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The Beatific Vision: Walking by Faith with the End in Sight

Lesson 1—February 25, 2024

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Mt 5:8)

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” (1 Cor 13:12)

“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” (Rev 22:3-5)

1. Introduction

2. Only the sight of God can satisfy: Psalm 17

3. Five good reasons for studying the beatific vision

(a) It is a blessed promise.

(b) It is a compelling metaphor.

“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 by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

“The oftener a believer beholds [the Lord Jesus] in spirit, the more clearly he knows his perfections, of which his holiness is the ornament. The more clearly he knows them the more ardently he loves them. The more ardently he loves them, the more like to them he desires to become. . . Moreover, the more ardently he loves God, he will both the more frequently, the more willingly and attentively behold him; and thus often running round that circle of beholding and loving, for ever returning into itself, he gains by every act a new feature of this most glorious image.” (Herman Witsius)

(c) It is connected to many other truths of the Christian faith.

(d) It is God-centered.

(e) It leads us to marvel at the goodness of God.

“For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.” (Ps 36:9)

4. One bad reason for studying the beatific vision

5. Conclusion

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Lesson 2—March 3, 2024

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (1 Jn 3:1–3)

1. Introduction

2. One thing: Psalm 27

“And let us know what our souls were made for. What are our souls more for than to dwell in the meditation of the beauty of God? What are our souls made for, but for excellent things? and what is excellent but in God’s ordinances? ... [Our souls] are for union and communion with God in his ordinances, to grow in nearer communion with God by his Spirit, to have more knowledge and affection, more love and joy and delight in the best things daily. Our souls are for these things that will make us gracious here, and glorious for ever after in heaven.” (Richard Sibbes)

3. Vision and fruition: WLC 90

Q: What shall be done to the righteous at the day of judgment?

A: At the day of judgment, the righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on his right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall join with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven, where they shall be fully and forever freed from all sin and misery; filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, **but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity.** And this is the perfect and full communion, which the members of the invisible church shall enjoy with Christ in glory, at the resurrection and day of judgment.

4. Glorify and enjoy God: WLC 1

Q: What is the chief and highest end of man?

A: Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.

“No man is truly Reformed in his thought, then, unless he conceives of man not merely as destined to be the instrument of the Divine glory, but also as destined to reflect the glory of God in his own consciousness, to exult in God: nay, unless he himself delights in God as the all-glorious One.” (B. B. Warfield)

5. Conclusion

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Lesson 3—March 10, 2024

1. Introduction

“The glory of God is a living man; and the life of man is the vision of God.”
(Irenaeus)

2. None else: Psalm 73

3. God is invisible

Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17, 6:13-16; Heb 11:27

4. Fruition by way of covenant

WCF 7.1

“The distance between God and the creature is so great that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.”

5. Seeing God in the Old Testament

Ex 33:18-23, 34:5-9, 29-35; Nu 12:6-8

6. Incarnation: God made visible

Jn 1:14-18

“Though He be infinite, incomprehensible, and invisible, yet has He made Himself visible, comprehensible, and finite to those who believe in Him, that as they receive and see Him by faith He may give them life.” (Irenaeus)

7. Conclusion

“There is a far greater distance between the vision of heaven and the sight which we have now by faith, than is between the sight which we now have and what they had under the Old Testament. Heaven does more excel the Gospel state than that state does the Law. . . If, then, they longed to be freed from their state of types and shadows, to enjoy the representation of the glory of Christ in that image of it which is given us in the Gospel; much more ought we to breathe and pant after our deliverance from beholding it in the image of it, that we may enjoy the substance itself. For, whatever can be manifest of Christ on this side heaven, it is granted unto us for this end, that we may the more fervently desire to be present with him.” (John Owen)