

Beholding Christ, Just Now



Jim Raddin

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J H Raddin LLC
2020

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With great thanksgiving
To my Lord Jesus Christ
And to those who have served Him in my life,
Most notably my dear wife Janie
With whom I behold Him,
Just Now
And Always Now.

Jim Raddin

San Antonio and Rockport, Texas

June 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In all your ways acknowledge Him... Proverbs 3:6

And particularly here, in this book, I acknowledge Him. I have heard authors claim that their book “wrote itself”. This one did not. This book came forth from Beholding Christ, Just Now.

I must be quick to also mention those He has used in my life to draw me with them into His Presence. My dear Janie, my wife of 53 years, stands most prominently among them.

There are others. Some of whom, I’m sure, already know who you are. Others will be made aware, more surely by Him than by me. I pray that some in that group will be among those loved ones He has raised deep concern for in my heart as I behold Him.

Scripture sections quoted in the text are rendered in italics and are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless noted. When you see an ellipsis (“...”) in a quote, it denotes an omitted word or section. You may want to go back and see what’s there. Read this book with an open Bible, in the translation He chooses for you.

There are a couple of fairly technical sections. Be patient with me there, and with yourself. You need not fully comprehend a really large number in order to appreciate the idea that it is large. Same goes with our larger God.

I express my deep appreciation to Christian brothers and sisters who have taken the time to read through my draft copy. My books have come about more frequently than I had originally thought, so I have tried to spread the draft-reading tasks around to some extent. Of course, Janie always goes first. Others for this volume include my cousin Reverend David Raddin of Jackson, Mississippi and my friends Dr. Seth Witcher, Ms. Janie Jones and Ms. Emily Fox of San Antonio, Texas.

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San Antonio and Rockport, Texas
June 2020

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock...”

Revelation 3:20

“There’s just one thing I still don’t understand.” Have you heard anyone say that? Have you said it yourself? I have to answer “Yes” to both questions.

Much of my education and my professional life was spent in a concerted attempt to “understand”. I often concluded that I had been reasonably successful in my efforts, but I really haven’t been. I don’t really “understand” much of anything. I don’t understand myself or anyone else. I have learned a lot of technical sounding names for things I really don’t understand.

I have even attempted to understand God, but I don’t even begin to. I do not comprehend the Triune God I have come to experience. I certainly don’t “understand” the Cross.

It turns out that the Christian experience is not something to be understood. The Christian experience is Someone to Know. The person who has a god they understand is in dire need of Another.

This book is not about understanding Jesus Christ. It is about beholding Him.

The book is not even about understanding what we should do after we behold Him. It is only about beholding Him. There is no “after” involved. We are simply invited to keep beholding His Glory.

It is certainly true that a response will be generated in us as we behold Him, but too often our responses are self-generated activities or activities prescribed by others. I think these simulated responses are probably initiated on the basis of hearsay before any semblance of real beholding takes place.

Our text (*Behold, I stand at the door and knock...*) from Revelation 3:20 continues on to describe the response and the outcome that He provokes in us: *...if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him and he with Me.* The response He provokes is just for us to consciously know, and be known by, the One we behold.

The beholding occurs at close range, close enough to hear His voice. We enter a relationship with the One who formed us, and He forms us anew. The beholding is intimate and personal. It does not come by our effort or through our effective search or because of someone's convincing explanation. It is simply Him, coming to each of us directly. He shows Himself in a Spiritual reality we have not experienced before. All we need to do is behold the One Who Is, simply because He has chosen to grace us with His Presence.

The Bible is rich with examples of those called to behold Him. We shall examine a few of those in these pages. The Bible also points to His Eternal Purpose in initiating this intimate relationship. We shall examine a few of those references as well. Fundamentally, and wonderfully, He desires us close to Him, so He comes exceedingly close to us. Within that relationship, He changes us into His Likeness, as He shares with us the Glory He allows us to behold in Him.

"The glory which You have given Me I have given to them..."
John 17:22

*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
The light shines in the darkness and the darkness
did not comprehend it.* John 1:4-5

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten
from the Father, full of grace and truth.* John 1:14

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.* Proverbs 3:5-6

CHAPTER 2

A CHRISTIAN'S EXPERIENCE

*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot
bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine,
so neither can you unless you abide in Me.*

John 15:4

The Christian life is not something we do. In an interesting way, the Christian life is not even something He does in us. The Christian life is Someone He Is. It is the Christ we behold.

I think it possible for people to become enamored with the idea of God, vague and impersonal though the idea might be. Or detailed and emotional, for that matter. I think such an arm's length approach can be employed because I have trafficked in that approach myself. But there is no way you can literally abide in an idea, no matter how we dress it up.

To abide means to stay, to remain, to continue, to dwell. It is basically where you live. Now our text above presents a geometrically unattainable picture. You can understand how Object A can be in Object B. You can put a little box in a sock. Some people do that at Christmas. Or you can fold up the sock and put it in the box. But it is really tough to understand how you would go about doing both at the same time. How can I abide in Him and He abide in me? (Here we go with that "understanding" thing again.)

God calls us to behold Him up close and to continue in Him. That presents us with even greater problems than geometrical ones. How do we get there? How do we remain there when we have other things we need to do? Once again, it is not about us. It is about Him. He is the One who has chosen in His Grace to be about us.

Paul addressed part of this in his discourse to the Athenians in Acts 17. He told them in verse 28 that *...in Him we live and move and exist...* (or "have our being" in another translation). Those Athenians were not conscious of God, or beholding the God Who Is Here. They were oblivious.

God indeed inhabits His creation. He desires for all to “come and behold Him” as the Christmas carol invites. But He has chosen not to take us by force. He touches us with a knowledge of His Presence in ways I do not understand. I suspect the ways are unique for every person. It certainly felt unique to me when He called me to come and behold Him. I did not have to come far, because He came to me right where I was.

He enabled my response in ways I do not understand either. I know I wanted to respond but He was the One who fashioned a response in me. He still works in that same way, but it is always a new and incomprehensible way. I behold Him only because He reveals Himself, personally and directly.

It remains true that I did not have to come far, but Christ has brought me farther from where I was than I can comprehend. He has brought me into a conscious, Spiritual awareness of Him as the Eternal God. He is not just somehow hovering nearby. He is not just leaving signs or footprints to follow. He is not just off somewhere listening to my prayers. He resides deep inside the depths of my entirely new being which has been created for His Presence. There, He is eminently “beholdable”.

Why, then, do I not consistently continue to behold Him all the time?

I am consciously aware of His Presence more consistently as I go about my days now than I was in the past. It is not only in those times when I pull away from what I am doing to pray and joy in His Presence. I also can have that same experience in the midst of my activities, including driving, walking, taking a shower, being with Janie, talking to people and writing this book. The beholding of Him goes on as a more and more frequent foundation of my life. But not all. Sadly, thus far, not all. I have looked away.

I have the distinct impression that I am not alone in this.

Look with me at a helpful description of Peter’s experience with Jesus as recorded in Matthew 14:22-33. Peter was in a storm-tossed boat with the disciples on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was not with them. In the midst of the storm, Jesus came to them walking on the sea. At first, they were afraid, but Jesus identified Himself and spoke calming words.

*Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. **But seeing the wind**, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (verses 28-31, emphasis added).*

Jesus confirmed His identity to Peter and called him out. Peter beheld Christ and moved toward Him, also walking on the water. But then, instead of Christ, he beheld the wind. Then he beheld his own feet, but they were no longer walking on the water. They were disappearing beneath the waves.

I know something of that feeling. But Jesus gently lifts us up. His question to Peter at the end of the passage was not a question based on His curiosity. Jesus already knew why Peter doubted. He was calling Peter, and calling me, to behold Him up close. That’s what faith is. It is an up-close relationship with the One who shows Himself to us in all our circumstances. It is not believing hard that He is there. It is knowing Him, here.

We do not need to look at the wind or waves. We do not need to look to ourselves or our little techniques. It is not a do-it-yourself Christianity. It is Jesus Christ and He is not just there. He is here.

We will see Him even more clearly when we no longer occupy these “earthen vessels” and all is revealed, face to face in His Blessed Now. We are told in I Corinthians 13 that now, here in time, we are seeing as through a mirror or looking glass, which is dim by comparison. But we are beholding Christ! Even now, in our brief sojourn in time, He is more than enough!

We are called to lay aside all our past shortcomings and press on to behold, and lay hold of, the One who has drawn near enough for us to behold. As I see Him, the wind and waves hardly qualify as background. Consider Stephen, moments before he was stoned to death: *But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God...* Acts 7:55

...it is I... Matthew 14:27

CHAPTER 3

PAINFUL and JOYFUL BEHOLDING

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord... Isaiah 6:1

Beholding Christ is not a mild or forgettable experience in any way. It brings the deepest pain and the deepest joy I have yet known. If it did not, I think it would not be Him I would be beholding.

Why should it be painful to behold Christ? It is far more painful for me than for the moneychangers' physical encounter with Him in the temple.

When we intimately behold the One who sees us as we are, our condition is exposed to us as well. All becomes plain to us when we are before Him.

Consider Isaiah in the text that starts this chapter. Some would consider this to be just a glorious "vision". Some would consider the One Isaiah saw to be God the Father, as if they understood the mechanical structure of God, and as if Jesus did not say in John 14:9, *...He who has seen Me has seen the Father...* In John 12:36-41, the Bible tells us that Isaiah spoke of the Christ to come, but that he did so having already beheld Him in His glory. Isaiah's beholding of Christ is recorded right here in Isaiah 6.

