



## **Revelation: The Urgency of Eternity**

I want to start this session by praying for what's about to happen in this room. It's really the culmination of all that's been happening. We've read in Acts 13:2 how, as the church at Antioch was worshipping, the Holy Spirit said, "*Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.*" In a supernatural way, the Spirit of God set apart Saul and Barnabas to go where the gospel had not yet gone. The church sent them out, which means there were goers and there were senders.

At the end of our time in God's Word a few minutes from now, I'm going to invite people all across this room to stand if you would say, "I believe God is leading me to communicate to my church a desire to go as a missionary, specifically to cross barriers for the spread of the gospel where it has not yet gone." At that time, if you would say you believe God is calling you to stay and make disciples here in your culture and live to send others where the gospel has not yet gone, then I'm going to invite you to stay seated.

I want to be clear. That is not a call to divide this room into two tiers—the super Christians who are goers and the sub-Christians who are senders, the varsity and the JV. The most important issue at that moment is not whether you are sitting or standing. The most important issue is whether you are being obedient to the Spirit of God in your life. For some, obedience will mean standing; for others, obedience will mean sitting. And for those of you who believe God may be leading you to go, I want to be clear about what you're not saying when you stand. You're not saying that you are deciding today to move tomorrow to the Middle East. I would not call anyone to make a decision like that alone, based on all we've talked about.

That's why I'm emphasizing, in your standing, you're saying as best you can tell that you believe God is leading you to go to your church—or if you don't have a church, to join a church—and say, "I believe God is leading me to go to a place and a people where the gospel has not yet gone. Please help me to discern this, then help send me, if God is indeed leading me to do this." That's the moment to which the next few minutes are headed.

We need the Spirit of God to lead us to that moment. So before I even pray, I want to ask every follower of Christ in this room—students, leaders, campus ministers, church staff, pastors, speakers, every single one of us including myself—let's put our lives on the table before God and say in a fresh way in this moment, "Whatever You want me to do, I will do it. Wherever You want me to go, I will go. No strings attached." Some of you already know God is leading you to go and you're ready to stand right

now. Others of you aren't sure. Some of you believe God's leading you to stay seated. What I'm proposing is we pray and let God determine that over the next minutes. Let's bow our heads together.

Our Father in heaven, it is such an awesome reality that we are meeting with You right now, that You are with us, that You—the Creator God of the universe—are with us, that Your presence is with us, that Your Spirit is among us. So we ask that in the next few minutes You would speak clearly to us by Your Spirit through Your Word. We ask that You would keep the adversary from distracting us from hearing Your voice, from doubting You when we hear Your voice and from deceiving us into thinking Your voice cannot be trusted. Help us hear You clearly and help us obey You completely, we pray, no matter what You say, no matter what that means, with all kinds of unanswered questions, but with trust in You.

We pray, O God, that You would set apart men and women, that You would do in this room what You did in the lives of Paul and Barnabas 2,000 years ago. We ask this so that in the future the nations might feel the waves of Your grace, gospel and glory to be made known among them as a result of what happens in the next few minutes here. With great anticipation we pray this, in Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, are you ready? If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open with me to Revelation 1. We have walked on a journey through the pages of Scripture. We have beheld a God Who is passionate about His glory being made known among all peoples, whether through blessing or judgment. I hope we've seen that the Bible is a clear affront to all of our pride, for it declares that everything in the universe and everything in our lives revolves around God. Your life does not revolve around you. That's why we pray what we just prayed. My life does not revolve around me. Our lives revolve around God, because He's designed it this way.

Last fall I was preaching at a conference on the Psalms. As I was meditating in preparation for preaching there, it hit me what an interesting book of the Bible it is. I thought, "Imagine if I were to go to my wife and say, 'Hey, Babe, I wrote some poems about how great I am and I want to give them to you as a gift. There are 150 of them that speak of my greatness from all kinds of different angles. I want you to read them to me. It's going to be so good for you.'"

This is what God has given us! God has wired us to find our greatest pleasure in glorifying and worshiping Him, in loving Him and proclaiming Him in all the world. So going and sending to the world only makes sense if God is worthy of all worship in the world—and He is.

So now we come to the culmination, not just of the Bible, but all of history—the book of Revelation. I read somewhere that Revelation is the book people in the church most want to hear taught, because they don't understand it, yet Revelation is the book preachers in the church least want to teach, because they don't understand it either.

