

**Ephesians 1:7-10**  
**The Revelation of Redemption**

Wonderful to worship our God together in song and to be able to do that now as we turn to His Word to continue worship and to continue recognizing that as one of the clear and distinguishing marks of us as Christians. We are those who do not show up once a week and sing songs but that we are those who live a life of worship and that is at the base and the heart of what we ought to be doing is we think about our existence, God creating you, God creating me, what do we exist for? We exist for Him and we exist to bring glory and honor to Him. We exist for worship. We exist for worship. We exist to worship God and bring Him glory in every manner - in every aspect of our life. That is what we are called to do and now when it comes to actually fleshing it out, we can recognize how it goes beyond a Sunday morning but how it does in fact even go to all the details of our life. But how about the means by which we can even do that. How do we live in such a way that we are living a life of worship? How do we stay in a pattern of life? How do we stay in that place where we are worshiping God and bringing Him the glory that He deserves?

One good answer is what Paul says in Romans 12:1, as you might be aware of, "I appeal to you therefore brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God." This is an act of spiritual worship that Paul says, and notice the fuel for it: where does the energy, where does the strength come from in order for you to present your life to God as that living sacrifice that is worship unto Him? It comes from His mercies. It comes from keeping His mercies, His grace - it comes from keeping all of His benefits given towards us, keeping those in view. We need that - we need to be reminded of that. We need to have them repeated. We need to study them deeper. We need to behold them in a new light because it brings us to a place where we are beholding Christ and all the greatness of our God in new light. That propels us forward. That drives us to offer our body up to Him, to give our life to Him, to worship Him in the way that He has designed for us to live and operate in bringing Him glory.

And that is really what we are having the opportunity to see modeled before us in Ephesians 1. In Ephesians 1:3-14 this long run-on sentence that we are really thankful for. We are so grateful that Paul gives us a good model of praise and worship and adoration to God - this kind of explosive doxology,

and in it we get a lot of wonderful theology flowing from it. We get information about God. We get understanding of who God is and what He's done and it allows us to behold Him in new light. It allows us to behold Him in glory so that hopefully as a result of looking at something like this, we move in a different fashion than the way we came in. We move in a way to continue to bring glory and honor to God. We move to worship. Our worship will be limited based upon how much we are engaged with and are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And this is what Paul gives us an opportunity to do: to grow in that knowledge and thus to grow in our worship.

When we are looking at it, just a few words real quick about these verses, versus 3-14, they've been outlined in different ways. People go through them and try to discuss how to even break it up, and how do you put the proper grammar and punctuation in these verses? And at a broad level, there are a couple different ways. One way, some people say, is to recognize it in three different parts. Well we have already covered, coming in versus 3-6, talking about the work of God the Father; and what we are going to cover this morning, verses 7-10, talking about the work of God the Son; and then verses 11-14, what we've yet to cover, talking about God the Spirit. So you almost see all 3 members of the Trinity acting in our salvation, all the spiritual blessings that we receive.

Another way of looking at it is the past, present, future. Verses 3-6 covering what God has done in eternity past and as we looked at last time, that was how He chose us and adopted us to Himself. He predestined us really, from the foundations of the world, before we were in existence. And in looking at what we are covering today, versus 7 through 10, we see what is presently true about our salvation - what we are currently experiencing. I hope this is true for everyone here, as we study this this morning. Looking ahead then to verses 11-14, we will focus on the future blessings of our salvation and what is to come.

Just glorious either way you look at it or divide up these verses, it is wonderful to behold our great God and what He has done. So we are going to continue to do that all with the hope of driving us into that place where we ought to be staying in step with the spirit, worshipping God, offering our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice. Let's return to the text, let's look at Ephesians 1 and let's read versus 7-10 our versus for this morning, "In him

we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

We shift now and we focus upon what we are presently beholding and experiencing in salvation, coming to us through the person of Jesus Christ and as we look and begin to look at these verses we see first off the redemption and forgiveness of salvation - these two loaded terms that come to us in verse 7. The redemption and forgiveness that we have in our salvation - two more of these spiritual blessings as he led off with in verse 3. He's blessing God because God has blessed us with all these spiritual blessings in Christ in the heavenly places - redemption and forgiveness.