Consider the rest of the passage in Isaiah 6. What was Isaiah's response to beholding Christ? Isaiah 6:5 summarizes it: *...Woe is me, for I am ruined!...* It hurt. Bad.

I certainly know something of that feeling too. Christ does not need to read out to me a list of charges. I see my guilt when I see Him. No trial is required. It hurts. Bad.

Consider another example from the Book of Job. After pages of philosophizing about the calamities that had befallen Job, much of it by Job's "friends", a radical transition occurs. Job had expected it in some way but it still came as a surprise. His anticipation is recorded in Job 19:25-27: *"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold..."*

Finally, Christ confronts Job with a series of unanswerable questions, starting in chapter 38 and continuing through chapter 41. All Job says during the whole series is the paradoxical statement that he is speechless (Job 40:3-5). When it is over, Job says, *“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”* (Job 42:5-6). I get the distinct impression that Job would not have used a capital “I” if his response had been handwritten.

Job’s experience mirrors that of Isaiah. Painful beholding leads to genuine repentance.

Consider a third example from chapter 22 of Luke’s Gospel. Peter had told Jesus at the Last Supper that he was prepared to go to prison and to death with Jesus. It was like he had signed a commitment card. But Jesus had told him that, before the rooster crowed the next morning, he would deny three times that he even knew Jesus. That is indeed just what he did.

Peter made his denials as Jesus was awaiting trial just across the courtyard from him. The third denial was still on his lips as that rooster crowed. *The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord... And he went out and wept bitterly.* Luke 22:61-62.

Can you imagine the look of knowing and unconditional love on the Lord’s face as He beheld Peter across that space? Can you imagine the pain in Peter’s heart as he beheld Christ in that moment?

I don’t need to imagine. I have beheld Him in similar moments and had my own experience of that pain. My sin has been just as dark. If you too know that look and have felt that searing pain, then you too know the experience of repentance. You too know that repentance is not something we come up with. It is a response He enables as we behold our Christ.

Our do-it-yourself version of repentance is less than puny by comparison. Out of myself, my preferred “repentance” involves stepping back, sometimes only temporarily, from stuff I have found to be inconvenient or to have bad outcomes. The pain is less searing. It is much easier to repent from consequences than to repent from what gives rise to them.

It is much easier to repent of something I have done than to repent of someone I am. It is harder to repent of something I thought was good or something I am actually proud of. It is much harder, and does not even seem necessary, to repent of who I am. But then I behold Him.

There is more to the story. The joy is deeper far than the pain could ever be. Read further in Isaiah 6. You will find that Isaiah was not “done for” in the way he had first thought. Isaiah was “Done For” by the very One he beheld. Christ caused an ember from the altar of sacrifice to be applied to Isaiah’s unclean lips. It was a promise of the Cross. Pain and repentance was turned to cleansing and joy as Isaiah beheld Him.

Read further in Job 42 as well. You will find that Job went on into the joy of praying for his philosophizing friends and being used of God as they joined in Job’s salvation experience. Certainly, salvation was more important than the restoration of Job’s earthly blessings. Job surely continued to behold Him.

Read further in Luke as well. Go on to chapter 24. You will find Peter called to see the empty tomb, fulfilling the promise of the Resurrection. Christ then appeared before Peter and the others to turn pain and repentance to cleansing, joy and a new life as Peter beheld Him.

What about me? Painful beholding has been the relationship from which any and all of my true repentance has sprung. It does not help to set aside some scheduled “repentance time” or fill out some checklist. When I do it out of myself, it is not true repentance and it does not result in real deliverance.

Here is what happens when I am the one doing it: the repentance seems perfunctory and superficial. I just have to keep doing it again. My sin in my own eyes never looks as desperately bad as it looks in His. My “deliverance” seems an illusion. The sin remains in my heart and the guilt is not removed.

Have you ever continued to pray for forgiveness for a sin that you are continuing to commit? I have. Some days I could have prayed in advance for sin already on my mental agenda for the next day, and the next.

Have you continued to pray, again and again, for forgiveness for some past act or desire for which guilt continues to lie heavy? Have you even continued to think about some past sinful thoughts or activity, and even to take some pleasure in the remembering of them? How could we expect forgiveness and deliverance from that in which we continue to wallow? Such is my condition when I behold myself or look to human council. I find the joy of deliverance only follows after the desperate pain of beholding Him and experiencing the look on His face that Peter saw in the courtyard. Only as I continue to behold Him, looking at me from the Cross, do I find the joy of real deliverance from my sin.

Consider again our verse from our previous chapter: “*Abide in Me and I in you...*” (John 15:4). Then look at the verse just before it: “*You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.*” He does not abide in a dirty place. He makes it clean as He comes in. We are not the ones doing the cleaning. He spoke these words directly to the Eleven at the Last Supper (Judas had already left). Just as repentance comes as I behold Him, deliverance comes from Him directly too. I am not made clean by words I read in a book or things I do. All must come directly from Him.

Christ makes clear that He has a high purpose in our pain as we behold Him. It indeed hurts as He shows me my sin. He knows that. It hurt more as He bore my sin on the Cross. *All discipline* (or “chastening” in the KJV) *for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful: yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.* (Hebrews 12:11). The verse before puts it in perspective. *...He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.* (Hebrews 12:10).

I think being made clean and holy in Christ is a frightening prospect for most of us. We must attend to Him to address that fear. Let’s move to a consideration of that fear in a new chapter.

...You shall be holy for I am holy... I Peter 1:16

CHAPTER 4

OUR PROBLEM WITH “PERFECT”

*...I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore,
and be holy for I am holy... Leviticus 11:44*

There is a clear relationship between the I Peter reference that ends our last chapter and the Leviticus reference that begins this one. The relationship is simply that Peter, in the New Testament, is quoting our Leviticus text from the Old Testament. The words have been around for quite a while and have received new emphasis along the way, but I think they are difficult words for many of us to deal with.

Am I to understand my job to be the attainment of holiness equivalent to that of God? I think not! I have begun to see that my rightful desire is not to understand at all. My desire becomes simply Him. I see that as part of the amazing clarity that is mine as I behold Him.

As we behold Him, we have discussed the deep pain we necessarily experience as our sin is revealed to us and the inexpressible joy we experience as it is removed from us. That's not all. First and foremost, we experience Him. As we respond into Him, we experience a holiness that comes simply from abiding in Him and Christ abiding in us. Recall the text from Hebrews in the last chapter: *...that we may share His holiness.* (Hebrews 12:10). The holiness is His. It is always about Him. It is not a do-it-yourself holiness any more than it is a do-it-yourself Christian experience. The Christian experience is the experience of Christ.

Please do not mistake this book as a feeble attempt on my part to explain how this all works. Since I do not understand, I have no basis or desire to help anyone else “understand” what He does, how or why He does it or who He is. There is far too much of that floating around already from others. When Moses asks what to tell the people about who sent him, He says to Moses, “*I AM WHO I AM*” (from Exodus 3:14). That is not an explanation to satisfy our understanding. That is the self-introduction by God drawing near to a human being He has made. I can testify that He is still doing it. I can testify that He does not always use the same words. I do not know what He will say, or is saying, to you, but I can testify to you that He is real.

This book tells of a God who has fashioned me from the beginning. He has been near me from before I was born in ways I do not understand. Christ first revealed Himself in a way that allowed me to behold Him in May of 1954. That's when He provoked a response in me to His knocking at the door. The response was in the form of prayer. I had never known that experience. Up to that point, I had only "said my prayers" or listened while others said theirs. That night I prayed, in response to His moving, and I beheld Him. I don't remember whether there were words involved. I just remember Him. He did not happen to me in a church service. I thought I was just alone in bed. He showed me I was not. I was nine years old.

Today, at the age of seventy-five, as I behold Him, He is recognizably the same God-Who-Is-Here that drew near that night.

In the intervening years, I have not lived a perfect life. I suspect you are not surprised at that. Regrettably, I generally have not been surprised either, but my relationship with Him has not been stagnant. I have experienced the bitter pain of repentance before Him again and again. Sometimes it has been for new selfish initiatives and sometimes for dark, previously unrecognized corners of who I was. Frequently, however, I behold Him especially painfully, over thoughts and deeds I dig up again even after He has dealt with them. He has worked in me a wondrous work while I have responded to Him in fits and starts. He has not bent me to His Will by force, but He has consistently invited me to cease my incessant "doings" and behold Him consistently. I admit being fearful of that.

I think we have a fear of the potential for perfection in our Christian experience. I think the fear derives from at least two things. The first is the concern that, if perfection is achievable, we would be the ones at fault for not making it. It seems easier to go with "I'm OK; You're OK", but we really aren't. The second is the concern that we have no earthly idea how to even try. So, we shrink back into a bland simulation of what we think, or have been told, that being a Christian ought to be. In our self-directed thinking, beholding Christ is typically reserved for heaven.

I do not understand and cannot explain God, but I think the common misunderstandings we apply to our Christian experience can be examined, and even understood on our level, if we look at them in His Light. I feel a clear imperative to try. You are welcome to come along.

Whenever I hear teaching on the great Biblical themes of salvation, the Cross, the Resurrection and deliverance from sin, I typically hear the quick caveat, “Of course we will never really be perfect.” Sometimes they add a conditional to it, “...at least not until we get to heaven.” Remarkably, they seem to say these things most consistently when expounding on the Biblical calls to perfection in our experience with Christ. There are many in His Word. I propose to examine just a few of them and consider some of the typical shallow misunderstandings we choose to adopt.

