

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

- **Intro:** Language can be tricky. Let me give you an example. If I said "Like beef, bra?" to you, what do you suppose I mean? Well it will all depend on the context. If you said that in IA, one might take it as a question about your preference for cattle over hogs. But if you said that in the Hawaiian islands when I was growing up, it means something entirely different. It means "I'm going to beat you up if you don't watch out." And it was usually said with a raised fist. They call it Pidgin English, don't ask me why, where words somehow morph into new meanings.
- I say this only to point out that Revelation language is about as tricky as pidgin English. We have to read Revelation, apocalyptic literature, in its own way, and context, not literally. It's picture language. In our text John's vision is of the new world, the restored world God's people have been waiting for their whole lives. The fact that there is no sea doesn't mean there is no water in the new world. In Jewish cosmology the sea was spoken of as the access point of evil into the world. In Revelation 13 the Beast is described as coming out of the sea. So to say there was no sea is to say this new world was free of all evil. Jerusalem of course refers, as so often in Scripture, to the people who belong to God (Lk.2:38; Isa.40:1). She is his Bride. He is the Bridegroom. You see what's going on, don't you. Heaven is getting married to Earth and the two are moving in together. *God is coming to live with mankind.* That's where all of history is pointing: someday, evil and sin will be dead, God and the hu-

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

man race will live on married in joy. That's really the main thing I want you to see on this Christmas Eve Day. The Bible is saying...

- **1. Christmas tells me that absolutely everything about created history is meant to lead me (the human family) to live with and love the God who made me.** All through history it has been God, coming for and seeking mankind. Mankind, in it's rebellion and sinfulness keeps walking away, or missing the point. But God is relentless.
- We saw this four weeks ago when we studied Genesis. God put man as his over-Lords on the earth, and God walked and talked with man in the beginning. This was his design. When Adam sinned and was separated from God's immediate and personal presence, God promised a savior who would crush evil's head and repair the separation. Later, when God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt and led them through the desert, he instructed them to place a Tabernacle (tent) in the middle of their camp where they could go to meet with God. Later, in the Promised Land, this became a temple in Jerusalem, always at the center of the nation symbolizing that God's intention is not to hide on some mountain top, or some cloudy realm of the gods, but that all of creation centered around one thing: for humanity to return to a right relationship with divinity. When Jesus was born on the first Christmas, John writes that "the Word became flesh and tented among us." Immanuel, God with

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

us. And in verse 3 of our text we read that at the end of time the same thing is going to happen: “now the dwelling (lit. “tent”) of God is with men and he will live with them.” If you read on in Revelation (v22) you’ll notice there’s no temple (the place where God and man meet) because Jesus is the place where God and man meet. You’ll also discover that the Tree of Life, yes same as in the Garden of Eden, grows in the New Jerusalem, bearing a new crop monthly (22:2) and there’s no curse on the ground anymore such as Adam caused back in Genesis (22:3). This is what we’ve been observing all of Advent. Christmas is all about God trying to say to us, “I want you in my family. I want to be with you. I love you in spite of your sin.”

- ““The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”
Acts 17:24-28, NIV.
- Listen very carefully, friends. Christmas, the celebration of Christ, is not an everybody-be-nice-to-others day. It is the

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

supreme announcement that your Heavenly Father wants you to come home!

- Know that feeling when someone important admires you or notices you? The teacher compliments your work, or your dad shows up at your play to see your part? I once met christian writer and singer Paul Baloche at a conference at Moody Church in Chicago. I love his music and admire his spirit. Well, he turned to me and said "Don't we know each other?" I said, "Well, I know of you, but I doubt it's the other way around." Regardless, I had this strange momentary feeling of being valued by someone I regarded as important, like when a friend of mine got to actually shake President Bush's hand. Or when Grandma gives you a pair of boots you've been wanting even though you never told her. What is that? That's the pleasure of being loved, or valued by another. That my friends is Christmas. Christmas is God saying, "Listen to me Bob, I care about your life, your world, you. Listen Sarah, I want you. I want to bless you. I want to save you and offer you eternal joy with me."
- Advent, Christmas is the doorbell ringing. It is the text from Amazon telling you the package has shipped. And that package is God himself. Heaven come down. He wants to move in. That brings me to a second thing I like us to notice about the Christmas message.

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

- **2. Absolutely everything and everyone, in all existence, ends up at the feet of Jesus.** That of course means you will too, and so will I. We might avoid Christ in this life, but we cannot avoid him forever, certainly not in the next.
 - *"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." Hebrews 1:1-3, NIV.*
- You will notice right away that Jesus is the end (heir of all things) and the beginning (through whom he made) of all things, which we saw last week in the book of Colossians.
 - "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Colossians 1:16, 17, NIV.
- That same truth is caught in the titles of our text: **Alpha and Omega**. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. That is to say that this little baby born on the first Christmas Day is not simply urging political peace, and good will toward men. Rather he is announcing, all of heaven is announcing, that Christ is the answer to every question, is behind every door you open, is at the end of every road travelled by every human being!

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

He's where the buck stops. He's the one we answer to. He's the top of the food chain. Say it anyway you want, pretend as long as you want, but there will come a day when you, like every other creature in heaven or earth bows before Christ.

