor apparently said afterwards it made a wonderful impression on me I know no more about the doctor but I ask you the same question there is an exclusion from heaven not all will be there with the lamb we read something of it but I want to invite you in view of the majesty and the glory and the loveliness that is there and I'm not irreverent when I say this it is there for the taking for the Lord Jesus

Christ comes today and he comes saying come to me and whoever comes to me I will by no means cast out may God add his blessing to his word now we sing and sing and peacely and him come to me and him and I am who is him

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