Take the text at the beginning of the chapter and the parallel one that ended the previous one. How could God expect me to be holy or perfect as He is? It doesn’t help us rationalize this by using the alternate translations for “perfect”. Is it any easier to consider how God could expect me to be “complete” as He is “complete”?

God expects me to be as He is, but He does not expect me to try to imitate Him or to fashion myself into His Holy Image. He just invites me to behold Christ. He remakes me in His Image as He abides in me and I in Him.

The accomplishment of His High Purpose in us is always by His Doing, not by our doing. His Purpose has always been beyond our reach. It will remain so until we behold Him.

The Bible says there is a deep mystery here that has been hidden throughout the ages but is now revealed. The mystery is stated simply in Colossians 1:25-27: ...*Christ in you, the hope of glory*. Not **with** you. **In** you.

Please read all three of these verses in Colossians. We are told that the mystery is ...*the word of God*.... Christ is Himself the Word, according to John 1. The mystery is not something to be understood through hearing a set of words. The mystery is Christ Himself. We are also told that the mystery is not revealed to all mankind. Christ is offered to all, but He is ...*manifested to His saints*... (His holy ones). Those who behold the mystery are those who behold Him. Those who know Him are those who have “opened the door” to His Presence. He is able to change us into His Holy Likeness.

Let's look at a few more. Try this one: *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* (Hebrews 13:20-21). Instead of *...equip you...*, KJV has, "...make you perfect...". The NKJV has, "... make you complete...". The Greek word here is "katartizo" which means "to complete thoroughly" and *Amen* means "So let it be".

What is our response? I fear the common reaction is, "Yeah, but we aren't going to be perfect...". Are we missing that **He** is the one "working in us"? Why should the Perfect One be limited to an imperfect work only when He is abiding in us?

Try this one: *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.* (Jude 1:24-25). (Romans 16:25-27 provides a parallel passage. Take a look.)

What is our response? I fear the common reaction is, "Yeah, but we aren't going to be perfect...". Are we missing that **He** is the One able to keep us from stumbling? Must "blameless" wait for heaven? If we are abiding in Him, aren't we now seated with Christ in the heavenly places as Ephesians 2:4-6 tells us? Sounds like He has the authority and He has it now, and *Amen* still means "So let it be".

Try this: *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ...our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. ...Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ...so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification...* (Romans 6:1-23) (I have included only these excerpts from Romans 6. We need to read the whole chapter.) "Sanctification", by the way, means being made pure or holy.

What is our response? I fear the common reaction is, "Yeah, but we aren't going to be perfect...". Should we just ignore **Him** and consider ourselves instead to be alive to sin and dead to God and His righteousness in us?

One more: ...*work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.* (Philippians 2:12-13).

What is our response? The common reaction is always, “Yeah, but we aren’t going to be perfect.” We think we should seek His will and then try our best to do it, but our best is never good enough. We don’t hear the part about it being **Him** at work in us, both to will **and to do** according to His Good Pleasure. I Thessalonians 5:24 even adds: *Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.* “Yeah, but...”

All this has been thoroughly frightening, at least to me. Part of the reason is my history of falling short. I don’t have to look back very far, certainly not years. More like moments? I am prone to allow my history of failure to hold me back from beholding Him and experiencing His Awesome Sufficiency for my present.

Does my past define my future? Paul chose not to let his past rule. He chose Christ instead, despite his history of violently opposing Him. Take the time to hear Paul hearing the Christ he beholds. Read Philippians 3:7-15. You will see, among these words, that Paul counted the works of his flesh as loss. His desire was not to try harder to do better next time. He did not even seek Christ’s help in what he was trying to do. He simply sought to know Him (verse 10). He did not seek his own righteousness. He sought God’s (verse 9). He recognized that his past had evidenced much of his own doings instead of the consistent presence of Christ in him, but he was moved to forget all that and press on to the call of Christ on and in his life (verses 12-14). He wanted to ...*lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.* (verse 12). That was to ...**gain Christ, and be found in Him**... (verses 8-9, emphasis added). Not nearby. In.

Forgetting the past is impossible for us, but what is impossible for us is doable by Him. It happens only when we behold Him. In that painful beholding, real repentance takes place. In that blessed beholding, real forgiveness takes place. He abides in us, in people He has made clean.

Our sin is not just relegated to the past, to be dredged up repeatedly. It is gone, removed as far as the east from the west. It is paid for at the Cross. He will not bring it up again. Neither do we as we are found in Him. We forget and move on into Him in the Light of His Presence.

The Perfection is His. Let us simply draw near to the One who draws near to us. He gives us ears to hear and eyes to see, that we may behold Jesus. Then He enables a response that allows Him to be Christ in us, the Hope of Glory.

The future is just as irrelevant as the past. Jesus advised us in Matthew 6:34 not to worry about tomorrow. We need not speculate about whether He is able to produce perfection in us tomorrow or the next day. All He calls us to do is to behold Him, just Now. Just Now is when we know Him to be all-sufficient.

The living experience of God only takes place in the present. We experience His Perfection as we behold Him. That is enough for now, and it always will be. There is no need to limit our expectation of His Sufficiency in us. Let us rely on Him to create an unconditional response into Him as we behold Him. He is able to work His Perfect Will, even in people like us, just for now. In His Presence, He will turn our “nows” into His Always.

“You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.”
John 15:3 (Spoken by Jesus to the Eleven, **before** Peter denied Him.)

...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. II Peter 1:3-4
(**After** Peter denied Him)

CHAPTER 5

WORSHIP, NOT IN THE THIRD PERSON

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24

Worship, the way we commonly choose to go about it, easily devolves into a perfunctory process. I think we can lapse into just going through the same motions. I confess that I have participated in that.

That kind of worship can still feel like something has happened, particularly when we participate in it as part of a group. We may feel better in some way for having done it, so we “go to worship”.

We have worship “services”, without really being clear about who is being served or how. We have worship “centers”, but we may still feel like we are on the periphery. We gather in “sanctuaries”, which purport to be holier spots, or “auditoriums”, so we can hear. We set aside fixed periods of time to worship. Worship typically starts and finishes on a recurring schedule, so we know when to show up and how long we will be there. We are sometimes entertained and sometimes lectured. We sing. We listen to music. We “worship”. I think some, among those who attend, may actually do it.

We know what makes us comfortable in “worship”, and we know what makes us uncomfortable. We generally like it to be reasonably predictable. The physical environment and the way people dress and behave may be important. When music and singing is involved, it must be the “right” kind. The people who speak should say reassuring, “right” things in the “right” way. The degree of formality, or informality, should also be “right”, at least most of the time. It usually helps if some of the other people gathered with us are friendly and welcoming and known to us. “Right” for one may be decidedly “wrong” for another, leading to a remarkably insular phenomenon.

Such is the common experience of group worship in the large and small commercial churches across America.

Worship need not occur only in groups. I can seek God in worship all on my own or with one or two others. Individual worship need not conform to a fixed schedule. I can do it anytime. It need not substitute for group worship; it can be supplementary. It does not require a specific location or procedure. It may not involve words or sound at all. Music may be involved, sometimes physically audible. I may listen to broadcast or recorded music or make my own, humming or singing quietly or aloud. Music may actually serve to initiate the worship.

Individual worship is something that generally feels good to me. However, I must also quickly confess that it can sometimes be just me, on my own initiative, going through the motions again, with a do-it-myself worship pursued for the good feeling I obtain. God can be uninvolved and far away from my experience.

Our text at the beginning of this chapter records words of Jesus spoken to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Just two verses earlier, He told her that she was worshipping *...what you do not know...*. I have the distinct impression she was not the first, and I know she was not the last to have done so, since I have done that myself.

Worship in Spirit and Truth is not a do-it-yourself proposition. I do not initiate it. It is a response. It is a response to the Christ who draws near. It is the response He provokes and enables as I behold Him.

My response takes the form He chooses in the moment. It may or may not change "things", but He always changes me.

All I can do is respond, because my Creator is always the Initiator. That is who He Is. The only choice I make as He draws near is either to turn away from Him or to behold Him. As I choose to behold Him, worship is not optional. Worship is imperative. He is my God.

The Samaritan woman beheld Him as He personally declared to her that He is the Anointed One of promise. Many of the Samaritans came to know Him because of her response but, more precisely, because Jesus drew near to her.

He draws near to you and me also. Behold, He stands at the door, knocking.

What is worship? The Greek word used to record Christ's statement to the Samaritan woman is "proskuneo", literally "to kiss toward". The sense is to reverence by prostrating oneself before Him, kissing the ground. The Hebrew word for worship in the Old Testament is literally "to fall down flat". When I behold Him, He is all there is. I fade from view. Worship, properly, is my response of pure adoration in His Presence. Worship, in response to the God who is here, does not require of me a predetermined posture or activity. I don't sense that He requires of me any memorized words to be spoken or songs to be sung. We need not leave our homes or jail cells. He just invites us to behold Him and the worship flows out of us, individually and differently, as His Presence calls it forth.

My worship responds to Him in the ways He enables. He has brought me to my knees at times or even prostrate on the floor. At other times, I have continued to lie in my bed. Sometimes my eyes are open; sometimes they are closed. Sometimes I am seated or standing in a worship service. Sometimes I am driving my car, without any threat to my safety or yours. I find myself in the experience of worship more and more consistently. I am in worship as I type this sentence.