The first thing, as we began to get into these verses now, we focus in on redemption and we see the cost - the cost of redemption, very clearly laid out. To be clear, as we look at verse 7, this is in Christ and you could just accept that because I told you, you could just accept that because I said it's Jesus, but if you look at the text it might be more vague. It says, “in him,” in verse 7 and you think, “well that could be any member of the Trinity.” All we have to do is look back to verse 6. From verse 7 the words, “in him” are informed by how we ended verse 6 which said “to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved” - “in the beloved,” and we noted that that is a term and a title that is given to Jesus. that is how God actually speaks of Him when Jesus was on this earth and He was baptized by John the Baptist and He went up on the mountain of transfiguration and showed His glory. God the Father spoke from heaven and said “this is my beloved son.” So that is a title that is used for Christ in the Gospels and Paul has repeated it here in verse 6 and then we go to verse 7, “in him.” We are talking about Christ - “in Christ” - “in Christ,” specifically “in God the Son,” as you see very clearly, “we have redemption” - “we have redemption.”

As we look at this term, this concept here of “redemption,” there are really two main ideas that float up; and as you look at this term, as it's used in the New Testament, you see it and you see it at different times and sometimes it emphasizes one of these more than the other, but the two main ideas that come from this concept of redemption is, one: payment. Payment that is

given for, perhaps a slave, that is most often seen. A slave or a worker of some sort. Someone that's in debt. Or you also see this concept of release of that slave. Release of a captive even. So the concept, the theological concept even - of redemption, it really encapsulates both. A payment for the release of an individual. A payment that is offered and given, also known as a ransom at times - a payment that is given and offered for the release of an individual.

And this would be a very common practice as they would understand it, all in the context of slavery. One commentator states this "because of the prevalence of slavery in the Roman world, including Ephesus and western Asia minor, the concept of the payment of a price to secure freedom for a slave was very common." It's a common concept. When they heard this term redemption or ransom they would understand that transaction that process that would actually happen often in society when someone would actually offer up a payment that would release an individual or a slave.

For us, as we kind of think about in Biblical terms, we can go back to the Old Testament, we get a great example. You might just think of the people of Israel and how we know what God did in interacting with them. He redeemed them from slavery. That is, when they were in Egypt, as we find in the book of Exodus, this beautiful story of God intervening in and actually claiming His people for His own. When He brings them out of Egypt here is how its stated here in verse 6 of Exodus 6 says, " say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment." You recall just how amazing that was not just God showing His great acts and His wonderful power in the plagues but that last and final plague claiming the firstborn of every household that did not have blood over the door. A very clear price that was paid as God gathered His people Israel and redeemed them for His own - a very clear thing.

In our text, as we come back to Ephesians the concept is right in front of us, we have redemption and the cost "through his blood" - "through his blood." The cost, the price, the payment necessary, the payment given, the blood of God the Son, the blood of Jesus Christ. What is it about the blood that is so significant? Why this? I mean it could have been gold or silver as Peter mentions but instead it's blood. Instead it's blood. And we can even go back

to how God interacted with Israel giving them the sacrificial system and how they were to operate in the Temple in bringing sacrifices and we see some significance in the book of Leviticus. Leviticus 17:11 states this, “for the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I've given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.” How was it that the people's sins in the nation of Israel were covered over until the next year when they had the day of atonement every year? How was it that God was able to cover over those sins? It was in the offering of the life which was seen clearly in the shedding of blood of those animals and the sacrifices that were brought. This was a significant cost.