I'm not going to presume to have it all figured out, but I do believe the theme of the book is crystal clear. Just listen to the first five words: "*The revelation of Jesus Christ...*" The book of Revelation is about Jesus. John is writing a letter to suffering, persecuted Christians in the first century who were tempted to shrink back from their faith, to compromise with the culture and shirk their mission in the world. So what does God inspire John to write about? Jesus. To show them the end of history and show them Jesus at the center of it. They will be compelled to live and die pursuing Him, proclaiming Him to the ends of the earth.

I want to do something I've not done before in a setting like this. I want to preach a 50-point sermon. That's 5-0, fifty. Now, I assure you my points will not be as long as John Piper's points. I would actually maintain that John Piper had 50 points last night, masked as one point. Obviously we're going to go at a pretty good clip, but I want to show you 48 characteristics of Jesus in the book of Revelation. I'll go ahead and tell you this is not all of them. We won't even touch most of the chapters in this book.

But I want to ravish you, I pray by God's grace, with a portrait of Jesus in this book, because I believe if we'll just see Jesus for Who He is and see that Jesus is where all history is headed, then radical going and radical sending will make total sense. I know of no greater motivation for missions than getting a glimpse of the glory of Jesus. So 48 characteristics that will lead to two exhortations. Here we go.

Revelation 1:9-11:

*<sup>9</sup> I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup> saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*

We're about to read one of the most majestic portraits of Jesus in all of Scripture from Revelation 1:12-20. But think about John's assignment here. This voice like a trumpet booms and says, "Write what you see in a book." That's not easy. It's one thing to write down words you hear. It's a whole other thing to write down in words the wonder of what you see with your eyes. It's like you have a pen and a piece of paper and somebody says, "Write down what you see in the Grand Canyon." You're thinking, "Ah, there's no way to put on here the grandeur of what I see out there." But that's what John is trying to do here, so feel the difficulty of his task.

As he turns, he sees the voice. How do you see a voice? He sees the voice of the One speaking to him and attempts to describe Him in words. He is "*like a son of man,*" verse 13. That's **Characteristic #1, Jesus is fully human**. Just imagine John's perspective. He had spent three years with Jesus on earth, every day, walking, talking, eating together. After three years, he's seen Jesus brutally slaughtered on a

cross, three days later rising from the grave and later ascending into heaven. That's the last glimpse John had of Jesus. Now he turns and sees Him again. He sees Jesus as a man and as God.

**Characteristic #2, Jesus is fully God.** Throughout this picture we see links between Jesus and God the Father. So earlier in Revelation 1:8, God has spoken and said, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega..."* Now Jesus speaks in verse 17 and says, *"I am the first and the last..."* Jesus is God.

There are so many allusions here in Revelation to passages in the Old Testament. Daniel 7 is one of them, where God is described as the Ancient of Days, Whose clothing is white as snow, Whose hair is like pure wool. Yet here, that is the description of Jesus. John is describing Jesus in terms that are used only for God in the Bible. Jesus is fully man and Jesus is fully God.

**Characteristic #3, Jesus is the fulfillment of centuries of prophecy.** In Daniel 7 and 10 we see a vision of a Son of man, clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold around His waist, with eyes like flaming torches, arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, Whose voice echoes like the sound of a multitude. It's the picture of a Son of man ushering in the Kingdom of God. That's what we have here in Revelation 1—just like it had been prophesied centuries before.

Realize that as we see this passage, this is not John's answer to the question, "What is Jesus wearing in heaven? What kind of fashion sense does He have?" No, these are images that would have been familiar to John's readers that would have triggered in their minds the words of prophets and provoked in their hearts awe and wonder at the vision of the One the Bible had spoken about centuries before. There are 300 specific references over the course of 1,000 years to the coming of Christ, down to where He would be born and the circumstances that surrounded His birth, His life and His death. He is the fulfillment of centuries of prophecy.

Next, **Characteristic #4, Jesus is the final and ultimate Sacrifice for sin.** He is clothed with a long robe with a golden sash around His chest. Six of the seven times a long robe like this is mentioned in the Old Testament, it refers to the clothing of the high priest who would enter the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, the holy presence of God, to offer sacrifices for the sinful people of God. Jesus is pictured here as the One Who has entered into the presence of God the Father and has offered once and for all, full and final, a sacrifice for the sins of God's people. He is the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin.

**Characteristic #5, Jesus is infinitely old.** The hairs of His head are white, like white wool, like snow—a deliberate picture of age. Jesus has existed forever. He did not begin. Jesus has always been. He is infinitely old.

**Characteristic #6, He is infinitely wise.** In ancient culture, white hair was a symbol of accumulated wisdom from years of experience. The experienced wisdom of Jesus knows no end.