I have not always continued in a worship response. I have found myself often in no worship at all or in a do-it-myself worship which amounts to the same thing. I have even tried to content myself sometimes with what I have come to call "third-person worship". Allow me to illustrate. Third-person pronouns are words like he, she, him, her, his, and hers. They are used when talking **about** someone. You use different words when you are talking **to** them. Worship is rightfully addressed **to** God, but I find He will still accept it even when I use the wrong words.

Sometimes our worship is carried on in conjunction with what might be described as "worship songs". One lovely example is a song written by Audrey Mieir dating back, I believe, to the 1950's, and published by Manna Music. The title is, "His Name Is Wonderful". You may have heard and sung it yourself. That song, despite being written in the third person, has been a rich part of genuine worship for me on multiple occasions. More recently, I have found Him altering the words sometimes, in my own worship, even when I sing it with others who are using the original words. Sometimes He even provides worship songs for me without physical words.

The Mier song can indeed be a true “worship song”, but the words are more in the form of a “testimony song” because they refer to my Lord in the third person. Many of our hymns do that, and there is nothing wrong with it. I have been referring to Him in the third person through much of this book.

I think worship can take place in our hearts no matter what pronouns we use if we sing, but I think we can sometimes fall into singing only to each other or to ourselves instead of to Him. I think that’s why He changes the way I address Him. Try it yourself if He enables: “Your Name is Wonderful... You are my Mighty King, My Master of Everything... I bow down before You. I love and adore You. Your Name is Wonderful, Jesus, My Lord!”

Worship songs are particularly powerful when they are addressed **to** Him. I think that is part of the reason for the enduring power in worship response for a hymn like “Just as I Am”. But testimony is important too, as we tell others **about** Him.

The Bible is full of third-person references to tell us of God. Consider one of the most familiar passages, the Twenty-Third Psalm (with emphasis added): *The Lord is my shepherd... **He** makes me lie down... **He** leads me beside,, **He** restores my soul...* But, have you noticed? That Psalm transitions out of the third person. Notice also where the transition takes place. It is no accident. ...*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for **You** are with me...*

Christ draws near in many times and places, but we may be especially ready to turn, behold Him and respond in worship as we enter our valleys. May He show me as surely that a third-person response may be just as inadequate on my peaks. We cannot worship the idea of God. May He transition me out of worship **about** Him to worship **in** Him. “May I behold **You**.”

“... this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote...”

Isaiah 29:13 and quoted by Jesus in Matthew 15:8-9

*O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him,
all the earth. Psalm 96:9 (KJV)*

CHAPTER 6

PRAYING IN HIS NOW

...pray without ceasing... I Thessalonians 5:17

Prayer and worship are intimately related. They may not be identical, but they have everything to do with each other. You might appropriately say that prayer abides in worship and worship abides in prayer.

Just as worship is our imperative response as we behold Him, prayer is too.

The most genuine prayer is an activity that cannot legitimately be experienced by a casual observer of a typical, modern church service. Genuine, bi-directional prayer is an activity that is between one beholding Christ and the God who draws near. We may cry out desperately to a God who seems far off, but we pray fervently as we participate in the One who draws near. We may participate in sweet prayer together with others doing the same thing, but it requires a joint experience in the God who is here.

The common public experience of prayer derives from listening to someone speak a sequence of words addressed to God. Sometimes that experience can even be for us as the speaker, as we say or even read or recite the words ourselves, maybe just before dinner. In the typical church service, lasting an hour or so, there may be only two or three minutes devoted to spoken or invited “silent” prayer. I think there are attendees who, along with me many times, have simply been spectators to the process. I think there are other attendees, including me, somewhat more frequently these days, who carry on more genuine prayer alongside or separately from the spoken words, before, during or after the service. For me, it is still not frequently enough.

We pray privately too, sometimes just going through the motions, sometimes crying out in desperation. The motivation for the latter usually relates to something we strongly desire, either deliverance from some significant perceived threat or the attainment of something we want deeply. Less significant threats or wants typically lead to praying that would be unlikely to merit the term, “crying out”.

The most dreaded threats are often those to life or health, ours or for someone close to us. Other concerns can include economic, relational, reputational or a host of other real or perceived threats. Wants can fall into similar categories or can be as mundane as a possession or the outcome of an athletic contest.

We tend to do most of the talking in prayer. It has been less common, in my past, to seek God simply because He is seeking me. The truth is, I have spent much time in prayer in an attempt to get my way with God. But, as I behold Him, I am turned. I begin to desire for Him to have His Way with me. His Way turns out to be Him. After all, He is the One who said of Himself, in John 14:6 ... *“I am the Way...”*.

The most genuine prayer is not something we do. Prayer, like worship, is a response He provokes in us by His Presence. Both the activity of prayer and its content is eventually initiated by Him. In prayer, His will ultimately can become our own, not by coercion or argument, but because our hearts are being made new. Our new hearts have a desire for Him above all others and above all else. Prayer is the means by which we come to know Him more surely in the new heart He has given us.

I have found that prayer, in my current experience, often does not involve words at all, for a very good reason. Consider Romans 8:26-27: *In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* You may have also experienced this, when the words stop, but the prayer keeps going. Richer. Fuller. Not praying that we might know **what** His will might be for the future, but praying **in** His will, right now, by His doing.

Only within this experience of Him can the text that begins our chapter actually work out literally. We cannot pray without ceasing if our prayers are just a torrent of words. The torrent always trickles out. We run out of words. We tire or become distracted. We start thinking about something else. The phone rings or someone drops by. We go to sleep. The God who “neither slumbers nor sleeps” prays on within us, ceaselessly. We come to a growing awareness of His praying in us as we behold Him, even as we sleep.

Allow me to relate an example. I recently awoke in the wee hours to find myself praying for Scott Albright. The prayer did not originate in my mind, nor did it make sense to my mind. Scott, to the best of my knowledge, has been dead for about fifty years. I don't recall spending any significant time consciously thinking about Scott for at least a decade. This was not a dream. I awoke in the middle of prayer, and the prayer continued uninterrupted, but it now involved my alert, conscious mind too.

You need some background to appreciate my experience. You see, Scott was one of my best friends in high school. Among other activities together, we would often meet at a generally-unused, outdoor basketball court about halfway between our houses, maybe a hundred yards away for each of us. We played "Horse". It's a game in which you challenge each other to match shots taken from various points on the court. As I remember, I lost more games than I won. We had discussions about our future plans. We were both involved in some "Christian activities" too, but I don't recall any deep Biblical discussions or prayer together.

John Scott Albright II graduated from high school with me in 1963. He received an appointment to the US Air Force Academy; I was admitted to MIT. We really did not see each other after that. We both graduated from our respective institutions in 1967. I married Janie and continued in graduate school before entering active duty in the USAF as an engineer in early 1968. Scott completed navigator and combat crew training and was assigned to Southeast Asia to participate in the war in Vietnam. I later heard that he was declared Missing in Action (MIA) on a combat mission over Laos.

Scott was on a Special Operations night mission over the Ho Chi Minh trail in a C-123K as part of a crew of seven on December 13, 1968. They were identifying and illuminating targets for B-57 attack aircraft when a B-57 collided with the upper back part of their aircraft, causing it to slowly spin down and crash. Only one member of Scott's crew was rescued alive after parachuting out. Another crewmember apparently parachuted and was captured but he was never recovered, so six crewmembers, including Scott, remained in MIA status. Scott was declared Presumed Dead in 1979, but they are still "searching". I have stood at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington DC and read his name there.

At the time of Scott's final mission, he and I were both Lieutenants in the USAF. He was promoted to Captain and then Major while in MIA status. I received promotions too, eventually retiring from the USAF in 1988 as a Colonel. I have been married for 53 years; Scott never married. I have children and grandchildren; Scott went to war. Eleven days after his plane went down, and before I knew about it, Janie and I were celebrating our second Christmas Eve as husband and wife. We looked at the moon. The crew of Apollo 8 was accomplishing the first manned orbit of the moon and taking turns reading the first 10 verses of the Book of Genesis by radio back to those of us on earth.

We were at the end of 1968, a pivotal year in US history. Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated. Violence was gripping the nation over race, the Vietnam War and politics, notably at the Democratic National Convention. The Paris Peace Talks had begun. Nixon had been elected. Janie and I were beginning our life together. Scott's life on this earth had apparently been ended. And I did not yet even know about it. We listened to three astronauts reading Genesis to those of us on earth. By the time the war finally ended in 1975, we had two children, the youngest being a three-year-old. I can't remember now when I heard about Scott's crash.

Why was I praying for Scott Albright in the middle of the night in the fall of 2019? The answer is simply that it was, for me, a living part of beholding Jesus. It did not come from me. It was Him.

I can describe a little of the outcome of it. Most significantly, I was drawn deeper into Him and I came to know Him, in me, in new ways. Those are the usual results for me of beholding Christ.

I can also tell you that I came to know Scott better too, and I had a far deeper assurance of Christ's incomparable sufficiency both for him and for me, right now. You see, I was not at all praying that Scott might be miraculously found alive today somewhere in Southeast Asia. I was not praying that he might have had a quick and painless death that night with a final moment to get his accounts in order with God. I was simply beholding Christ, and He made Scott part of it.

I don't understand the process, but the experience is amazing. When I am in Him and He is in me, I find that I am not the only one graced with His Presence. I am beginning to know something of the "fellowship of the saints" and the "Body of Christ". Since Christ has conquered death, why should I find death to be an impediment. I find I am not so much praying **for** Scott as I am praying **with** him, in Christ, even now. What grand assurance!

