

GOD IS...
GOOD
TRUE
BEAUTIFUL
 Revelation 21:23-27

SOOKE BAPTIST CHURCH
SUNDAY
MAY 8
 2022
10 AM

ALSO ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE

Coffee/Question:
 "We are all starved for the glory of God, not self. No one goes to the Grand Canyon to increase self-esteem. Why do we go? Because there is greater healing for the soul in beholding splendor than there is in beholding self." (John Piper)

Do you agree? Disagree?
 Explain what this means to you.

03:00

I appreciate how Rick Warren describes the glory of God...

What is the glory of God? It is who God is. It is the essence of His nature; the weight of His importance; the radiance of His splendor; the demonstration of His power; the atmosphere of His presence.

— Rick Warren —

Our passage for today reveals a scene of incredible glory... we are shown the goodness, the trueness, the beauty of the triune God.



v.23a – **The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it...**



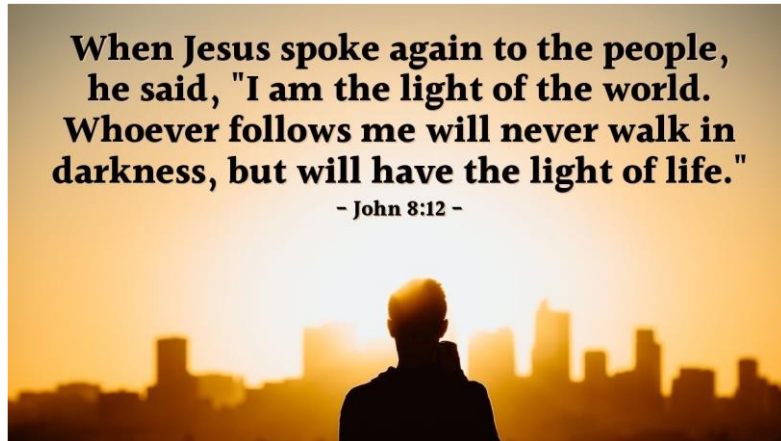
This is not saying there will be no sun or moon in the new creation. It is simply saying... that the new city... will not... need... the sun or the moon. Why is that?

In this present time, the sun and the moon... illuminate life upon the earth. For most of humanity our daily tasks are oriented around the time when the sun shines.

In the new creation, in the new city... there will be a source of light greater than the sun and the moon. What will that source be?

v.23b - The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, **for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.**

One particular day, Jesus said to a crowd of people, in the presence of Pharisees who had come to find some fault in him with which they might discredit him...



Think how remarkable that statement is...

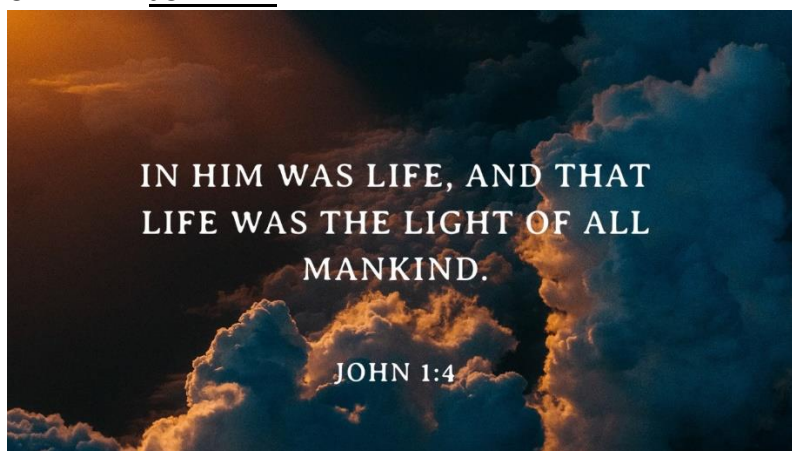
Jesus didn't say I am the light of my family, or my hometown, or my generation. He didn't say I am the light of the Jewish people.

He said, "I am the light of... the world."

Because this is who he is... Jesus said that everyone who follows him will never walk in darkness.