This leads to **Characteristic #7, Jesus sees all things.** His eyes are like a flame of fire. Nothing escapes His gaze. He sees it all and He sees through it all. Jesus sees through all pretense. He searches

every area of our hearts. He sees the purity of our hearts; He sees the stains of our hearts. He sees everything we would like to hide. Nothing in your life or my life escapes the pure and penetrating gaze of Jesus Christ.

This means, **Characteristic #8, Jesus knows all things.** This image of Jesus' eyes being like fire reappears in His letter to Thyatira in Revelation 2, to whom Jesus says, "I know everything about you." He knows everything. Jesus knows everything about you and everything about me—things that nobody else knows.

**Characteristic #9, Jesus' purity has no error.** His feet are like burnished bronze. Bronze metal would have been purified in a furnace until it glowed in its purity. Jesus is absolutely pure and His purity has no error.

**Characteristic #10, Jesus' power knows no equal.** Burnished with bronze is also a picture of glory and strength and might. His power knows no equal. Hang with me.

**Characteristic #11, Jesus' voice resounds with authority.** First, His voice was like a trumpet. Now it's like the roar of many waters. What imagery! And from His mouth, Revelation says, comes a sharp two-edged sword. We have seen its double edge throughout the last few days, as we have walked through Scripture: blessing and judgment, mercy and wrath.

So, **Characteristic #12, Jesus declares eternal salvation for all who trust in Him.** Mercy is available to you. His mercy is sufficient to cover all your sin. He declares eternal salvation, and at the same time...

**Characteristic #13, Jesus decrees final judgment for all who turn from Him, for all who do not trust in Him.** Jesus is the Judge Whose declaration will finally and forever decide your fate and my fate. Jesus is the Judge Whose declaration will decide the fate of 7.3 billion people in the world who alive right now. His voice resounds with authority.

**Characteristic #14, Jesus' face radiates with light, like the sun shining in full strength.** This causes John to fall on his face as though dead. I love this. Jesus lays His right hand on John and says, "Fear not. I am the first."

**Characteristic #15, Jesus had the first word in creation.** We heard this last night in Colossians 1:16: "*By him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*" Jesus existed before all things. In Jesus, all things hold together. He had the first word in creation.

**Characteristic #16, Jesus will have the last word in creation.** Jesus will fully and finally usher in the new creation. Jesus is the force behind all of human history. He alone is able to bring the divine plan and purposes to task, because He has conquered.

**Characteristic #17, Jesus was dead for a time.** I love Revelation 1:18 which says, “*I died,*” comma. That’s usually a period—but not with Jesus. “*I died, and behold I am alive forevermore.*”

**Characteristic #18, Jesus is alive for all time.** He is the living One Who will never die again. We’re not talking resuscitation and reincarnation. We’re talking resurrection. We’re not talking “passed out, went to heaven, came back and wrote a best-selling book about it.” We’re talking dead for three days. We’re talking, “You go to a funeral tomorrow and you see a man’s body put in a grave. Dirt is poured over that grave. Then next weekend you’re walking the street and that same guy comes up to you and says, ‘Hello.’” That’s unusual. It’s crazy. It’s crazy good. It’s the greatest news in all the world: Jesus is not dead—He is alive for all time!

Which means, **Characteristic #19, death is controlled by Jesus.** He controls it. “*I have the keys of Death and Hade.*” (1:18). A key is the symbol of authority. Jesus says, “I have authority over them. I speak and death listens. I speak and death obeys.” This means that because Jesus has authority over death, He has the ability to turn death into gain, for you, for me and for all who trust in Him. This is really good news!

Since our last CROSS conference, a close friend of mine named Jonathan became really sick. This is the brother who has personally taught me more about missions than anybody else I know. We served together alongside each other for years. He had started a business in Afghanistan, because he wanted to shine the light of Christ there. But a few years ago they found a tumor on Jonathan’s brain. He’s about my age. He fought that tumor for years. It was getting worse.

I was flying in from a trip overseas when I received word that doctors had said it was time to move from treating the tumor to just trying to keep him comfortable. So I immediately got off the plane in Atlanta and went to Birmingham instead of going straight to Metro Washington. I went to his house and just sat by his bedside. We talked for hours late into the night. He whispered most of the time and it took a lot of energy for him to have a conversation. We reminisced, laughed, cried, prayed and talked about Scripture. Scripture was just flowing from him. We talked about family, about mission strategy.