I have briefly groused around at times, when I thought about all that Scott missed of this life. I have the sense now that he is not complaining. If he has Christ and Christ has him, what might he possibly be missing? What might I possibly desire that He has not become in me, now?

That is what praying in His Now is about. We are mired in time and He makes provision for us here. God isn't mired in time. It is not just that time passes quicker or slower for God. I have the distinct impression that, for Him, it is always Now. When we behold Him, we taste the experience of His Now. Scott's night over Laos is part of his present experience of Christ's eternal provision. We can actually be seated with Christ in the heavenly places just now, even while on the way to a doctor's appointment. And we are seated together even now with those who are also His. They are not abiding in some different Jesus. We who are His are abiding in Ours, together.

Fifty years or a lifetime melts away in His Presence. The past has no power and the future breeds no fears as we behold Him. It is not that the past did not occur or that the future holds no threats. All is subsumed in Him, just now, as I behold Him. Prayer becomes an entirely different activity than I thought it was. It becomes hard to tell who is doing the praying. It is not prayer **for** stuff. It is prayer in Him, by Him and to Him. Prayer becomes part of my experience of the reality of Christ in His Eternal Now.

*...God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.
...if we walk in the Light as He is in the Light, we have
fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus
His Son cleanses us from all sin. I John 1:5-7*

*How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the
sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.
When I awake, I am still with You. Psalm 139:17-18*

CHAPTER 7

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST

...I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me...

...I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe...

...When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man...

Revelation 1:12-17

We cannot behold Christ on our own initiative. We cannot creep up on Him unawares and get a look. It doesn't work that way. He is God.

The necessary condition for me to behold Him is for Christ to reveal Himself to me, specifically and individually. If I turn and behold the Revelation of Almighty God, I turn from all else, including myself, and I know Him. If I avert my eyes and turn away, I remain inexpressibly alone.

The Revelation of Christ is an individual and different experience for each of us, even when He reveals Himself to multiple people at the same time and in the same place. He is intimately My God, even when He is yours.

None of us reveals Christ to anyone else; He does that Himself. He may involve someone else, or some set of circumstances, as He draws us to Himself, but He is most assuredly the One who reveals Himself if we are to behold Him. A person may see some evidence of an experience taking place with Him in someone else. They may hear or read a testimony. They may read the Bible. They may desire to behold Him for themselves, but nobody can truly behold Christ second-handedly any more than they can behold Him single-handedly. He alone reveals Himself. We behold Him. It is not enough to just learn things about Him or rely on someone else's experience.

Christ does not sneak into us unawares either, nor does He take us by force. He stands at the door and knocks. He announces His Presence to me. He reveals Himself at times and in ways of His choosing. We behold Him and He comes in, if and when we open the door that has closed us into ourselves.

John beheld Christ, as recorded in the excerpts at the top of the page. It is worth your time to read the whole passage. It is relevant. Appropriate to our chapter title, the text is from the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

John had seen Christ before. He had seen Him at the Jordan River, at Galilee and in Jerusalem. He had leaned against Him at the Last Supper and he had looked up at Him from the foot of the Cross. He had even seen His Glory on the Mount of Transfiguration and he had later seen the Resurrected Christ on multiple occasions. He watched His Ascension into heaven. But this experience described in Revelation was different. He had never fallen at His feet like a dead man on any of those earlier occasions.

When Christ draws near and reveals Himself, we do not behold Him merely with physical eyes. We behold Reality, for the first time. “Revelation” or “apocalypse” means the removal of the veil or cover. We directly behold.

Natural human beings perceive reality as what we can see and touch, but the Bible says all that shall pass away. The Eternal Reality is Christ. The Bible says God is Spirit, and we can only worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. It is abundantly clear that it is also the only way we could possibly behold Him.

In the third chapter of John’s Gospel, Nicodemus struggled to understand just as we do. Jesus had told him that he must be born again, and Nicodemus tried to conceive of that in physical terms. Jesus said that, instead, the reality of the new birth is Spiritual. We cannot understand, but the experience is ours as He draws near and lifts the covering veil from us. As we choose to open the door, He makes us to be new Spiritual creations in the Spirit of God, and we are given eyes to behold Him. He is Real, the first Reality we have ever known, and the last we will know. He actually said it to John: “***I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.***” (Revelation 22:13, emphasis added). (Nicodemus was the one who brought a large amount of myrrh and aloes for anointing the body of the Anointed One after His crucifixion. John told us about it in John 19:39.)

John also tells us where he was when He beheld Christ in Revelation 1. He says he was *on the island called Patmos* (v.9). That is a small island in the Aegean Sea, east of Greece and just off the coast of what is now Turkey. More critically, John says in the next verse, *I was in the Spirit...*

The Revelation of Christ takes place now. Always now. That is Who He is: the I AM. To our minds, it would appear that He always was and always will be. That is true because, in the Reality of the Spirit, HE IS, now.

Our minds are not designed to comprehend life apart from time. While I remain stuck in time on this earth, it seems that I behold Him in a sequence of experiences, arranged over time. Each experience, however, is a fresh taste of the same Revelation of the same Christ. I see more of Him and I see Him more frequently, but I sense that there is an incomprehensible taste of a continuing “Always” in each “Now” in Him.

We have no real experience with “now” except in Christ. Each of our “nows” goes by too quickly, and is replaced by another, before we can really taste and know it. We can’t even know what time it is, with complete precision, because whenever we think we do, it isn’t that time anymore. But when I behold Him, I behold Him just now.

When John beheld Christ, as described in Revelation 1, I have the sense that all his other encounters with Him were wrapped up in that singular experience. John beheld Christ on the isle of Patmos but, in that same “now”, I think John was also beholding Him in all his other encounters as well. Even on Patmos, John was also looking up at Him from the foot of the Cross.

I say such a thing because that has been my experience as I behold Him. I have no way to explain or rationalize it. As I behold Him, I am immersed in encounters of His design that I did not know I had been a part of. I look up at Him from the foot of the Cross too and He looks at me. He not only had me in mind when He went to the Cross, He hauled me up there. The Bible says when He died there, I died too (Galatians 2:20). I am not just **with** Him on the Cross and in the Resurrection. I am **in** Him, just now. It is part of my overwhelming “now” experience as I behold the Revelation of Christ.

As usual, my mental constructs about Him are radically changed when I behold Him and know Him. For years, I pictured the Revelation of Christ as the cover being literally lifted, a little like a CEO ceremonially whipping the big sheet off the new model product being unveiled for all to see. It is not that way. For one thing, I was picturing the veil on the wrong Person. Christ is not the One hiding, or being hidden, under some cover. I am the one in that condition. As He draws near, Christ is the One who lifts the veil over me that kept me from beholding Him. He lifts my veil as I receive His Grace. The Bible actually shows this truth distinctly. Consider the following passage from II Corinthians, but first a little background.

Back in Exodus, after the Law was given and the golden calf episode occurred, Moses beheld the Lord directly (Exodus 33:18-23). It is worth reading at least Exodus 32-34 for context. Moses had even stood in the place of Christ by offering himself for the sin of his people (Exodus 32:30-32). When Moses came back down from Sinai after his encounter with the Lord, the skin of his face shone with a brightness that disturbed the people. He had to wear a veil over his face to keep from scaring them, but he took it off when he met with the Lord (Exodus 34:33-35). Now here's the passage.

But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (II Corinthians 3:15-18). He draws near by the Spirit and, as we turn, He lifts the veil from our hearts that we might behold Him. As we behold Him, we are transformed. We are not the ones who do it. He is.

There is much more to see in that passage. Notice, for example, that with our veil removed, we are beholding the glory of the Lord **as in a mirror**. Who else might you see when you look there? Look closely. Christ does not just reveal Himself externally. Christ **in you** is the hope of glory, as we saw in Colossians 1:27. Christ reveals Himself in you when He comes to abide in you. We are given to behold His glory as we look in the mirror with our veils removed and as we are transformed by His Abiding Presence.

What does it mean to “behold” Him? I have no words to describe the experience, but I can tell you a little bit about what it is not. It is not meditation. It is not contemplation. It is not prayer or reading or study or listening to someone talk. It is not me doing anything. My mind can appreciate some things about Him, but I behold Him by the Spirit. He reveals Himself by the Spirit to a new creature made newly alive in and by His Presence. As I behold Him, He transforms my mind to know Him, as befits the new creation He has made me to be. Only in that experience can we live out the first and greatest commandment: ... *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...* (Matthew 22:37). The heart, or spirit, must come first. The entire New Creature is then transformed into the experience of beholding Him.

I have no way to meaningfully describe the experience, but there are a few common events which, in very simple ways, can point to some aspects of beholding my Christ. Sometimes, the simplest illustrations can be the most useful. Jesus used them often. So, with no apology, I offer the following.

Our dog Keegan often comes and sits in front of my wife Janie and it is clear he is not asking for food or to be let outside. It is usually in the evening when we are sitting there talking. Janie just says, “Do you want to be close?” Then she gets out of her chair and sits down on the rug. Keegan nestles into her lap and looks into her eyes. That’s about all there is to observe, but a lot more is going on. She strokes him occasionally and he may adjust his position from time to time, trying to snuggle closer. I think he would stay there all night if he could. Sometimes he appears to go to sleep. Janie is the one who first initiated these episodes. She is the one who first desired to be close to him, back when he was a puppy. She places herself at his level, making herself accessible. He responds. He beholds her. Close. Just now.

