



HG268: Amazing Grace (Verse 6)
The earth will soon dissolve as snow

Matthew 24:29-35; Phil 1:3-6

Home Group Study Notes

10 December—Christine Williams



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Where do you feel closest to God? Somewhere in the
country, by the sea, at home or in a church?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs
of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using
Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



HG268: Amazing Grace (Verse 6)
The earth will soon dissolve as snow

Is 55:1-11; Matthew 24:29-35

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10 December—Christine Williams

The earth will soon dissolve as snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God who called me here below
Will be forever mine, will be forever mine.

Background

First a bit of background. In this home groups series we've heard a bit about John Newton's conversion and the enormous change it made to his life. He wrote the poem, 'Amazing Grace' after he discovered the grace of God. The poem was later set to music. The hymn had a familiar final verse which was not written by Newton which went, 'When we've been there 10,000 years.....'

In 2006 Chris Tomlin was asked to write a new verse for the hymn for the film about William Wilberforce and he wrote 'My chains are gone, I've been set free, My God, my saviour has ransomed me, and like a flood His mercy reigns, Unending love, Amazing grace.' Wonderful words which sum up the awesome change that God's grace makes in our lives. But Chris also discovered that John Newton had written a final verse that had been dropped from the hymn when the new verse, (when we've been there 10,000 years), was written and that is the verse we are looking at today. 'The earth will soon dissolve as snow'.

God is true to his word and he is in charge

This world as we know it, had a beginning and it will have an end when Jesus returns. All that we know and love about the world will go, but equally all that we know and hate about the world will also go. Pain, sickness, war and famine will all go. All the terrible things we are continually hearing on the news; all this must pass. But hear God's words in Isaiah

55:11, 'My wordwill accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. 'Jesus said, 'heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away.' Matt 24:35 If the earth is going to go and God's words are holding true then it raises questions that many people find uncomfortable and few actually preach about. What will happen when we die? Linked to, What will happen when the world comes to an end?

Is this life all there is?

But the first question of all is perhaps one that many people wonder about, and that is, 'is this life all there is?' Is there life beyond the grave? Here we can confidently say 'yes' there is life beyond death because we know that Jesus was alive after his terrible death. People saw him, touched and he ate with them. He was not resuscitated but resurrected. He was different because he had been raised in a new body ready for heaven. He was as St Paul in 1 Cor 15 says, the first one to be raised. Jesus was: 'The first fruits of those who sleep' Because of Adam, (and the consequences of sin), we will all die, but because of Christ we will all be made alive for the life beyond this life. I Cor 15 was written by Paul because he had found that some of the Christians in Corinth were saying that there was nothing beyond this life. But as Paul said 'if Christ has not been raised then our hope is useless.' That is where our faith is based. Jesus is alive and if he isn't we had better all go home.

Every person will see him

Jesus promised that he would come again but that when he came again it would not be like the first time he came; it would not be secret so only a few people knew about him. Matt 25:21 says, 'when the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.' No-one will be in any doubt about him. he will come as King and Lord. Everyone will see him. It will be awesome in the true meaning of the word. Some people will see him and despair. But for people who already know him, his coming will be a relief and a joy.

The judgement

Why will there be these 2 different reactions? Because when Jesus comes again he will come as judge. John 3:17-19 is useful to understand the judgement because the judgement is self-selecting. 'God did not send Jesus in to the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not

believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in God's one and only son. Light has come into the world but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.' The judgement is based on what we think of Jesus? Are we relying on him for our salvation? Are we changing to become more like him? Are we children of our loving heavenly father? Or are we resistant to his grace and love? Are we rejecting his grace? People who reject God will have no welcome there.

A new heaven and earth

When Jesus comes again he will come as judge but he will also remake heaven and earth. Read Rev 21:1-6 Heaven and earth will be one place because our future is to be where God is, where we can see him, smell him touch him. We will know his love and joy and peace that we can only get a slight glimpse of now. We will drink from the water of life. At the moment we know him through his Spirit and at best we are just getting a little glimpse of him but when Jesus comes again we will see him face to face.

So, the earth as we know it will go. Our Sun will go. (Rev 22:5) Christ will be our light There will be a complete end. But there will be a new home, a remade heaven/earth, a real home for all of us who know and love the Lord Jesus. I feel that these first 2 lines of Newton's verse reflects his joy at seeing an end to this world. He had suffered and done terrible things in his life. For him it was sufficient to know that one day it would all end. God's grace had saved him and he needed to be with Jesus. My feeling is that the couplet is rather inadequate because it is the negative side of the fact that the earth will be remade into something wonderful. This verse is not giving us the whole picture because there is a home in the remade heaven and earth for us when we die. (Maybe that is why another verse was originally inserted into the hymn.)

I am his and he is mine

But Newton's last 2 lines are words of hope and trust. 'God who called me here below will be forever mine' speaks of his confidence that what Jesus has done and God's amazing grace will stand for eternity. When God calls us to follow him he is faithful and will never let us down. He is mine and I am his. I am my beloved and he is mine for now and for all eternity. We are bonded together by his love. Our lives are a walk of trust in a trustworthy God and he is faithfully guiding us through all the ups and downs of this life. Phil 1: 3-6 I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confi-

dent of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it onto completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Amen.

One day we will see him face to face and be with him forever.

Come Lord Jesus. Amen.

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*The LORD bless you and keep you: the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you: the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace. Numbers 6: 24-26*

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Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. How would you re-write this last verse to make it more positive? Here is my attempt: The earth and heaven will be remade, And Christ forever shine, And He who called me here below will be forever mine.

2. If heaven is so great why do Christians cling so dearly to life and want to live longer if possible?

3. In what way do I belong to Jesus and in what way does he belong to me?

4. Does the fact that the earth will be destroyed fill you with joy or sadness?

5. Jesus could return at any time. are we ready? How can we be ready?

6. Which is your favourite verse from John Newton's hymn?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?