There was one point when I had to step out so the palliative care people could talk with him and he could sign some papers basically saying they could let him die. I came back in while they were setting up a bed for him in his room. He just looked me and whispered, “David, God is good.” He told me about calling his three kids into the room earlier that day—they’re 14, 12 and 9—and explaining to them what it means to bring in hospice for their dad. He looked at his kids who were crying and told them, “Kids, know this and believe this. Don’t forget that God is good.”

A couple weeks later he was surrounded by his wife and those three kids, who love and adore their dad, along with some friends who shared life with him. They gathered around his bed, they were praying, reading the Word and singing, but they could tell things were getting close. They sang, “Because

He lives,” with that powerful last verse, “Then one day I’ll cross the river, I’ll fight life’s final war with pain. And then as death gives way to victory, I’ll see the lights of glory and I’ll know He reigns.” They sang that last verse, then my brother in Christ, Jonathan, took his last breath. Praise God, Jesus is in control of death and He turns it into life.

That’s 19 characteristics. That leads us to Revelation 5. We’re skipping over all kinds of stuff in these chapters. We’ve got a vision of God the Father on the throne in chapter four. Then John writes in Revelation 5:1, “*Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.*” This scroll contains God’s foreordained plans for the redemption and restoration of creation. Think plans for the ultimate eradication of evil and death and sin in the world; the final removal of suffering and pain and persecution. This was the end of all world wars and physical diseases and natural disasters and the coming of God’s Kingdom to man, the recreation of a new heaven and a new earth, where God’s people will enjoy Him and reign with Him forever and ever. It’s all in the scrolls.

*“I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’”* Who is able to bring these things about? *“And no one on heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.”* Why is John weeping like this? He is overwhelmed by the prospect of the future without all these things. No redemption, no restoration, no eradication of evil, no final justice, no final removal of sin and suffering and pain and persecution. No defeat of death. No hope. So amidst John’s hopeless wailing, one of the elders said, *“Weep no more; behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

**Characteristic #20, Jesus is the conquering Lion.** This was first prophesied in the first book of the Bible about the Lion of the tribe of Judah: *“To him shall be the obedience of the people.”* (Genesis 49:10). The conquering Lion is here. See the contrast here between one minute not being able to open the scroll, then the next minute somebody being able to open the scroll. Think about how, throughout history, from the beginning of time, men have come and gone, women have come and gone—all of them, the noblest, the kindest, the strongest and the greatest of them have all fallen prey to sin. Generation after generation, century after century, every single man and woman on the earth has succumbed to sin and death.

But then came another Man unlike any other man, Who did not fall prey to sin. He possessed power over sin. He was not captive to Satan. This Man came to crush Satan. He did not succumb to death; He triumphed over death. The Root of David, the Lion of the tribe of Judah has come and He has conquered. How? John rises to look at this strong Lion, but to his surprise, *Between the throne and the*

*four living creatures and among the leaders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain” (5:6).*

The conquering Lion is a slaughtered Lamb.

**Characteristic #21, Jesus is the slaughtered Lamb.** This vision, recorded by the apostle who wrote that John the Baptist, when seeing Jesus, said, “Look, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.” This harkened back to language in Exodus 12, when the Israelites took an innocent lamb into their homes, kept it until the 14<sup>th</sup> day, killed it and spread its blood over the doorposts. The people of God were saved from God’s judgment under the banner of the lamb’s blood.

Centuries later, Isaiah spoke of a Lamb who would be led to the slaughter. He prophesied that the only Son of God would be crushed according to the sovereign will of God. So how does the Lion conquer? By suffering as a Lamb. He conquers through crucifixion. He is marred, despised, rejected, stricken, smitten, afflicted, wounded, chastised, oppressed and pulverized in the place of sinners, so that all who hide under the banner of His blood are safe. He’s the slaughtered Lamb of God. Yet He is standing. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen a slaughtered lamb, but they don’t stand. This Lamb, though, is different. This Lamb has endured death and defeated death. This is the greatest news in all the world. The slaughtered Lamb of God reigns as the sovereign Lord of all.

**Characteristic #22, Jesus is the sovereign Lord.** This Lion-like Lamb, “*went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne*” (5:7). What audacity! Nobody in heaven or earth or under the earth was able to take the scroll, yet Jesus walks right up to the throne surrounded by living creatures and elders and a host of angels. He takes the scroll from the hand of God the Father. The angels then sing a new song, this time to the Lamb, saying, “*Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation*” (5:9).