The illustration is not complete, but it is not silly either. There is a picture of one of Keegan’s episodes on the next page. I can’t take a picture of me beholding Christ or a picture of the Christ I behold. There would be no point if I could, because He is always new and always now. I only took a picture of Keegan beholding Jane. I can’t see inside to view what’s going on, but you get the picture...

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
...Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*
James 4:8-9



CHAPTER 8

CONTEMPLATING HEAVEN?

...Christ is all and in all. Colossians 3:11

Our ability to “talk around”, “sing around” and “think around” the plain Word of God has been astounding. We have used these techniques to formulate, and content ourselves with, various versions of do-it-yourself, arms-length Christianity, instead of simply beholding Christ.

Consider a few examples from my own experience.

I have prayed for God to show **me** the way so I could follow it. I have prayed for God to teach **me** truth. I have prayed for God to preserve **my** life. But Jesus says to Thomas, and the rest of us doubters, “...***I am the way and the truth and the life...***” (John 14:6, emphasis added).

I have prayed for God to give me strength so **I** might be stronger. The Bible says, ***The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him...*** (Psalm 28:7, emphasis added).

I have prayed for happiness in my life and for my loved ones. Jesus says, “*These things I have spoken to you so that **My joy** may be **in** you, and that your joy may be made full.*” (John 15:11, emphasis added).

I have prayed for God to give **me** some peace to calm **my** fears. The Bible says of Christ, ...***He Himself is our peace...*** (Ephesians 2:14, emphasis added). Jesus said, “*Peace I leave with you; **My peace** I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you...*” (John 14:27, emphasis added). He does not give a packet of spare peace, like spare change from His pocket. He brings the Peace of His Own Heart that carried Him to the Cross for me. It is mine when “He Himself” resides in me and I in Him.

I have been far more than shy about all this. I couldn’t come to terms with the idea of beholding the Lord of all creation and dwelling in Him while He dwells in me. I have generally preferred the idea of Him watching over me from above or nearby. “In me” seemed somehow too close, but He is not my idea. I don’t come to terms with an idea. I only behold Him, just now.

Until we behold His Revelation of Himself to us, we don't step into the relationship with Him. It is tough to have a meaningful relationship with Someone you have never met. It turns out that "faith" is precisely the term for my participation in a relationship in Him.

For a long time, I thought faith was just strong belief or belief strong enough to act upon. That's the way the childhood stories described it: a Wizard of Oz or Santa Claus mentality. I was told that I "gotta have faith", and I tried hard to have it. It was only a mental exercise for me. I tried to train my mind to believe He was there and that everything would work out the way I want. How silly of me!

Faith is actually a Spiritual experience with God Who is Spirit. That's one reason why the Bible says God is faithful. (As just one example: *God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* I Corinthians 1:9) It does not mean that God believes very hard that we exist. It means He gives Himself to full participation in a relationship, even with me, and even with you. He even gives us the faith to participate with Him from our side. That's what "grace" is.

Faith is not something I am expected to come up with out of myself. The Bible says, *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God...* (Ephesians 2:8).

I have heard preachers council us to "Put your faith in Jesus Christ!" as if faith was a commodity we already possess. It sounds like all we have to do is redirect our faith. Look at Ephesians 2:8 again. Faith is the Gift of God. Faith is not belief. Faith is relational. Real faith only comes from Him and it only operates in Him. You can't have real faith in anyone or anything else.

How do we get that gift? How do I find Him? I can only speak of my own experience. I did not do the getting or the finding. I had been seeking after something or someone I did not know until He touched me, right where I was, and He revealed Himself. I turned to behold Him.

He continues to operate that way. Even just now. I do not do the getting or the finding. He draws near, right where I am, and He reveals Himself. I turn and I behold Him, just now. He is no longer only outside and neither am I.

Jesus said, “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if **anyone** hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.*” (Revelation 3:20, emphasis added). I am convinced He still means it. I no longer have to pray to God out there. He invites me to pray with Him in here.

If I am abiding **in Christ** just now, then everywhere I look outside myself, I can only behold Him. If He is also abiding **in me** just now, then everywhere I look inside myself, I can only behold Him. It’s a taste of the experience of heaven. He is fitting me, just now, for a constancy of that experience in His Eternal Now. He is “preparing a place for me” by preparing me as His place (see John 14:1-3).

When He draws near, we can know the experience of Him up close, but we may shrink back from any idea that this could occur right here and now. Instead, we may relegate all this to an odd, hoped-for, worked-for heaven.

Let’s first look at a range of examples, good and bad, in the hymns we sing about how we may pursue a Christian walk today and about how we may contemplate heaven. Our songs can influence us profoundly.

Consider first one of my least favorite hymns. It is in the classic, do-it-yourself genre. The gist of its message is that whatever difficulty you may be experiencing, there is something you can do about it, on your own, that will take care of everything. Just “Count Your Blessings”. “Every doubt will fly and you will be singing as the days go by.” It is not clear if we should just be trying to come up with a number, or if we should be examining the blessings as we go. It is not clear if we should take them in random order or organize them in categories. It is not clear what criteria we should use to distinguish blessings from non-blessings. Is there any penalty for double-counting? I have wondered who has the record for the highest count reached.

Johnson Oatman, Jr. wrote the song in 1897, one of about 5,000 songs to his credit, most of them apparently with Christian themes. I have not heard them all. Neither have you. A somewhat related idea was used by Irving Berlin in a pop song from the 1954 Bing Crosby movie, “White Christmas”. Berlin added the phrase “instead of sheep” because, in his song, the counting of blessings was employed as a sleep aid.

I suppose the same sleep effect may also be experienced for some people who follow Oatman's recommendation. In neither song is Christ asked or expected to intervene. Generalized past and present "blessings" are all that are considered necessary.

Towards the opposite end of the spectrum is one of my favorite hymns over the years. It remains a favorite of mine today. The words are much closer to reality in Christ. This wonderful worship hymn is "Abide with Me". It is not written in the third person. It is addressed to my Jesus. "Abide with Me" was written in 1847 by Henry Francis Lyte, an Anglican minister. Lyte entered the ministry in 1815, but his ministry was radically changed in 1818 after observing the illness and death of a fellow clergyman. As Lyte testified about the man, "He died happy under the belief that though he had deeply erred, there was One whose death and sufferings would atone for his delinquencies... I was greatly affected by the whole matter and was brought to look at life and its issue with a different eye than before; and I began to study my Bible, and preach in another manner than I had previously done." (Quoted in Hymnary.org). Sounds to me like a man who had begun to behold Christ, as Christ revealed Himself through a fellow beholder.

Henry Lyte died of tuberculosis, potentially acquired through his ministry to the sick and dying. I feel a deep affinity with this man. He was 54 years old when he died, the same age as was my mother. A matter of weeks before his death he completed "Abide with Me", and read it at a Sunday service.

When "swift to its close ebbs out life's little day" for me, I would expect to be praying a similar prayer to that given to Henry Lyte. When I meet Henry in face-to-face fellowship in Christ, I don't think he will express any disappointment that I have lately been singing and praying "Abide **IN** Me".

Our singing reflects and can shape our thinking and our experience, but the words of our hymns and worship songs can become sufficiently familiar that we are no longer aware of what is being said. Sometimes, perhaps often, the words have been chosen less for their meaning and more for their fitness for the meter and rhyming scheme, but that is not the only problem. Writers have filled our hymnbooks with lyrics that range across the spectrum from "do-it-yourself" to recognition of the indwelling Christ. The more popular hymns are not necessarily the ones that are the most helpful.

Our own thinking is not driven by meter and rhyming, but by what others have told us about how things are, or by how we want or expect things to be. At least, that has been my experience over much of my life, but I cannot think my way to Christ. I have meditated on the attributes of God and listened to sermons and hymns about them. I have pondered Grace and the Cross. None of that is necessarily wrong, but it can be unhelpful if I settle for just that. I don't come to know God by thinking theoretically about His attributes. I must behold Him by the Spirit. Then I experience the reality of His attributes within my experience of His Presence.

As we move to the contemplation of heaven, we see additional profound disconnects between common conceptions and reality. I recall hearing and seeing fanciful portrayals of heaven's grandeur, of the angels, the palatial living quarters and, incongruously, winged people lolling around on clouds. Some religious traditions emphasize an unlimited range of earthly delights in unlimited quantities. Some people have even wondered if they will get bored after a few hundred thousand years, even with all that.

I have heard a fairly recent gospel song that recounts a dream of heaven. The singer is escorted around to see the marvelous sights and meet some of the residents but, all the while, asking to "see Jesus". If someone is claiming to be showing you around heaven, they are really putting one over on you if you have to ask to see Jesus.

You may have heard another song from the 1980's written by Dottie Rambo and made well-known by a singer with a powerful voice named Sandi Patty. I think "We Shall Behold Him" is much closer to heaven's reality. The title is not a bad definition of heaven all by itself. I only wish the lyrics made clear that the One we shall behold "face to face" at His Coming is the same One who reveals Himself for us to behold by the Spirit just now.

There is confusion about heaven in many of our hymns and worship songs, even in the current version of one of the most beloved hymns we know. Surely you have heard "Amazing Grace". The words were written, for the most part, by another Anglican minister by the name of John Newton. Newton was born in 1725, well before Henry Lyte, but Newton did not die until he reached the age of 82. Therefore, Newton and Lyte were technically contemporaries, if only briefly.

