



July 27, 2014

Vacation Bible School Sermon Series – Who Is Like the LORD?

5. **GLORIFICATION** – God glorifies a new creation by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and raises up our bodies to eternal life

1 Corinthians 15:20

The Ancient Mesopotamians had their story. Evolutionists have theirs. Everyone has some idea of why we are here, what we are supposed to be doing, and where we are headed.

For the Mesopotamians, time is circular. What was will be again. The cycles of months and years are always anticipating a return to what was before – which is, as they see it, a return to chaos. Their creation story, Enuma Elish, recounts a beginning that came about from chaos and anticipates a world that will return to chaos. It depicts a god, Marduke, with limited power, with self-interested motives, and with no real end goal for mankind.

Evolutionists tell their own story, though it is not so different at all. It begins and ends with chaos. Rather than seeing death as the enemy, it is just a natural part of our existence; it is a necessary process of evolution. There is no real goal for this world except to survive; there no real hope for something better to come.

A god or philosophy without Christ has no true hope. Without Christ, there is no answer to death. The Biblical notion of an end time restoration is unique. What makes the LORD unique is that He is a God who restores, who makes new, who gives hope. He is the God of rest. When God rested on the seventh day of creation, He was anticipating what He intended for all creation: an ongoing existence and relationship with Him characterized by a state of rest. Harmony was the original design and harmony is the end goal of God's work.

This harmony was disrupted by sin. Death is the inevitable result of sin – a condition which renders it impossible for us to enter God's glory. Death is the enemy; it is a wicked thing never intended by God, a thing which God promises to destroy.

Throughout the week we've seen the wonderful works of God. Creation has shown how God made something good out of nothing, how He has brought us life and purpose and rest. Preservation has shown how God protects us against the elements of sin as we now face a fallen world. Redemption has shown how God makes us His own by sending His Son to the cross and to death and forgiving our sins for Jesus sake. Sanctification has shown how the Holy Spirit enables us to believe, granting us safe access into His holy presence and empowering us to live according to God's will. Today's lesson now ties all these lessons together as it culminates in the final fulfillment of all God intended. We gaze into the future and see the future come into our lives today. Christ Jesus is a glimpse of the

future because He is the “firstfruits.” He characterizes exactly what God intends for His creation: glorious rest.

*But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:20)*

Christ is the firstfruits – a glimpse into the future harvest. From His resurrection we see what God intends for us all. During His forty days on earth prior to His ascension into heaven, Jesus walked with His disciples. They ate and drank with Him; they touched His hands and side and they listened to His words of peace. So the risen Lord said, “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” Because Christ has risen, you too who believe in Him will rise.

Death is swallowed up in His victory, so that for each Christian, there is hope. “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53). The intention of God is to restore what was first intended. There is but one cycle for God and it is to return to the beginning. In Christ Jesus, we return to what God intended: righteousness and life with Him. On the Last Day God promises to remake this world; He will bring us a new creation – a world in which there is no more sin, nor sorrow, nor pain, nor death. He will raise up you and all who believe and glorify your body to what it should be: a body at rest, a body that lives and never dies. Christians have hope.

And this hope is what changes the way we live in the world today. The future God intends is realized in the way we live as Christians. As Paul writes: “If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.” All we say and do, the way we repent and forgive and encourage and exhort, the way we listen to His word and keep to His commandments, the way we treat each other and this creation, the way we care for our children and love our neighbor, the way we stand up for injustice and reach out to those who suffer – in these ways, we represent God in this world and give those around us a glimpse of the new creation.

The LORD is a God who restores, who makes new, who gives hope. Who is like the Lord?

Amen.