**Characteristic #23, Jesus’ worth is undisputed.** Jesus alone is worthy. He alone has the key to all of human history. He alone has the power to bring about the consummation of the Kingdom of God. Verse 12, “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!*” Seven-fold, perfect praise. There is no one like Him. No gods in India. No idols or spirits in Animism. No figures in Buddhism. No prophet in Islam. No one anywhere compares with the worth of Jesus. His worth is undisputed.

**Characteristic #24, Jesus’ work is unforgettable.** This is heaven, Christ is risen, yet He is seen as a Lamb Who looks like it has been slaughtered. The implication is clear: for all of eternity, we will see the conquering Lion and sovereign Lord ruling as the slaughtered Lamb. “Crown Him the Lord of love, behold His hands and side, rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified” (from “Crown Him with Many Crowns” by Matthew Bridges and Godfrey Thring). His work is unforgettable.



**Characteristic #25, Jesus' worship is universal.** He has purchased people for God from all the peoples of the earth. Jesus did not die on the cross for the praise of one type of people; He died for the praise of every type of people on the planet. He will receive the reward of His sufferings. The Great Commission will be accomplished and a Kingdom of men and women from every language will sing about His salvation. His worship is universal.

We're halfway there; stay with me. That leads us to a similar vision beginning in Revelation 7:9: *"After this I looked, and behold a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"*

**Characteristic #26, Jesus is the Author of our salvation.** Salvation belongs to Him. It comes from Him alone. John goes on to describe these worshippers. He says in Revelation 7:15, *"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. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat."*

Then verse 17, *"For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd..."* Here's the Lamb—Jesus.

**Characteristic #27, Jesus is the Shepherd of our souls.** Jesus is the good Shepherd Who will guide us to that day. Jesus is the great Shepherd, the Shepherd Who does not lose one sheep that belongs to the Father. No one can snatch us out of His hand. He is the Shepherd of our souls. Then it goes on to say, "He will guide them to springs of living water."

**Characteristic #28, Jesus is the source of our satisfaction.** College students, drink deeply from the fountain of the fullness of Jesus. Eighteen to 25-year-olds—surrounded by so many promises of pleasure, so many people, possessions, pursuits in this world that promise satisfaction but cannot deliver—your soul is designed by God to be delighted in God alone. So drink from His cup. Jesus is so much better than all the best things of this world put together. He's better than that guy; He's better than that girl; He's better than that image; He's better than that pursuit; He's better than that money. He's better than it all put together. He's the source of our satisfaction.

We're going to jump now to the end of the book, to Revelation 19. It's just a travesty to skip over all these chapters, but I don't think a 100-point sermon would work. Revelation 19 depicts shouting in heaven, songs of hallelujah. Did you know that Revelation 19 is the only place in the entire New Testament where we see the word "hallelujah"? It's like the whole New Testament has been building to this—26 books, 260 chapters, with Jesus coming to the earth, dying on the cross, rising from the grave, ascending to heaven, sending His Spirit, inaugurating His church, being preached among the nations and

the history of the church—and now, when Jesus ultimately comes back, heaven fully and finally shouts, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!”

Skip down to verse six: *“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready.”* What imagery.

**Characteristic #29, Jesus is the Groom Who chooses us as His Bride.** We’re His Bride! I remember when my bride over here stepped into a room one day, everybody stood up, turned and looked at her. I was standing down front, beaming, trying to stand still on the outside, but inside thinking, “Boom, that’s my bride! She’s not your bride. Just to be clear, she’s my wife.”

Think about it. Jesus has chosen you as His bride, me as His bride, us as His bride. He beams over us. Get the picture. *“It was granted to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints”* (19:8). How awesome is this? Jesus is the Groom Who chooses His Bride, and then...

**Characteristic #30, Jesus is the God Who makes us beautiful.** Think about it. You and me. Men and women with sin-sick, sin-stained hearts. Men and women who have over and over again given in to pride, anger, lust, selfishness, immorality and idolatry all around us in this world. We will now be standing before the holy God of the universe dressed in fine white linen. How is that possible? Because He’s granted us clothes of righteousness.

Don’t miss the picture here. Revelation is giving us a picture of the church through the eyes of Christ; the Bride through the eyes of the Groom. No groom looks at his bride on their wedding day and thinks, “Ah, it’s okay.” No. He just looks at you and says, “You’re my Bride and you are beautiful.” Just let that soak in.

I don’t know what guilt you are carrying around in your soul, what accusations from the enemy you can’t get out of your mind. We skipped over Revelation 12. The enemy’s accusations will stop; Jesus’ promises will prove true. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2). Brothers and sisters, by the grace of Jesus Christ, you are His spotless Bride, bright and pure.