Before I address the confusion part, let me say a little about Newton, because he also had an experience of deeper life-change well after he first came to Christ. Newton was introduced to sea-faring before he was a teenager. Over the next few years he was impressed into service in the Royal Navy, received severe corporal punishment and spent a short time as a slave in Africa. He became a Christian after a profound experience of deliverance during a severe storm at sea, but he continued to pursue a career in slave trading. He became captain of a slave ship until a medical event, variously described as a stroke or a seizure, ended his time at sea.

Newton's conversion experience was sufficiently profound that he sought a new career as a clergyman. He became a well-known and respected lay minister, but he had difficulty obtaining an ordained position, despite applying to a variety of denominations, because he lacked a college degree. Eventually, after waiting several years, the influence of an acquaintance yielded an appointment in the Anglican church, as Lyte would earn as well. It was much later in his ministry that Newton finally experienced a further turning that caused him to renounce slavery and become an ardent abolitionist. He ended his life as a well-respected clergyman.

Newton served the congregation at Olney for many years. William Cowper, the well-known British poet, became a member and collaborated with Newton on a publication entitled "Olney Hymns" in the late 1700's. One of Newton's hymns in that collection became well-known by its first words, "Amazing Grace". He had been fully convinced of the wretchedness of his lost state when Christ found him and revealed Himself.

So where is the confusion about heaven in this great hymn? It probably wasn't John Newton's fault at all. The confusion derives from an odd but popular verse that is appended to the end of the hymn in most hymnals. Newton wrote six verses but most hymnals only print three or four of his. Nobody seems to know who wrote what typically is added as the last verse. Some have attributed it to a gentleman by the name of Rees, but a version of that verse was published before Rees was born. Newton apparently never claimed it, nor does it appear in his writings. That last verse is commonly attributed to our old friend, "Anonymous".

The added verse does not fit with the rest of the hymn. Newton wrote of experiencing grace only as an individual. The hymn is full of “I”, “me” and “my”, but the odd verse starts out, “When **we’ve** been there...”. There is no antecedent for “there” either. Where is “there”? Heaven is the implied reference, but heaven has not been a subject of the rest of the hymn.

The real confusion starts with “...ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun...”. Revelation 21 tells us clearly that the first heaven and earth will be gone (v.1) and the heavenly city *...has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.* (v.23). “Bright shining as the sun” will have no meaning. Neither will “years”. We won’t spend any years orbiting a sun that isn’t there.

It goes on. “...We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise...” has no meaning either, since “days” won’t happen. Revelation 21:25 tells us *...there will be no night there...* How are you going to count years or days when there will be only one day? The Bible calls it *...the great and glorious day of the Lord...* (Acts 2:17-21, quoted from Joel 2:28-32). The notion of the day after the great and glorious day of the Lord has no meaning whatsoever.

Welcome to God’s Eternal Now! You won’t have time to get bored because you won’t have “time” any more at all. More significantly, how could you possibly get bored beholding the Face of the God of All Creation, just Now?

I still like much of John Newton’s basic hymn, but I now sing it differently. I prefer to dispense with that last verse and, as I behold Him, I say, “It’s You who teach my heart to fear and You my fears relieve.” His Grace is never impersonal or separate. He Himself is our Grace. I can address Him directly as “You”!

*“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* John 17:3
(From Christ’s High Priestly Prayer for me, and for you.)

CHAPTER 9

A SENSE FOR HIS ETERNAL NOW

*...Behold, now is “The Acceptable Time”,
behold, now is “The Day of Salvation”-*
II Corinthians 6:2 (Referring to Isaiah 49:8)

We have never seen or heard any “nows”. We always miss them because they pass by before we can sense them. We have no way to live in awareness of something we cannot know.

The light of “now” travels to our eyes at the speed of light. Even if the light starts close by, it takes some time to get to our eyes. Not much, but some. The light strikes sensory cells in the retina which cause impulses to be produced in nerve cells. More time. Not much, but some. The impulses travel along nerve cells and arrive at the brain where they are decoded and, after even more time, allow us to consciously perceive the light of a “was” that is no longer the “now”.

The sound of “now” takes even longer to appreciate, in part because the speed of sound is a lot slower than that of light. Our sensing of sound also involves a slower, partially mechanical process in the ears.

It seems to us like we are living in the “now” because we have become accustomed to our sequential existence in which each “now” is immediately replaced by another. We perceive this sequential process as something we call “time”. Time is our measure of change. If time stopped, change would stop too, but even when we might wish that time would stand still, it just keeps marching on. And so, we change, along with the world around us, at least for a time...

God does not change. He tells us that. *“For I, the Lord, do not change...”* (Malachi 3:6). The Hebrew words have the literal sense of telling us that He does not live in a repeating sequence. It is hard for me to comprehend an eternal changelessness. Does nothing happen? Apparently, it is quite the reverse. Everything happens! All at once. Just now. Everything that **has** happened and everything that **will** happen (from our perspective) is all apparent to our God in His one glorious, eternal Now.

Moses once prayed a remarkable prayer which we can read in Psalm 90. A portion of his prayer acknowledges that time does not impose upon God the limitations that it imposes upon us. *For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night.* Psalm 90:4. (Peter quoted from that prayer in II Peter 3:8.) Some have been silly enough to opine that the II Peter reference means creation took 6000 years, as if we had a conversion constant here allowing us to convert God's days to our years. We don't. You have to read the whole quote in Psalm 90 where the comparison changes from a day to a watch. For the Hebrews, a watch in the night lasted about four hours. For Roman soldiers, it was down to about three. A thousand years, therefore, is like a day, but it's also like four hours. There is no fixed conversion constant here.

The Psalms passage is simply telling us that time imposes no limitations on God. He created time for us to live in, apparently at the beginning of the creation. According to Genesis 1:4, the first "day" (or time period) started with the creation of light, well before the earth or sun were formed. Time began before humans were formed to live in it. We will not live in time forever. Revelation 10:6 says in some translations that, at the end, *...time shall be no more...* (KJV), but other translations say *...there will be delay no longer...* (NASB). The actual Greek word here is "chronos", meaning "time". That's where we get the word "chronometer" or "timepiece". A clock will have no practical use in heaven. The I AM simply IS. He was and is and is to come, all in His Holy Now. As we behold Him, we experience His Now.

We are told in Romans 1:19-20 that the whole creation gives evidence to us about the One who fashioned it. You and I are a part of that creation. Before we end our discussion, consider with me some aspects of the evidence of Him in the way we are created. Let's take a look at some ways He gives us a kind of sense for beholding Him and His Now as we consider some aspects of our created senses as we use them to experience our finite creation.

Most of us are created with five basic "senses", namely sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Most notably through the first two, inputs come to our brains about what is going on around us. We attempt to make "sense" of these sensory inputs with varying degrees of success.

As we have discussed, none of these five senses are adequate for us to understand God or to behold Christ directly. We must be born again spiritually to know Him. The physical five senses, however, as a part of His creation, in His Image, give some sense for the One we behold.

Consider the sense of hearing. Consider specifically a person with reasonably normal hearing like I used to have. Such a person can appreciate sounds in their environment that can provide information, warning, pleasure and even communication. Discernment of frequency in the sound waves helps us to characterize the sounds and even appreciate a musical note.

In a sufficient time period, I can easily hear a single note. Over more time, I can hear a sequence of notes that may constitute a recognizable tune. Take the first five notes of “Amazing Grace” for example. You can hear them in your mind’s ear, or whistle them as you think about them. Actually, there are only three different notes among the five, associated with the four syllables in those two initial words in the hymn. You could play the three notes all at once on a piano and hear them all together as a pleasant basic chord, but I can’t whistle it by myself since I can’t whistle three notes at once.

It would take a more knowledgeable person than I to recognize that the beginning of “Amazing Grace” was compressed into that one three-note chord if I just heard someone play it just now. An even more knowledgeable person might recognize that many other hymn beginnings were being compressed into the same three-note chord, if you allow some key transpositions. A few among them would be “All Hail the Power”, “Were You There?”, “I Love to Tell...”, “My Hope is Built...”, “I’m Pressing On...”, “My Faith Looks Up...”, “Stand Up, Stand Up for...” and “Rise Up, O Men of...”. The vast majority of us would need to actually hear each of the note sequences over a space of time. It would take some kind of musical genius to discern them all in one somewhat-prolonged “right now” from a single chord.

What we **can** easily do is hear more notes, along with each note of the melody, in a tune. Take just the first note of “Amazing Grace” for example. The hymnbook has a four-note chord there, instead of one note, so the hymn can be sung in four-part harmony. You could hear even more in that first sound if you were hearing it played by a full orchestra with many instruments having differing timbre and other sound qualities.

My sister is a professional musician in New York who can hear far more than I can. She is the kind of person who can listen to a note or chord from a full orchestra and tell you that one of the violas came in late and a little flat. What even she **cannot** do is hear and discern all the 125 notes of “Amazing Grace” if they could be played all at once in one instant “now”. It would just sound like noise, if any sound could be heard at all. In fact, we could not even discern one single note if played alone in one instant “now”. Why? Notes are discernable by their frequency. Middle C has a frequency of 256 to 261.62 cycles per second depending on whether you are using scientific pitch or A440 pitch. That’s about 0.004 seconds for one cycle. You must listen for long enough to hear enough of a cycle to appreciate the frequency. A single, instant point in one cycle could never be enough for us to discern even a single note as a note.