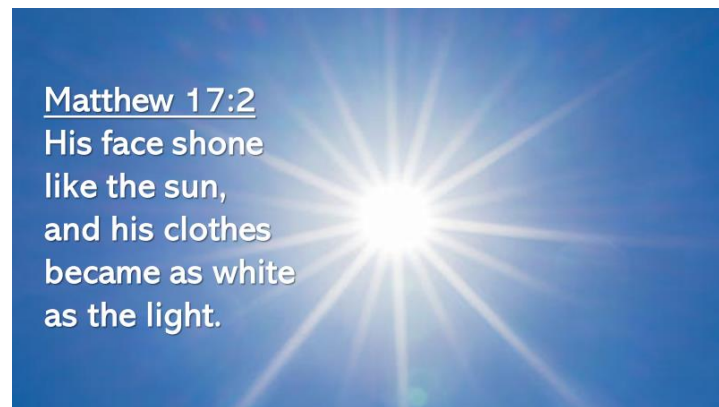
The life of Jesus within... gives to his people spiritual sight, insight, perception... and understanding.

What Jesus said on that particular day resonates with what the apostle John said of him in John 1:4...



During his time on the earth, the glory of Jesus, that is, the brilliance and beauty and goodness of his person... was kept under wraps.

But there was one moment ... described in Matthew 17:2 when...



In the new creation, the glory of Jesus will not be kept under wraps. The brilliance of his person will be... as v.23 says.... the lamp of the new city.

The reason the Scriptures make much of Jesus, which is why, we his followers also do... is because Jesus truly is unique.... as is God the Father and God the Spirit. We the people of God bear witness that among the gods of the nations there is no one... absolutely no one... like the triune God.

It is intentional that when v.23 speaks of the glory of Jesus that it speaks of Jesus... as the Lamb.

This image of a Lamb... has been used a number of times in the Revelation, as well as in the rest of the Scriptures.

This image reveals the goodness, the trueness and the beauty of our Lord Jesus.

Here we must remind ourselves of what John saw in Revelation 5.

One of the twenty-four elders said to John, "See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah..."

When John looked to where the elder pointed, v.6, instead of seeing a Lion, he saw... "...a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain..."



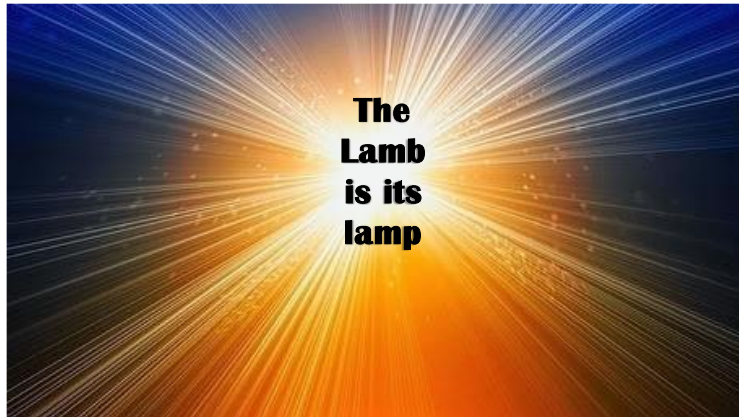
Tom Wright says, “The Lion is the symbol of power and royalty... and the Lamb.... of vulnerability and innocence. In the vision which John saw in Revelation 5, these two symbols were fused together, completely and forever.” Revelation, p.54.

But John saw more than a Lion who is a Lamb looking as if it had been slain. John saw that this Lion who is a Lamb stood... “at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.”

What did that mean... at the center of the throne?

The triune God reveals himself... to be a warrior who sacrifices himself in order to save those he loves.

In the new creation... “the triune God who is the Lion who is Lamb stands at the center of the new city...



... and from him glory radiates out... illuminating all life in the new city.” p.374.

This vision of Jesus, the Lion who is a Lamb... who is the new city’s lamp... is what inspired the hymn writer to write the song we earlier sang...



v.24 – **The nations will walk by its [the Lamb’s] light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it [the new city].**

Where is human history headed?

