

Title: “All That Remains”

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Hebrews 12:27

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Service Readings: Is. 66:18-23, Heb 12:4-29, Luke 13:22-30

Isaiah writes: “From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD.” We come before the Lord in the Divine Service as we wait for his second coming when all that remains will be that which cannot be shaken.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

This is how God designed his creation. It was to glorify him. For six days he had created out of nothing... everything. And its response to his work was to give him glory. And it did, initially. The vast universe, filled with uncountable galaxies displayed the breadth of his canvas. No space was beyond his reach. The blazing stars displayed the strength of his might. Who other than him could ignite these balls of flame and keep them burning for thousands of years? The Earth, and all contained within displayed the perfectiveness of his harmony. For each plant, each animal, the ground, and the sky all worked in cooperation to support and nourish each other. And man was created for one purpose. Theologian John Piper once explained our purpose this way: “Man was created from the beginning *in God’s image* that he might image forth *God’s* glory. He was to multiply and fill the earth so that the knowledge of the glory of God would cover the sea.” You see, we were created to *display God’s glory so that it would be praised*.

And ever since the fall of man into sin, people have refused to align themselves with this divine goal and instead have sought to replace it with their own:

Come, let us be like God, knowing good and evil...

Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top reaches to the heavens. And let us make a name for ourselves,...

Come, let us serve two masters: God and money.

<MOVIE> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHiZ3KPxD-Q&feature=youtu.be> (The downloaded version doesn't include the production intro/exit).

This is where it has gotten us. This is who we have become. This is the world that we have made for ourselves. But this is also the world in which Jesus entered. A world that refuses to glorify him but a world that he still seeks to save. It's a world where God's desire has not changed. He still *wants* his creation to display his glory but he first must destroy the sin that fights against that desire. And that sin man throughout the world. It exists in you and it exists in me. And through these sinful eyes we so often look out into the world and wonder if there is anything left of his creation that actually

glorifies him. Is there anything out there, anything at all that remains for man evidence of God's glory? The world would answer "no" and be boastful, even, that it has replaced God with happenstance. And the faith of the Christian is shaken.

And more locally, schools have begun their new year and we send our children to them for worldly education. But we know that this education competes with God's design, for our children learn not to glorify him but to glorify themselves. They will be taught the knowledge and wisdom of the world. And the faith of our children will be shaken.

This is the world in which Jesus entered. He entered into a creation that was being shaken by Satan, destroyed by sin, and took upon himself all that rebelled against God, all that obscured man's view of God's desire. And he suffered the punishment on our behalf.

But yet we still see the brokenness. The images you just saw all took place *after* the his death and resurrection. What are we to make of it? Paul responds in his letter to the Hebrews. Starting in verse 18 he writes:

¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." ²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly^(a) of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

You have come into the presence of God. Your gathering in this place is not out of fear like those in the time of Moses, when they trembled and hid. No. You gather in this place, you come to meet Jesus with open eyes and outstretched hands because you know what the *world* around you is doing, what sin *is* doing, and you know what *Jesus* has *done*. The foundation of your faith may be shaken daily, but you come to this place to meet him who has rescued you and you cling to his promises of forgiveness and salvation. You receive the gifts of baptism and communion because you *need* an unshakable place to set your feet. Paul continues in verse 25:

²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

We have come into the presence of God. We have gathered in this place because we know that we *need* him. The world *needs* him and so we come not just on our own behalf but on the world's

behalf. We gather together as a God's people, like they did in the time of Moses, to offer our pleas to him and to offer our thanksgiving to him. We gather, not out of obligation but because of what he offers us. He offers us strength to overcome another day. He offers us reassurance that he holds all things together, even when it seems like it is all falling apart. We gather because he offers grace and mercy to each of us and we need that. We gather because we can't stay away. We gather because we know that one day, through him all things will be made new. We gather because we know that one day all that can be shaken will be removed. Our faith, our hope, our trust, all that currently comes under the influence of sin in this world will be removed. And what will remain will be God, his glory, and our praise.

Please pray with me.

From new moon to new moon,
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship before me,
declares the LORD.

Lord, hasten the day when you come again in glory and make all things new. For though we love to meet you here in this place, we look forward to the day when we will stand face to face and give glory to God, together, for all eternity.