- "Christ Jesus... being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:5-11, NIV.
- B. First an implication: if say, pornography, could fulfill your heart, bring you peace and hope, broaden your mind and your skills -then the Bible would say that one day every knee will bow before the god/goddess of sex. But it doesn't say that. If parties and beer pong could establish a certainty of purpose for a person, a stalwart hope for a life well-lived, and eradicate for once and for all one's sense of loneliness in this world -then the Bible would say that one day every knee will bow before the god of feasting. If spending huge amounts of cash on oneself, or one's children, seeing the world, walking the beaches, owning the mansions could cause a man or woman to live indefinitely, and never grow old, and find deep satisfaction with every breath

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

in the morning –then the Bible would say that one day every knee will bow before the god of gold. But it doesn't say that either. These things can't even help you get along with your family! They don't make you a better parent. They certainly cannot counter your sin and guilt. Christmas is a call to evaluate your gods!

- C. Now there are two kinds of bowing before Christ. The important question for each of us this morning is which one are you? Let's start with the bad news first:
 - 1) The wicked: some folks bow before the Alpha-Omega but not happily. These are those whose lives are characterized by unbelief, sexual immorality, magic arts, etc. These are those who don't care about being God's son or daughter. They're following their own laws. It's just that no such sinful ways make it into the New Heavens and Earth. They not only die, but die again(v8). The Bible is perfectly clear that all will bow before the Man Jesus Christ. Even demons. They already do. They recognize his authority. But they don't return his love.
 - 2) The only other group mentioned in our text is The thirsty: who are they? You will notice that there is no list of good actions, like: those who share, benefactors, law-abiders, honest men, etc. Only "thirsty". They are those would feel their need and look to God. Thirst here is simply another image for what we call faith; a sense of emptiness that looks to Christ for filling. This is basic to Advent, the season of "coming" of God, for

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

which we still wait. Let's return to Luke 2 for a moment.

Simeon was "waiting for the Consolation of Israel." He was a thirsty one. Anna spoke about the child to whom? To "all those who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem". Same thing. Thirsty folk. *Folk not simply wishing, but believing God's promises.* The drink God promised was coming. The requirement to enter the New Heavens and New Earth was thirst for God's drink, forsaking all others. Have you placed your longing in God and his goodness?

- "He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life." Revelation 21:6, NIV.
- "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." Revelation 22:17, NIV.
- Does that sound familiar? What does it mean to be thirsty? Just return to the Old Testament prophecy being quoted here. It comes from Isaiah.
 - *"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. ... Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while*

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.” Isaiah 55:1-7, NIV.

- Jesus and Paul say the same in the New Testament.
 - “but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4:14, NIV.
 - “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23, NIV.
- So there it is. Set you thirst on real water. Chase real bread. You don't earn heaven or forgiveness, or the New World. It is a gift to the thirsty who will bow and ask for it. One kind of bowing gives you a second death. Another kind of bowing ushers us into life after life! Now for the important moment. Which will you do?
- **D.** The Christ of Christmas is not singing “Imagine there's no heaven”, and “no religion too.” In the new world with the true brotherhood of man it is precisely the true religion that brings the peace. There is no ultimate peace without Christ. There is no salvation of man or brotherhood of man for that matter, without Christ.
- This of course is a challenge to each of us in the room! Will you willingly bow your head before Jesus in thirst and faith? Or will you forcedly bow your head in rebellion? And if Christ is the key to the New World, then doesn't that suggest he can unlock our bonds in this one?

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

- “So from now on we regard no-one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. *We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*” 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, NIV.
- **Conclusion:** Do you long? Of course you do! Do you thirst? Of course you do. Everyone does. But for what and for whom? What do you long for? A better future. Contentment; to be at peace in what you do with your life and who you spend it with. What do you long for? People who genuinely love you even when you are faulty and unimpressive. Someone to tell you they care about you. Someone to guide you. What do you long for? Each day to be filled with discovery, mystery and delight. And when the sun goes down, a noticeable lack of fear of what might be lurking in the dark. What do you long for? The ability to choose the right thing, or to escape for good those parts of you that actually often opt for what you believe to be wrong things. What do you long for? To be free from addictive things. To overcome hardship. To have a body or a mind that doesn’t hurt, or

The Final Advent, Rev.21:1-8, Lk.2:21-38

Heaven Come Down #4

malfunxion. What do you long for? A world without crime, or death, or selfishness. One full of giving, and compassion, and selflessness. A place where differing political parties only differ on the variety of ways to shower goodness on their citizens. To be a better citizen than you have found yourself able? And in whom are you hoping for all this?

- Lets review.

- 1) Everything about the history of the world is meant for this one purpose: to lead you to life *with* God.

- 2) Everything in existence winds up at Jesus' feet one way or another. Better to bow there as family than as fighter. Open your heart to Jesus right now. Ask him into your life. Decide to thirst for Christ and live for Christ! Turn your longings toward the Son of God for real peace. Pursue Christ. Do everything you can to learn of him. We can help you around here!

- ""Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."" Matthew 11:28-30, NIV.