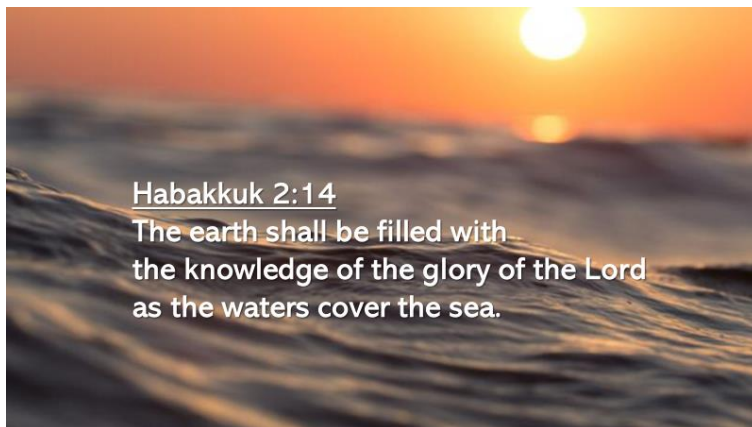
If the book of Revelation only went to chapter 19, one might conclude...



... that history is headed to a catastrophic end.

But that is not what we have read of in Revelation 21.

In the days of the OT prophets God pointed his people to a future that stretched beyond this present time.... when there would... no longer be brokenness... when...



Do you realize what this means?

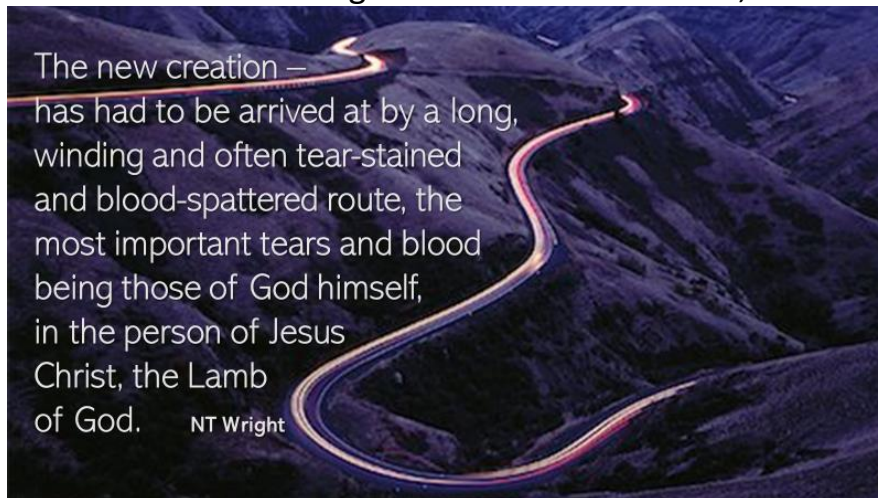
This incredibly beautiful creation in which we now live, “was not created to be an end in itself. This present creation is a signpost.... “ NT Wright, p.198

The new creation is not an afterthought... nor a plan B...



... which God put together after the first creation was corrupted by sin and ruined.

As we have read through the book of Revelation, we have seen that...



The new creation –
has had to be arrived at by a long,
winding and often tear-stained
and blood-spattered route, the
most important tears and blood
being those of God himself,
in the person of Jesus
Christ, the Lamb
of God. NT Wright

But as we've read and studied our way through Revelation 21... there is no doubt... new creation will be brought about by the creative power and wisdom of the triune God who is true, good and beautiful.

He will fulfill, not abolish, he will renew, not throw away. NT Wright, p.198

v.24 – The nations will walk by its [the Lamb's] light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it [the new city].

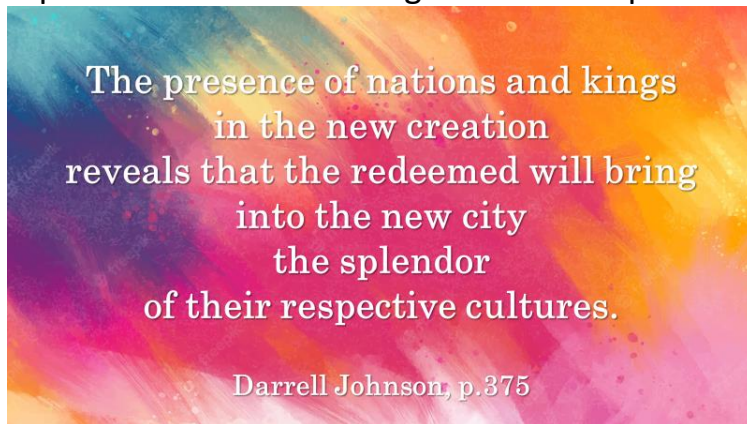
In the new city, who is it that walks by the light of the glory of Jesus?
John saw... the nations... and the kings of the earth.