And we think back to our text in Ephesians, we think about the blood that was shed by Jesus and the significance goes up not because it's a human versus an animal but because of what we have already studied in Mark's gospel. He was sinless, He was perfect. No deceit in His mouth in all of His interactions, in everything He did. Right? All His ministry and everything that was done, you would think that all of that would somehow maybe be enough - be a good enough offering to God; that He could appreciate the miracles that Jesus did, He could appreciate just the way that Jesus treated people, or the disciples that He gathered for Himself. But no, Jesus went all the way to the end. He offered up His own life and shed His blood, that very thing that God even demands, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

What a wonderful and amazing profound cost that was offered on our behalf. One commentator, expanding on the profound reality of this states, “Christ's bloodshed in death liberates from the divine wrath, from bondage to sin and guilt, from the impossible burden of law keeping, and from the tyranny of death. Ransom and redemption represent God's merciful answer to the many forms of bondage that enslave men and women.”

Isn't that the truth? That's the reality of mankind, enslaved. Slaves to our sin - slaves - and even if we think about the law, trying to uphold the perfect character of God and live it out. No, we are burdened, we are unable to actually live it out. We are enslaved in sin and guilt, and thus in bondage, deserving the wrath of God. Thus redemption comes in is one of the most glorious truths that comes to us from God the Son. That a payment has been offered, there is no longer this enslavement. We've been released. We've

been set free from our slavery to our own flesh - Satan, this world in the sin that binds us.

This is the concept of redemption and it is not just put forth as a most glorious amazing truth of what Jesus did but then we see the results of that come in the cancellation which is forgiveness. The cancellation as the verse goes on to state, “the forgiveness of our trespasses.” There is redemption. The price that was paid in the blood of Jesus and His death on the cross and then from that we experience this result, “the forgiveness of our trespasses.”

This is the relationship between redemption and forgiveness. Redemption in the cross of Christ brings about this result of forgiveness. This is a wonderful feeling to have. A debt lifted off of one’s shoulders. When you are in debt, when you have a loan, when you are bearing those burdens, you are not forgetting them. They are constantly on your mind, and it is a burden as you walk around, you are not truly free.

Paul actually speaks a little bit more about the reality of what the cross did in terms of forgiveness in Colossians 2. He states this, “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.” Very interesting here, to see the record of debt that Paul's mentioning here, and this word that is used, and its a very common one for their culture and society, as people would actually make loans to one another, and there would be this interacting with one another, and they would write it down and have some formal agreement, and more than likely it would get nailed up in the city square for all to see that everyone knew how much Joe owed Debbie or whatever it was. Everyone saw how much the loan was for and what the expectations were as it was just put up, nailed up, for all to see. This note, this agreement note, that was then put up and Paul then uses that, draws on that imagery, and says, “that’s the record of debt that mankind has.” Right? We are all indebted in this way and what does God do? He takes it and He nails it to the cross. He nails it to the cross. To have the burden lifted. The debt gone - forgiven. It is gone by being nailed to the cross. This is the payment that is offered by the blood of Christ and the result of having burdens lifted and having forgiveness offered to us, forgiveness for us.

It's worth pointing out too, a simple thing here in verse 7, if you go back to the beginning, "in him we have redemption." You notice that? Not, "in him there is the possibility of it," right? "In him is the possibility of redemption," or, "you will have redemption." No, we have it - we have redemption. This is true for every single one of you if you have put your faith in Jesus Christ. You have it right now. You are not going to be anymore redeemed tomorrow then you are today. You are redeemed. The price has been paid, the blood was sufficient and enough, forgiveness has been taken care of. You no longer carry that burden. That weight is not on you, so you don't try to perform better for God in hopes that somehow that will be the way you get in. That's not how it works, you know that the promise that is offered here, that the truth of what Jesus did is that it was offered perfectly unto God and it was accepted because of Jesus, not because of you. You don't perform, as so many other religions and worldviews would like to say, they put it on themselves, and they try a little harder, and they work a little extra, and they hope, and they don't even know for sure if that's enough to get them to the place where the gods are pleased with. We are certain. We are convinced. It's present tense. We have this. You can know that if you are in Christ, if your life is bound up and wrapped up in Him, you have redemption this morning. You have forgiveness. You don't worry, you don't question, you just are rejoicing in such a state of salvation.