This leads to Revelation 19:11 where John writes, *“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse!”* The One Who came into Jerusalem riding on a humble donkey is coming out of heaven riding on a war horse.

**Characteristic #31, Jesus is the faithful Witness.** The One sitting on the horse is called Faithful and True. Revelation 1:5 and 3:14 both call Jesus the faithful Witness Who is true to His word.

**Characteristic #32, Jesus is the righteous Judge.** *“In righteousness he judges...”* John says in Revelation 19:11. Jesus is coming to right the wrong, to dispense the righteous justice of God, fully and finally for all.

**Characteristic #33, Jesus is the divine Warrior.** John says he makes war. Jesus is on the assault against evil and injustice and unrighteousness in the world. So if you ever find yourself in Nepal or Thailand and you see young girls trafficked for sex and little boys trafficked into the fishing business where they’re put on boats to work until they can’t work anymore and they’re just thrown overboard, then you’ll find yourself praying, “God, please either save these traffickers or smite them.” You can pray that with confidence, knowing that justice is coming. The divine Warrior is coming.

**Characteristic #34, there’s a flaming fire in Jesus’ eyes.** Verse 12 says, *“His eyes are like a flame of fire...”* much like we had seen in Revelation 1. There’s a flaming fire in Jesus’ eyes and on His head are many diadems.

**Characteristic #35, there are many crowns on Jesus’ head.** *“And he has a name written that no one knows but himself.”* Follow this. There’s flaming fire in Jesus’ eyes, there are many crowns on His head and...

**Characteristic #36, there is much mystery to Jesus’ name.** There’s a lot of ambiguity about what verse 12 means, but what we do know is the name for God in Scripture reveals the character of God. The name for Jesus reveals the character of Jesus. So the picture here seems to be a fullness of Jesus’ character that is yet to be revealed until the day when He returns and we see Him as He is. This makes sense, doesn’t it? Jesus’ majesty and beauty are infinite. Do you realize what that means? For all of eternity, there will be more beauty and more majesty to discover in Jesus. Ten trillion years from now, we’re still going to be seeing new majesty and new beauty, forever. Infinite beauty. We will never, ever, ever get tired of Jesus. He will awe us forever.

**Characteristic #37, Jesus conquers God’s enemies.** This is where the imagery gets graphic. Jesus is clothed here in a robe dipped in blood. This could be a reference to the blood He shed on the cross, but in light of the context it’s more likely a reference to the judgment Jesus is coming to bring. Isaiah 63 speaks of One coming in crimsoned garments, splendid in apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness and mighty to save. He has red apparel because He treads the winepress of God’s wrath, which we’ll see in a minute in this passage. Jesus is coming as the clear conqueror of God’s enemies.

**Characteristic #38, Jesus reveals God’s Word.** Verse 19: *“The name by which he is called is the Word of God.”* Jesus is the authoritative Word. He is the revelation of God. Jesus reveals God’s Word.

**Characteristic #39, Jesus rules the nations of the world.** He’s followed by the armies of heaven and *“from his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule*

*them with a rod of iron.*” Praise God! Kim Jong Un in North Korea is not sovereign over the world, neither is Putin in Russia, neither is Shi of China, nor Modi of India. And praise God, Donald Trump is not sovereign over the world. Jesus rules over all of them. He rules the nations and all of their leaders. He holds them in the palm of His hands.

**Characteristic #40, Jesus treads the winepress of God’s wrath.** I mentioned that earlier from Isaiah 63 and now it’s here. It’s an exact quotation in the end of Revelation 19:15. All who do not trust in Jesus will experience the winepress of God’s wrath. I know we have talked about this, but may it continually soak in. We talk about the unreached and the winepress of God’s wrath for all who don’t trust in Jesus, they can’t trust in Jesus if they never even hear about Jesus. They need to hear. “How can they believe if they don’t hear?” Paul says in Romans 10. If they don’t hear about Jesus, they will experience the winepress of God’s wrath.

God, help us lift our eyes to this urgency!

I think about being in Nepal and seeing bodies put on a funeral pyre and set ablaze 24 hours after they died, with their ashes going down into the river. They believe that’s helpful in the process of reincarnation. I realized, as I was looking at and smelling the burning bodies, that I was looking at a physical picture of a spiritual reality. Most if not all of these people never even had a chance to hear about how to go to heaven. What will it take for the concept of unreached people to be totally intolerable to us? There are more bodies being put on funeral pyres today in Nepal, tomorrow in Nepal and the next day. There’s an urgency that comes with a view of eternity.