There will never come a time in the new creation, when God's people won't need Jesus.

Forever and a day we will live and walk by the light of his person.
His life that sustains us in the here and now, will continue to do so for all eternity.

What does it mean that the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into the new city?

Richard Mouw, in his book “When the Kings Come Marching In,” explains. In the time when John wrote the Revelation, kings were more than political leaders of a specific region. They were also considered to be the primary representatives of their region’s culture. p.26



We need to linger on this thought.

From our natural and spiritual giftings, which were given to us by God, and then developed in partnership with the Holy Spirit, the good and beautiful God will welcome the redeemed to bring into the new city... knowledge and skills which were acquired during our lifetime.

As marvelous as this is... the fact that God will do so, even more speaks to the marvel of his grace.

Could God do everything without us?

Of course, he could.

But he chooses to include us... to use us... now and in the time of the new city.

As Jesus said... there is a blessing...



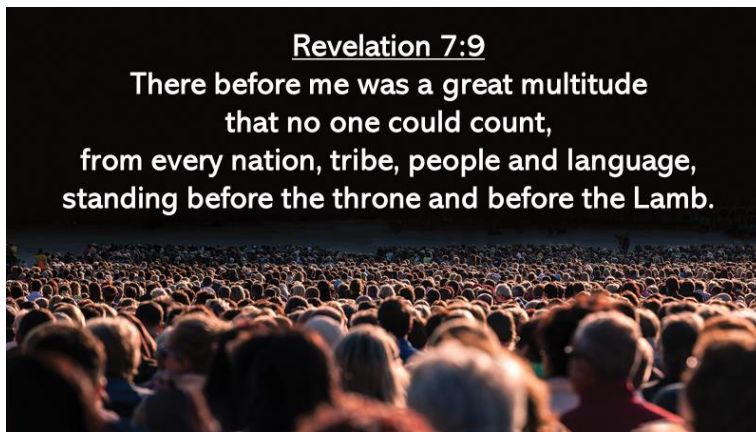
...when we serve God and others in the name of Jesus.

This is a blessing we experience now.

But it will also be a blessing we will experience in the new city.

There is more here regarding the statement about the nations.

Back in Revelation 7 John was shown the vast number of those saved by... and claimed as... God's own.



The redeemed are from where?

They come from every nation... from every tribe... from every people and language people....



...Guatemalans, Lebanese, Koreans, Nigerians, Scots, Germans, Pakistanis, Irish, Colombians, Chinese, Ukrainians, Egyptians, Congolese, British, Burmese

...the plethora of First Nations, Brazilians, Sudanese, Israeli, Dutch, Russian, Norwegian, Yemenis, French, Chileans, Bengalis, Vietnamese, Hawaiian, Iraqis

... Kenyans, Swiss, Hungarians, Indian, Peruvians, Mexican, South African, Iranians, Cubans, Armenians, Polish, Ethiopians, Thai, Syrian

This truly is beyond astounding!

The redeemed from all the varying cultures of humanity will bring their...



... and this will be... our starting point as we steward the new creation and its creatures for the glory of God.

What we see in v.24 and 26... is a picture of the community of the redeemed... engaged in activity... that is God-honoring and soul satisfying.

Dallas Willard in his book, 'The Divine Conspiracy,' writes...



v.25 – On no day will its [the new city's] gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.

The new city is not a fortress that protects God's people from evil that lurks outside its walls.

Why will the gates always be open?

Because.... there will no longer be night.