And obviously, to make this clear, you just look at the reality that it doesn't depend upon you but totally and completely on God. He is the one that's done this. It's come from Him, as an overflow of His character. This is just the greatness of our God to us, as verse 7 ends, "according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us." All of this: redemption, the blood of Jesus, the cross, forgiveness for all of our sins, all this coming out of who God is. This is the nature of our God. He is full of grace and mercy, and He wants to extend it, and He does, in rich fashion and rich form, such that we are lavished. It's been lavished upon us. One commentator states, "this grace is sufficiently abundant to cover the sins of all and is adequate for the worst of sinners." I don't know how you feel this morning, I don't know how guilty you might be this morning, or maybe you start to think of your past and the guilt starts to swell and you do start to worry that maybe you are somehow worse than everyone else in this room, and you do start to worry about your performance and what God might think of you - well grace is better. Grace is that much greater and better than whatever guilt you're feeling or whatever you have experienced or whatever it is you have done.

Think of the apostle Paul, for crying out loud, think of his past, think of how easily he could be writing these letters and he could be shaking at the thought of approving of the killing of Christians. He could be shaking at the thought of how he was the one that was going and throwing Christians in jail before God turned his life around, think of such sin, such guilt, such weight and recognize that God's grace is better. God's grace is greater, as Paul himself would write in Romans 5:20, “ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded.”

And this is the nature of our God. It all depends upon Him, and His kindness, and His grace, and His love towards us, and not on you. It's not about you. This is why we are rejoicing in worshiping our God because of all of who He is and what He has done, a gracious God, extending grace to us far more beyond any sins that we have committed. This is the work of God, the Son. He's given us this that we experience now. We have redemption. We have forgiveness, and it's all because of the riches of His grace.

And then this shifts us, in verses, the end of verse 8 here and into verses 9 and 10, we now see the revelation and fulfillment of salvation, the revelation and fulfillment of salvation. There is more to the way that we've been privileged, as if this wasn't enough already, to have the privilege of being redeemed, being called redeemed, and to have the privilege of knowing that we are forgiven. There is more, there is more that is offered to us in how we have been privileged. Considering all the people that have lived in all time in history, you and I this morning are in such a privileged position. Go back to verse 8, in the middle of the verse we pick up, “in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose.” We have something that's been specially granted to us. Paul reveals this concept of a mystery. The mystery of the will of God. The mystery of God's will. You and I today are here rejoicing that we know that mystery. It's been revealed to us. The mystery of God's will. The mystery of God's plan. The mystery of what God is doing, according to His purpose, in His pleasure, what He is carrying out. Your eyes have been opened to see. You are so privileged to live in the year 2018 and to be able to know what God is doing. To understand, to have this mystery unfold before your eyes as you read the pages of Scripture.

To be more specific about this, what is this mystery to which Paul is referring? What has God actually made known to you and I in His wisdom and insight? It was so wise and insightful of God to make this mystery known to us. And verse 9 just simply says, it's a mystery of His will, in accordance to His purpose, in His pleasure, but still what is that? What is that mystery in fact? This is where we need the Old Testament. This is where we need to zoom out. We've got to get the big picture at this point. We've got to really start thinking, what is God doing in all of history? - in all of redemptive history as we can see it. What has God been up to? And we go back to the Old Testament and we have to recognize what has happened.