The Infinite Christ inhabits the Now in an infinite fashion. He hears and distinguishes, just now, every note ever played, indeed every sound ever made, and every sound that ever will be made. He hears, in His Eternal Now, my first prayer and my current one. There will be no last one, but He hears, just now. He hears every idle word uttered by each and every one of us. And He also makes it possible for us to hear Him by the Spirit, just now. Just Now, and without the limitations of our physical ears. The human sense of hearing He has created gives us a tiny, limited sense for the wonder of His Now. He invites us there to hear, as we behold Him.

By God’s grace, our senses are limited in a manner that allows them to be useful in our finite physical bodies. We can only hear sounds within a frequency range of about 20 to 20 thousand cycles per second or Hertz (Hz), some of us having narrower ranges than that. We can feel vibrations at lower frequencies but we don’t hear them. Our vision range is even more dramatically limited, relative to available frequencies, to our great benefit.

Vision is not like any of the other four senses in that direct physical contact with some material object is not required. Taste and smell involve some direct physical contact with material atoms or molecules being tasted or smelled. Hearing requires some vibration in a physical medium (usually air) being transmitted through physical contact to some part of our bodies (usually an eardrum). Touch most commonly requires physical contact with material objects too, but vision is different. It requires light.

We don't understand light very well, but please consider with me just a few somewhat technical observations here. Light is electromagnetic radiation, with characteristics of a wave (it has frequency) and also a particle (it appears to require no medium for transmission). A photon of light can be described by its frequency and its energy but scientists say it has no mass at rest. That's a little funny because you just can't get the thing to slow down from the speed of light to study it. If you stop it, it stops being light and its energy is absorbed as heat.

Frequencies across the electromagnetic spectrum have an incomprehensibly wide range. The lowest energy radio waves have frequencies that can be lower than 1 Hz. It goes up from there through higher radio and TV frequencies, microwaves, infrared radiation, visible light, ultraviolet rays and x-rays. When you get up to the highest-energy gamma rays you can be far beyond 100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 Hz. We even have a name for such a number. It would be 100 YottaHertz, which is one whole "lotta" cycles in each second!

The visible light we can actually see has frequencies from around 400,000,000,000,000 Hz for deep red to about 790,000,000,000,000 Hz for violet. That is 400 to 790 trillion Hz. The frequency determines the color we perceive. The whole visible range represents a tiny, tiny fraction of the overall electromagnetic frequency range of "light". Our visible fraction is much less than $3.9/1,000,000,000,000$ or 3.9 trillionths of the full range. Our other senses can make us aware of a little more of the unseen light. For example, our sense of touch can detect skin heating from infrared radiation. (I have an infrared heater at home that's like an invisible sunlamp you can feel.) We can also sense a sunburn on our skin from ultraviolet radiation.

We should be absolutely delighted that God has limited what we can see of His light. If we could "see" the whole electromagnetic spectrum, we would not be able to see much of what we now see, because all the other currently non-visible light would be in the way! Even if there were millions of new "colors", the familiar colors in our finest sunsets would be effectively compressed into one shade, if you could even see it with the measly 100,000,000,000 neurons your brain uses to think with. It would be so much worse if we could see light going by from the side instead of just the little bit that goes right into our eyes. Even on a dark, clear, moonless night, all that light hurtling by from all those stars would overwhelm us.

The Bible says clearly that ...*God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.* (I John 1:5). He not only **sees** all the light, He **is** all the Light. Light is what He began the creation with in Genesis 1. Jesus later declared, *“I am the Light of the world...”* (John 8:12). Our physical light reveals something of the creation. His Light reveals the Creator.

It is easy for us to talk about an all-knowing, all-seeing God. The words can just roll off our tongues like we knew what we were saying, but it is much harder to have an understanding of what those words might mean. “All” is a lot. Is God aware of every photon that is, just now, streaming throughout the universe? Is He aware, in His Incomprehensible Now, of the history of every photon that ever was and every photon that ever will be? Does He, in His one glorious Now, track the progress of every electron in every atom in the universe that ever was and ever will be? Does He see and hear and know, in One Grand Now, everything that ever was and everything that will be?

Let’s take this even a few steps further. *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.* (I Corinthians 13:12). **Really???** We will know as we are known?

Big thoughts? Yes, perhaps..., but we can think about them, in some small way, with our tiny, limited, 100 billion neuron brains, while we remain here in our finite existence. We miss the experience of our nows, but we don’t realize it. In our sequential existence, we know deep down that this will not go on forever, but we usually try not to think about it. We cultivate the illusion of having sufficient knowledge and being in control. We expect that, if a problem arises, we or someone else will fix it. Doctors surely know what they are doing... Occasionally, as recently happened, our rationalizations get challenged. A pandemic intrudes. It becomes evident that human knowledge and control is far more limited than we thought. Those are the times we may ponder the hints of now and eternity and try to understand.

God stoops to our weakness here. He created human beings long ago in order that He might have an eternal relationship with them. Instead, they chose a finite existence apart from Him. The Infinite Christ we attempt to understand from a distance loves you and me and went to the Cross that we might behold and know Him intimately. He reveals Himself by the Spirit in ways that correspond to our physical senses but He transcends them all.

Christ comes to us in ways of His choosing. He does not take us by force but He offers to enable a right response in us. It is never about what we do out of ourselves. It is always about Him. He is the One who is about us.

Christ is completely overwhelming, but He seems remarkably familiar at the same time. He sees us and He allows us to behold Him by the Spirit of God as He makes us clean. He hears us and allows us to hear Him by the Spirit. He touches us, anointing us with His Cleansing Blood, and we touch Him, by the Spirit.

*O **taste** and see that the Lord is good... Psalm 34:8*

*For we are a **fragrance** of Christ to God... II Corinthians 2:15*

*And He stretched out His hand and **touched** him... Luke 5:13*

*...all who are in the tombs will **hear** His voice... John 5:28*

*"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall **see** God." Matthew 5:8*

*... "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,
And which have not entered the heart of man,
All that God has prepared for those who love Him."
II Corinthians 2:9*

As we behold Him, as we abide in Him and as He abides in us, we step with Him into the experience of His Eternal Now. We do not understand **it**; we behold **Him**. Seems to me that, somehow, by His Doing, I am Home.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

*“Abide in Me,
and I in you...”*
John 15:4

Gather me Home
Into You, Precious Lord.

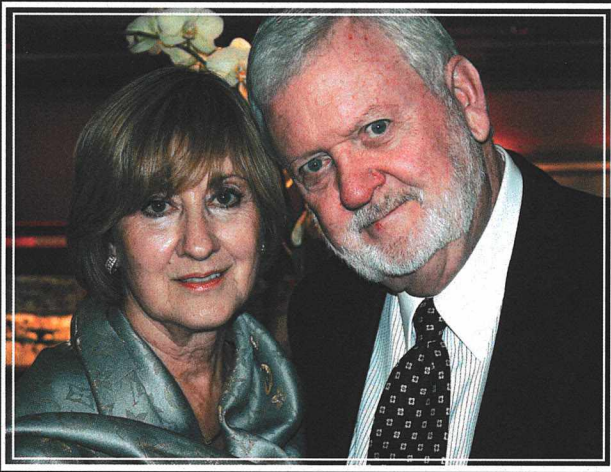
Come and Abide
Just Now In me.

May i Behold
Only You, Precious Lord.

Let me Abide
Just Now In Thee.

jim raddin
November 2019

... “Behold, the Lamb of God!”
John 1:36



I used to pray, intermittently, to a God I believed to be somewhere out there. I used to ask Him to give me the desires of my heart when I was fearful or in need. Sometimes I would seek to know His Will for me so that I could try to do it as best I could. I thought things would be made right only when I got to heaven, but I was in no hurry for that.

But He draws near, nearer than I could have imagined. He invites me to simply behold Him. Just now. In here, where I am. He reveals Himself as all the desire of my heart and He convinces me that I am the desire of His. He does not ask me to do His Will. He offers to do His Will in me, not someday, but just and only now as I behold Him.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock...” Revelation 3:20

Dr. Jim Raddin is a Christian. He and his wife Janie celebrated their 53rd anniversary in June 2020. They have two children and six grandchildren.

Jim retired from the US Air Force as a Colonel in 1988 after 20 years of active duty, first as an astronautical engineer and then as a physician and flight surgeon. He did research in impact protection, including participation as a volunteer subject in his own experimental impact tests. His last assignment was as vice commander of the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine at Brooks AFB, Texas.

Jim holds two degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). His Bachelor's was in Aeronautics and Astronautics in 1967 and his Master's was in Management in 1983 as a Sloan Fellow at the MIT Sloan School. In between, he earned his MD degree in 1975 from the University of New Mexico School of Medicine in Albuquerque. He did a straight surgery internship and was later board certified in Aerospace Medicine.

After retiring from the USAF, Jim was a consultant in impact injury causation and impact protection for over 20 years with Biodynamic Research Corporation in San Antonio, Texas. His clients included both aircraft and automotive manufacturers and NASCAR. He retired again in 2010. Jim and Janie make their home in San Antonio with part-time in Rockport, Texas.

This book derives from years of Bible teaching and a growing experience in Jesus Christ. It is not a commercial endeavor. Anyone can download it for free from drjimraddin.com and print it for your own use. You will also find a link there to a print-on-demand version available solely for the cost of printing. Jim's two previous books (*Experiencing the Holy Days* and *Recognizing Christ in the Old Testament*) are also available through the same website. Please do not sell any of them for profit.

Janie took the photograph for the cover (Revelation 3:20, again)