



Through the Eyes of David

For those of you weren't able to worship with us last week, let me trace the BIG picture that Pastor Q painted for us last week. In Revelation 5, John (the apostle, not Qualmann) painted a glorious picture of heaven, a vision that God gave to him. And the main color that he used from his palette was the color of power. A hundred million angels singing, *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and wealth and wisdom and strength and glory and praise."* And people are bowing down saying, "Amen!"

Two chapters later, the Lord paints another picture, dipping his brush in the same color. If it wasn't the same author, there'd be a copyright lawsuit because the pictures are so similar, *"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 before 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."*¹¹ *All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,*¹² *saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"*

There's great comfort in knowing that our God is powerful. That he's got authority gives us confidence as his children. How awesome to know that he can squash the devil's head. He can break down death's door. It's awesome to know that when Jesus gives the church its mission to "Go and make disciples," he introduces it with, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." But can I confess something? God's authority doesn't always give me comfort. Not because I question the existence of his authority. I question how he exercises it. If God has authority over disease, why are there people here with cancer? If God has authority over the wind and the waves, why did we have a tornado drill in school this week? If God has authority over death, why did I preach for one funeral and attend a second this last week? If God has authority, why are there trials and tribulations? That's what John had to be wrestling with. If God has authority, why is this new thing called Christianity floundering? If God has authority, why am I exiled to a remote island? If God has authority, why are the other eleven disciples dead?

God gets out his brush to finish the painting. This time, instead of dipping it in power, he moves to another color on his palette and finishes the painting with the color of care. *"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."* In other words, "John, you're worried about troubles. Let me show you something. Do you see what I'm doing? Every day, I am leading people out of that world of persecution and pain. Every day, I am leading away from that life of sickness or storms. Because they have been washed by the blood of Jesus, I am leading them out of that great tribulation." *"Therefore..."* – I love that word when it comes up in the Bible. It always sets up something awesome. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. **Therefore**, don't worry about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34). If anyone tells this mountain to fall into the heart of the sea and doesn't doubt, it will be done. **Therefore**, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it (Mark 11:24). For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one. **Therefore**, what God has joined together, let no one separate (Mark 10:9). Whenever I see the word, "therefore," I ask, "What is the 'therefore' there for?"

Look here. John, these people are the ones I'm bringing out of the tribulations because of Jesus' blood. **Therefore**, this is what they have: *"They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence."* I mentioned earlier that I went to two funerals this week. Listen how we comfort one another at Christian funerals. We say how nice it is to know that our loved one is reunited with other believers. Grandma is with Grandpa. Friend is with friend. Dad is with daughter. Indeed, that is part of the joy of heaven - that there are people, uncountable people, from every tribe, nation, language and people. Not only is it comforting to know the recently deceased is with other people, it's also comforting to know that we're going to be with them again. How often don't we say, "Because of Jesus, this isn't a 'good-bye.' This is a 'see you later.'" I can't wait to hear my Grandpa's laugh. I can't wait to be reunited to Drew, my college friend and teammate. I can't wait to see Ilah and Sally, best of friends who brought so much joy to my ministry. I don't want to minimize that joy. But don't miss the joy beyond joy: *"Therefore, they are before the throne of God... in his temple... he shelters them with his presence."*

Think about that! In heaven, we're with God. Here, you pay to go to the Children' Museum. In heaven, you'll be with the God who created children. You pay to go the Trout Museum of Art. In heaven, you'll be with the God who can paint the sky in breath-taking purples, pink, oranges, and reds like you've never seen before. Here you see a music group give a concert in a park. In heaven, you'll be with God who gave voices to birds to sing for you in every park. Here you enjoy your Copper Rock coffee. There you'll be with God who invented coffee. Only two times in Scripture does it use this picture language of God sheltering us with his presence: John 1, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, or tented among us;" and here. It's like God has a round-robin

party with us. First he came here. He said, "Your house is nice. Oh yeah, that's right I built it." But then he says, "Now come to my house." That's where God is leading you. God is leading you to be with him. And once you're there, you don't have to leave.

Not only is God leading us to something. He's also leading us away from something. "*Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat.*" Here's a challenge: how would you describe a double-rainbow in its full spectrum of colors to someone who was born blind? It'd be impossible. Or you'd at least fall short in capturing the beauty with your description. Now you know why God often describes heaven by what it's not. There are no words in our language or concepts in our minds to capture its full beauty. Because of the blessed society we live in, I'm not sure we even appreciate the language here. *Never again will they hunger...* maybe the only people who can appreciate that are the parents of teenage boys. Your kid will never stand in front of your open refrigerator again asking, "What's to eat?" *Never again will they thirst...* if you're thirsty, there's a bubbler in back. Imagine being our brothers and sisters in Christ in Malawi. I think we have 40,000 people we're connected to as a church body in Malawi. If you're worshiping with them today after you hiked your two miles to fetch water this morning, you'd appreciate this. Or think about the apostle John. He's on an island surrounded by saltwater. He hunted for fresh water to survive. And this whole sun and heat thing not falling on us, maybe we can't relate to that either.

But I hope you get the point. Whatever your trouble, whatever your tribulation, it will be gone. Mentally jot down your troubles this past year. What caused you to cry, be it in your eyes or your heart? Tears over a losing a loved one? A fractured relationship? Missing familiarity of old neighborhood or old job? A spiritually wayward son? Is your health giving you problems? Stress at work? Stress at home? Lost a game? Not enough playing time? Scared about the dark? Guilt about a sin? Skinned knee? Bruised ego? After I wrote this paragraph, I pulled out our church directory and tried to pick out one person on the page whom I knew experienced tears this year for one reason or another. It didn't take much effort. I could list them off just that fast. What caused, causes or will cause your tears? Now read this, "*For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*" The Shepherd is leading you to his home where he will wipe away every tear from your eyes. Broken relationship? He will wipe away every tear. Broken toy? He will wipe away every tear. Broken body? He will wipe away every tear. Every tear. Every tear. God's authoritative hand maybe doesn't always comfort, but his leading hand always comforts.

That's what a guy like David knew. He was hated, hunted and hungry, even starving at times. He lost his best friend in war, had a rebellious son who was killed by his employee, had sixth commandment guilt that weighed so heavily on his shoulders that his bones ached, lost a child as a consequence of his action – through it all, David could say, "I shall not want." How could he do that? How can he get down on his knees and worship his Lord? Because by God's grace, he knew that the Lord was his Shepherd. He knew that because of his Lord's future death and resurrection, his Lord was leading him not just to life, but through life.

Sometimes we think of heaven as only a future blessing. "Someday" I'll be there. The visions that God gives to us of heaven in his Word are not just for tomorrow. They're for today. They're not just for the future. They're for the now. Knowing that our Shepherd is leading us there, strengthens and comforts us here. Brothers and sisters, that's the BIG picture. That's what the "therefore" is there for. The resurrection proves - a living Savior proves -- that he is leading us to life therefore he will lead us through life. AMEN.