In the Old Testament, as you just take a very broad general glance at it, and as you consider what events unfold, and what we learn about different characters like God and the nation of Israel, one thing we learn very clearly about God is some of His character and who He is. He tells us who He is. He actually shows it in how He interacts. He is a holy and righteous God. He is just, right? He will punish, if need be, sin. At the same time, He's merciful. He is forgiving. We see these affirmations of His character in the Old Testament. And then we think about some of the promises of God, some of the things that He has actually said. God has actually promised that there would be blessings for those that obey Him and there would be curses for those that disobey Him. He promised a kingdom that would actually come and expand and actually be greater than all the other kingdoms upon the earth. He promised the king to actually rule over that kingdom and that king would be a good king that would rule with justice and righteousness and peace. God also promised that there would be salvation and deliverance for His people. Far greater than what they experienced in the Exodus. Far greater than being removed from Egypt and redeemed by Him. There would be a greater salvation and deliverance for them.

The Old Testament also has its fair share of sinful examples if we are honest. We see a picture of an amazing God in the portrait of His power and His grace and mercy, along with His judgment, His righteousness. We see His promises that are laid out, and stated plainly, but we also see a terrible response from His people, not just the nations, but even His own, His own people that He called out of Egypt. How do they respond to Him? With corruption, with hypocrisy, unfaithfulness, over and over again, such that it even spreads, and it permeates all the leadership, whether it's a prophet or a priest or a king, they're all declining, they're all morally going downhill.

They are not upholding the law, they're forgetting the Word of God, and they don't even have it at times. In fact, it's so sad, that even when you get to the end of the Old Testament, you see that God has to punish them, because of His righteousness and His justice, that He kicks them out of the land. He sends them into exile for 70 years and they have to be removed because of their sin. Their sins are worse than the people that were in the land before them. So He kicks them out for 70 years and then there's this glimmer of hope that He's going to bring them back, and even when He does that, even when He brings them back into the land, they come back to a land that's full of rubble and ruin that's been destroyed, and they start to put the rubble together and make walls, and they put it more together and they kind of reconstruct the Temple to the best that they can, and the people are back with the walls built in Jerusalem and the Temple built and they look around and there's still a reality, "this isn't even close to what Solomon had," - "This isn't even close to where we were at," - "So all of God's promises and all of what He said, we didn't even get it with Solomon, but here we are now back in the land and the reality is we're still woefully short, we're still so far from what God has promised and said, and we are still sinful, we are still not obeying Him like He set for us to do."

The whole point of painting that picture for you is I hope you see a tension, there is a tension there; that you have God on the one hand, a perfect, holy, righteous God, sinful and rebellious people on the other hand and then these promises that have been made. How is God going to accomplish these ends, these promises that He stated, with these kind of people, when He is perfect and holy in all His ways? How is this going to work out? How will righteous God save His sinful people? And will He actually come down and dwell with them like He's promised? Will He actually come and be their king? Is His plan really going to progress and unfold as He said?

Well, you and I sit here in 2018 and even acknowledging that tension, I hope you know the answer. I hope you can acknowledge that tension when you read the Old Testament for yourself, but you can say, "But I know how God answers it! I know how God actually solves this!" This is not a problem too big for God because the resolution really lies completely in the man Jesus Christ. The resolution is all about the Messiah. The Messiah - it's about His Son. God resolves that tension between Himself, being holy and righteous, and a sinful and wicked people by entering in His own son, Jesus. If you go back to verse 9, we see that, "he has made known this mystery of his will

according to his purpose,” and Paul says, “which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time,” - “which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time.”

God revealed the mystery of His will in Jesus Christ. Jesus, the revelation of Jesus. Jesus entering into our world is the solution to that tension. Through Jesus, God upholds His character as holy and righteous. Through Jesus, God upholds His mercy and grace upon mankind. Through Jesus, God redeems His people from slavery to sin. Through Jesus, God cancels the record of sin that was held against them. Jesus brings peace between God and man. That is what we saw at the end of Mark's gospel. God upholds His righteousness and His holiness and His justice. When Jesus hangs on the cross, and he cries out, “my God my God why have you forsaken me?” God remains just and righteous in that moment, because He pours out His wrath upon the sins of mankind, and Jesus steps in the way and takes it all for us.