**Characteristic #41, Jesus is King of kings.**

**Characteristic #42, Jesus is Lord of lords.** Verse 16, “*On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*” This leads us to Revelation 21, where find...

**Characteristic #43, Jesus will usher us into the presence of God.** This is our hope: a new heaven and a new earth. So many Christians have such a paltry view of heaven. Do not think about the new heaven and new earth in merely spiritual terms. This is not an ethereal, other-worldly picture where we’re all sitting on clouds in the sky. The Bible is picturing here a very earthly heaven and new earth, where we’ll have physical resurrected bodies in a real physical world. This is important. I think many of us, if we’re really honest, when we think about heaven we have a pretty boring picture of what it’s going to be like. We think we’ll just stand around with each other, singing songs and staring at light for a few quadrillion years. The answer But Scripture says there’s so much more in the presence of God. This is not just endless choir practice we’re going to. This is a place where we’re going to experience the fulfillment of all our desires in the presence of God, in a new and complete earth. It’s not a place where we’ll have nothing to do but float on clouds. It will be a new earth where we have everything to do—God to worship, a Kingdom to rule, a universe to explore, and extended family to enjoy.

Others read Revelation 21 and think, “Ah, this is the architecture of what heaven will look like. There are numbers and measurements and charts describing what heaven will look like.” But I think that actually misses the point. We don’t have time to dive into all of this, but if you look at the measurements here in Revelation 21, you realize heaven is shaped like a cube. You think, “Why would that be?”

It takes us all the way back to the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament, where you’ll never guess what the dwelling place of God among His people in the Holy of Holies was shaped like. It was shaped like a cube. If you put together these measurements, you start to realize, “This is like one giant, massive Holy of Holies.” All of a sudden it hits you—the whole point of heaven is that we’re going to be ushered fully into the presence of God, unhindered.

Revelation 21:4 says, “*Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.*” This is the point of heaven. Not what this wall or that gate will look like, but the fact that one day the skies will open up, this earth will be rolled back like a scroll and God’s holy dwelling will literally come down to man—and we will be with Him.

Jesus said in John 14:2, “*In my Father’s house are many rooms...*” The word there literally means dwelling places and it’s the same word here in Revelation 21. It’s really unfortunate how some translations have “mansions” there, so people talk about the mansions waiting for them in heaven. “How big is your mansion going to be?” as if God is trying to compete with Western luxury in His eternal abode.

I think about one place where I had been invited to preach and they wanted to put me up in a home with a church member. So we drove up to a massive mansion. I was escorted to my room—a luxurious room. I went outside to look and there was all this land and cows and stables that are nicer than many homes. I sat down to eat in the dining room, then one of the cows from outside was placed on the plate. It was always the case when I was in a place like this that Heather had not traveled with me. That’s when I was put up in something like the gas station motel, and Heather was right there with me. “Sorry, Babe.”

I think about another place where they said, “We’re going to put you in a basement.” I thought, “Okay, that’s fine.” Ah, but this was not your average basement. This was a palatial basement with a massive big-screen TV, a big hot tub right in front of the TV, during football season. Again, Heather was not with me which was really a bummer.

Anyway, when we think about heaven, we start thinking about all the stuff we’ve ever wanted and think we’re going to have there. But heaven is so much better than that. When you think about heaven, do not think about a place with all the amenities this world has to offer. Think about a place where the amenities of this world do not compare with the fact that we are dwelling with God. We don’t

come to God to get stuff; we come to God to get God. And the culmination of our salvation is God. He will be with us and we will be with Him. There will be no more sin, no more sorrow. God personally will wipe every tear from our eyes. No more sickness, no more cancer, no more tumors, no more hurts, aches or pains. No more sudden heart attacks like the one that ended my dad's life. No more hunger, starvation, trafficking and AIDS. No more death. Everything will be new.

One of my favorite quotes from Joni Eareckson Tada, a quadriplegic, talks about her hope for heaven with God, for restoration and everything new. She said:

I hope in some way I can take my wheelchair to heaven. With my new glorified body, I will stand up on resurrected legs and I will be next to the Lord Jesus. I will feel those nail prints in His hands and will say, "Thank You, Jesus." He will know I mean it, because He will recognize me from the inner sanctum of sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings. He will see that I was one who identified with Him in the sharing of His sufferings, so my gratitude will not be hollow.