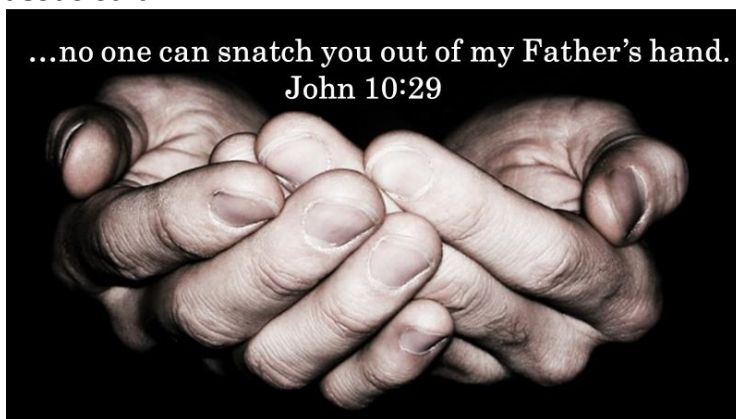
In the new city there will no longer be any threat of danger.

The assurance that those who live in the new city will be safe from danger... is not because God somehow becomes more powerful than... than he now is.

The triune God never changes.

In this present time, he is the God who holds his own in his hand.

Jesus said...



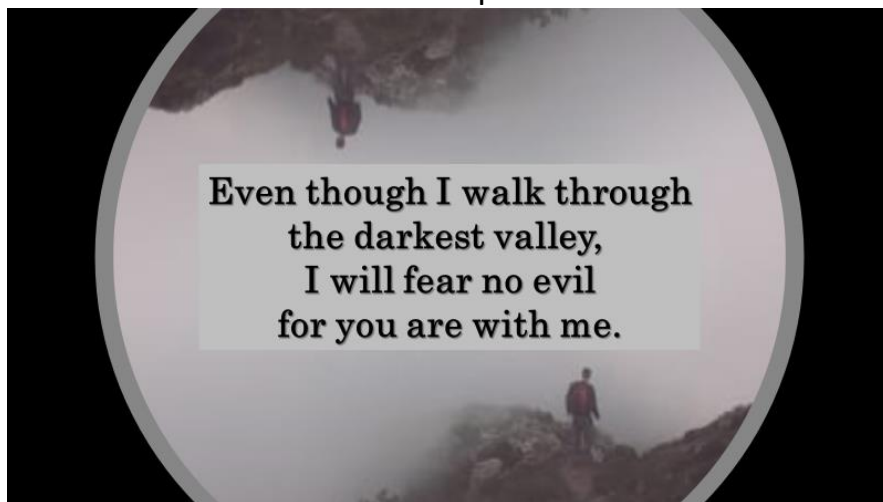
I can remember when we first arrived in Colombia in June of 1989. The Medellin cartel had declared war on the government. It was a regular occurrence to hear gunfire ... and some days the explosion of bombs... and to read the daily assassination report.

We lived in a city with heightened risk.

But our hearts were at peace.

We believed and the Spirit gave assurance that God held our lives in his hands. If he permitted something to happen to us, then it was with good cause.

This was the confidence of the psalm writer.



In the new city, there will not be any danger.

What makes the difference between now and then is that the source of trouble – our sin and those who do evil... will have been forever dealt with and removed to a place where it can no longer influence or cause harm.

This is the point made in v.27 – nothing impure can enter the new city and corrupt, no one who is deceitful will be able to enter the new city and cause chaos and harm.

Those who live in the new city will only be... those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, those who have been saved by God, body, soul and spirit. This is the inheritance of the redeemed.

Just as nothing we do in the present is merely relevant to the present, but carries significant implications into God's future, so nothing in the vision of God's future is merely future.

This is why it matters how we live in this present time.

This is why as the people of God we spend our lives for the cause of Jesus Christ. It's why we use our natural and spiritual gifts with the power of the Holy Spirit to disperse the grace of God into this world.

We are a people upon whom hope has come.

We are a people into whose hearts the love of God has been poured.

We are a people into whom the light of God has shone.

We are a people who experience the life of heaven even in our pain.

We are a people whose sin has been removed.

We are a people who've been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ.

We are the redeemed.

We are a people who have tasted liberty, the freedom of the Spirit.

Because the central reality of God's future is Jesus himself, and because Jesus is not merely a future reality but the one who lived and died and rose again and even now reigns in glory and holds his church in his hand, the reality of the new city, though still a matter of hope, is something we glimpse in the present, especially in... the church's worship and witness. NT Wright, p.195

In light of what our passage has revealed to us, we express our Amen to God – our heart-felt gratitude for him... and for his marvelous salvation.