That is how the tension is resolved, and you and I live in such a privileged time to know that we have redemption, we have forgiveness. Why? Because God changes His character? He flip-flops on who He is and He pretends like righteousness isn't important anymore? Or because He just killed everyone and started over? No, we have forgiveness, we have redemption, because of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus stepped in and made it all possible. It's the mystery of God's will that He was pleased to unfold in His Son. Something that absolutely blew the mind of all the Pharisees and all the religious leaders. They were not ready for such a plan. They were not ready for a suffering Messiah. They were not ready for such glory. Galatians 4, Paul describes this time that was coming in Christ, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

At a time where the Old Testament built up with more and more climax of tension and wonderment of how this was actually going to work and if God's words were actually trustworthy, enter Jesus - enter Jesus - the fullness of time, to bring all this together, to resolve it for us. Christ coming established a foothold for God's plan to move forward without compromise of His character. Through Jesus, mankind can be in relationship with God. Through Jesus, God can come and dwell with man. Through Jesus, God can establish His kingdom on earth and reign supreme. The work of Jesus on the

cross not only provided our redemption and our forgiveness, the work of Jesus on the cross changed the entire course of human history so God's will would prevail. All the promises, all the reality of and the intentions of what God put forth for His people, all able to be back on track, moving forward, because of the cross. Without the cross, we still have the tension. Without the cross, we still have man at odds with God and no ability to see any hope, any glimmer of hope, of God's promises coming true. But God upholds His Word in allowing His Son to step in and take on the wrath that was deserved for sin.

Perhaps a great place to see this is in the book Revelation. In the book of Revelation, when you go to chapter 5, you enter in with John to this glorious throne room, alright, this scene that is just amazing when you think of all the angels and the multitudes that are there praising God, and you think of even the four living creatures and everything being described as John is taking it all in. It is a glorious scene of a holy God that is there in His heavenly throne room, and then there's brought into the scene, this scroll, the scroll that sealed seven times, and it's the so-called, it's like the title deed to the earth. This scroll that, as you know, when it's open it unfolds and it brings about all the wrath and destruction upon this earth and rebellious mankind, and ushers in the kingdom of God, as God will then dwell with man as we see at the end of Revelation. But the scroll is presented in the throne room, and it's brought up and attention is brought to the scroll, and the question is offered, "who can take the scroll?" "Who is worthy?"

And there is silence, an awkward silence, and John starts weeping because there is no one to take the scroll. But then he's actually reassured and someone comes along and said, "Wait, take heart," and he looks and there is this combination, a description of someone that is like a lion but, at the same time, a lamb who has suffered, a lamb who has been slain, a description of Jesus. Jesus who went to the cross. Jesus who bore the wrath of God. Jesus who enters into the scene and takes the scroll, and as we know He will open its seals and it will unleash the flood of God's judgment upon the earth, but at the same time that the rushing presence of God to dwell with man and to actually set up His kingdom on this earth.

The book of Revelation can't happen if the cross doesn't happen. If the cross doesn't happen, you don't have a Lamb who was slain that can take the scroll. If you don't have anyone to take the scroll, we don't have the end. We

don't have the kingdom. We don't have God dwelling with mankind. We're still at odds. This is the beautiful mystery that you and I know. This is the privileged position that we all find ourselves having this morning. We have redemption. We have forgiveness. We know the will of God. We know His plan because we know Jesus Christ. We know how He comes and intersects and actually comes to be our intercessor. He takes on the wrath and punishment that we deserve and He moves forward the plan of God, the promises of God that will be fulfilled in its fullness one day.