Then I will say, "Lord Jesus, do you see that wheelchair over there? Well, You were right. When You put me in it, it was a lot of trouble, but the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on You. The harder I leaned on You, the stronger I discovered You to be. I do not think I would have ever known the glory of Your grace were it not for the weakness of that wheelchair. So thank You, Lord Jesus, for that. And now, if You like, You can send that thing off to hell.

Jesus is going to usher us into the presence of God which leads to Revelation 22.

**Characteristic #44, Jesus will completely undo the curse of God.** When you get to chapter 22, the imagery shifts from the new heaven and the new earth as a city and a temple to a garden with a river and trees, a garden that looks a lot like the garden the Bible began with. Remember the sword flashing back and forth to guard the way of the Tree of Life in Genesis 3? Now read Revelation 22:1-4: *"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed..."* Jesus will completely undo the curse of God. *"The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it and his servants will worship him."* He will open the door, undoing the curse. Then come the five most beautiful words, I believe, in all the Bible—Revelation 22:4: *"They will see his face..."*

**Characteristic #45, Jesus will open our eyes to the face of God.** Fanny Crosby, famous hymn writer who was blind her entire life, wrote this poem called "My Savior First of All." Because she was blind, heaven would be the first time she would ever see anything.

When my lifework is ended and I cross the swelling tide,  
When the bright and glorious morning I shall see;  
I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side,  
And His smile will be the first to welcome me.

Through the gates to the city in a robe of spotless white,  
He will lead me where no tears will ever fall;  
In the glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight,  
But I long to meet my Savior first of all.

Aren't we, in a sense, very similar in this? Our vision here on earth is blinded by sin. It is nothing compared to what we will see on that day. We will see His face.

**Characteristic #46, Jesus will shine His light on us.** Night will be no more. *"They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light..."* (Revelation 22:5).

**Characteristic #47, Jesus will share His reign with us.** Verse five is shocking. It's not "he will reign"—as in Jesus—but *"...they will reign forever and ever"* with Him. We will reign with Jesus. Jesus will share His reign with us.

All this leads to **Characteristic #48, Jesus will come back for us.** The Bible ends with these words: *"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'"* The book closes with a prayer: *"Amen."* May it be so. *"Come, Lord Jesus!"*

I love the way C.S. Lewis ends his last paragraph in one of the books of the Narnia series. He writes:

The things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And perhaps this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real Story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and title page. Now at last they're beginning Chapter One of the great Story which no one on earth has ever read, which goes on forever and which every chapter is better than the one before.

The end of Revelation in the Bible is the beginning of a story where every chapter will be better than the one before it. So I exhort you with this Revelation, with this picture of Jesus before you,

**Exhortation #1: Pursue Jesus as the all-consuming passion of your life.** I phrased that very intentionally, because I am not—and I don't believe the Bible is—exhorting you to pursue missions as the all-consuming passion of your life.

The most important question I could ask you today is not whether you're going to be a sender or a goer. The far more important, far more fundamental question is does your heart beat for Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Do you want Jesus more than anyone or anything else? A heart for missions, a heart for the nations, springs from a heart for Jesus. The last thing I or we want for this conference is to spend three days leading people to manufacture a heart for missions, while we miss a heart for Christ. Don't manufacture a heart for missions and miss a heart for Jesus.

Some might say a missions-charged sermon like this should be filled with missions stories, not 48 points from the Bible about Jesus. But I went the 48-points route because if I had just told stories of adventure and sacrifice, then you might be tempted to care more about the adventure than Jesus. In a weird way, you and I might be tempted to care more about the idea of sacrifice than the One Who sacrificed for you.

So I ask you, right where you're sitting now, does your heart right now beat for Jesus? I exhort you to pursue Him as the all-consuming passion of your life, more than any guy, more than any girl, more than anyone, more than any thing, more than money, more than comfort, more than safety, more than success, more than the position...we could go on and on. More than anything. Count all things loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:8).

Then, as you do that, as you pursue Him, **Exhortation #2: Spend your life for the fame of His name where He is not yet known.** We have seen this in Scripture. Nobody's making up anything. It's in the Bible. The end of all history is the exaltation of Jesus' name among the nations. That is where all of history is headed.

So I ask every person in this room, how is your life going to be spent toward that end? How is your life going to be spent for the fame of Jesus' name where He is not yet known? Max said it the first night, "Every generation has a choice." You have a choice. I pray that you will choose to say, "Jesus is my life and I want to spend it so the nations might be glad in Him, so that the nations might give glory to Him."

In the presence of this Jesus—He is here—we come to a moment of decision. What is He leading you to do?

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