What is this will of God that must prevail? What are these plans, aside from just generally what you read in the book Revelation? We have a brief description in our passage here as Paul describes in the sense of this merging that takes place - this merging that takes place. As I've alluded to. This merging of God coming to earth and making His dwelling place with man. We come back to our text in Ephesians 1, and we see that, "He made known to us the mystery of his will," in verse 9, "according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." This is what we are moving towards, we're moving towards a unification, a uniting of all things in Christ, a uniting of all things in heaven and on earth in Christ. That is what we're moving towards. God's will is to bring everything under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures teach that this will take place in this future messianic kingdom of Jesus. The kingdom had been promised repeatedly in the Old Testament. The kingdom had continued to be discussed by Jesus and His disciples as they were on this earth and they were doing their ministry, and it continued even after Jesus rose from the dead and then ascended into heaven. The disciples were even then still waiting, "is now the time for the kingdom? Is now the time for the kingdom?" They're still waiting, because God promised it, and even into the early church, and as we see mentioned in these letters, and even in the book of Acts and the preaching of the apostles, they were still looking forward to this kingdom. Still awaiting this time. It was anticipated and we still anticipate it today. Jesus will return to earth and set up His kingdom. He will unify all things under Himself. Those who rebel will die and those who have believed in Him will experience His righteous ruling.

As Paul states in Philippians 2:9-11, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so 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.” There’s are no exceptions there. That’s every knee. Every knee bowing, that’s every tongue confessing, and it doesn't matter where you're geographically located, heaven or earth, you will be bowing, you will be confessing, and that is the truth. That is the unifying of all things under the Lordship of Christ such that there is no longer any rebellion, but an acknowledgment of Christ the King over all. Jesus will ultimately deal with heavenly entities as well. This is not just for mankind, and in what we know of the sinfulness of man, this is even the rebellious spiritual beings, Satan and his demonic forces, thrown into the lake of fire, as clearly stated, for their destination in the book of Revelation. Along with all those who choose not to believe in Jesus as Messiah.

Why is it important to keep the end in mind? What's so great about this, this moment of everything being unified and brought under Jesus, sin being dealt with finally, Christ ruling supremely? The truth is, you and I are in a privileged position to know that, that can actually happen now. We’re not still at this tension. We’re not still at this awkward place of wondering, “how are you going to do this God? You say these things, but I just don't know how it's going to happen?” We know it will happen. We have certainty. There is no question about it. Why? Because Christ came and He went to the cross.

This is how Paul describes it in Colossians 1:19-20, “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” Before the cross, before the peace that is accomplished because of the shedding of the blood of Christ, the sinless one, you still have tension between God and mankind. You have a promise that God will dwell with mankind and rule and reign over them, but you have no idea how that can happen. How will that even be accomplished? But after the cross, where you and I now sit, after the cross, we’re aware that this can and will happen, because tension has been removed. We have redemption. We have forgiveness. We will dwell with God. He will dwell with us. Because He is no longer seeing us in our sinfulness and the guilty ways that we know we have, but He sees you and He sees me as in Christ, in His Son. What a glorious day that will be, and what glorious hope we have. What glorious privileges are in front of us because we know this is certain. We know that much more certain than even the Old Testament saints.

Such knowledge, such wisdom that has been given from the hands of the apostles down to us. It ought to move us. It can't just be information. It can't just be another statement. It can't just be another word that you know, redemption, forgiveness, a mystery that's been made known. But now puts you in perspective. It helps you see where you fit in God's timeline and when you recognize where you are in God's timeline you play your role. You worship Him. You give all glory and praise to Him. You are eager to tell people about the redemption you know you have, and the forgiveness you are experiencing, because of the work that Jesus did. And furthermore it allows you to continue to see yourself appropriately in your relationship to sin. You are dead to that and you no longer walk in it. You now walk in step with the Spirit, living to please God in all things because you've been redeemed and you been forgiven from those old worthless ways and habits. Those truths can, and should, and will motivate us to live a life of worship at every moment, in every conversation, and every word that's spoken, in every thought that enters into our head. Let that be true of us in our worship as a congregation and as individuals.