

Chapter 31: The End of Time

Descriptions of Jesus from the Old and New Testaments:

- a tender shoot
- no beauty or majesty to attract us to him
- despised and rejected by men
- a man of sorrows
- oppressed and afflicted
- born in a barn
- son of peasants
- “Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head”
- “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

“Revelation” means “_____” “_____” or
“_____.”

Descriptors of this same God-man now:

- The Alpha and the Omega
- The First and the Last
- The Beginning and the End
- The Almighty
- The Living One
- The Lion of the tribe of Judah
- The Root of David
- Faithful and True
- The Faithful Witness
- The Word of God
- The King of Kings and Lord of Lords
- The Bright and Morning Star

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Revelation 21:3-4

Today's Equipping Point

Pray for God to begin _____

Words of encouragement from Jesus' letters to the seven churches

Ephesus: Good things can never replace a _____ with Jesus.

Smyrna: Fear nothing of the _____.

Pergamum: _____ nothing.

Thyatira: Do not live a _____ life. You are called to be a “fully _____” for God.

Sardis: It's not about _____.

Philadelphia: You will be _____.

Laodicea: Jesus loves those He _____ and _____.
I am here, at the door, knocking; will you hear? Will you open the door?

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see of Jesus in Revelation that you haven't seen before?
2. Why is His role as Righteous Judge so important?
3. Which of His instructions to the seven churches most challenge you this morning?

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

Colossians 1:28

Teaching Script

Wow, what a journey! For almost nine months, we have undertaken what seemed to be a very impractical goal when we began: the whole family, through the whole Bible in a year. But as usual, this group of men has been faithful beyond expectation, and God has grown so many of us through this study to see His Upper Story weave throughout the entire Bible, in new stories we've never heard, and in old stories seen with fresh eyes.

And from day one, in these astounding stories of everyday men and women, the name of "Jesus" has been whispered, and sometimes shouted from each chapter. For me, I have seen anew the intricate, mystical puzzle that God assembled before the beginning of time, and then gradually, piece by piece, revealed to us as the outline, then the silhouette, then the sketch, then the full picture of Jesus has been painted throughout Scripture.

It's been like watching a master artist compose a beautiful portrait, one step at a time. The OT gave us frequent glimpses, or portrait sketches, from several different angles. Then we watched the Word and Creator Himself as He walked the earth, showing us the detailed features of this God, how He taught, when He laughed and when He cried, and his demeanor as He sat a child on His lap, or as He cleaned out the temple. Then a disturbing element of color entered the painting, and of course the color was blood red. As more and more red was added, it was almost too much for us to look at as the full weight of sin, the full fury of God, was poured out on one man's fragile body—a body just like ours, that was taken to the absolute limit of torture prior to His death.

Then, three days later, the red in the portrait joined with yellow and orange and became the bright glow of Easter Sunday, the pure white of unstained linen, as once and for all He conquered darkness, and forever the blackness of sin was eradicated from the picture.

And now we stand at the final book of the Bible, Revelation. This is a chapter we dare not leave out, because only here do we begin to see a glimmer of Jesus as He really is, now at the right hand of the Father...Jesus as He really was before the foundation of the world...and Jesus as He will be as Righteous Judge, overwhelming Conqueror, Husband of the Bride, and Light of Eternity.

The New Testament begins with the four gospels that reveal the first coming of Christ. This book of Revelation reveals the second coming of Christ as the culmination of all the themes we've studied these last eight months: themes of relentless pursuit and unending forgiveness that now climax with the New Heaven and New Earth. The thrust of the message of Revelation is Jesus' ultimate victory over His enemies and the establishment of His kingdom. I know many Christians avoid the book of Revelation because of its symbolism, its apocalyptic genre; but to avoid this book is to neglect the final step. After the humiliation and suffering, after His death and resurrection, one stage remains: the glorification of Jesus—the final staggering chapter of the Story that paints Him in the full color of the majesty that is due only Him.

Christ is the main subject of the whole book; and without it, we would miss the end of the Upper Story and the final service of Jesus: to continue watch over His Church, to return for His own, to judge the world in a time of Tribulation such as the world has never seen; to reign, and finally to execute the justice we've all been waiting for: the final defeat,

judgment and expulsion of Satan and his angels to the eternal lake of fire. That's the Jesus I want to be next to, when all evil is banished, all death defeated, and final justice is pronounced on the one who is responsible for all the tears, pain, and suffering of the people I love. We dare not omit or minimize this final saga where Jesus makes his enemies a footstool for His feet, and His name is exalted far above every name.

What would you give to be John as the one to whom this was revealed? Of the original apostles, only John remained to hear these words. He had experienced the climax of salvation history on Resurrection Sunday, but God was not yet finished. He had one more message to share with John.

He was exiled on the island of Patmos for his faith in Jesus. He had a longer history with Jesus than any of the other apostles. Some scholars think he was a first cousin of Jesus, the son of Salome. John, along with his brother James, and Peter, became the most trusted of Jesus' disciples. He had an especially intimate relationship with these three men who would later play significant roles in the life of the early church. John was the "beloved disciple." He was there when Jesus healed Jairus' daughter. He witnessed firsthand the tiniest glimpse of Jesus' glorification at the Transfiguration. John and Peter were charged with preparing the Passover supper (Luke 22:8) where he later reclined against Jesus' breast. Hours later, he saw both the terror of what was to come in the Garden and the horror of Jesus' execution. It was to John that Jesus entrusted His mother, and gave John to her as a son. After the ascension of Christ, Galatians calls him a "pillar" as a leader in the young church. He outlived all the other apostles and is probably the only one of the original disciples who was not martyred for his faith.

Yes, John had a long history with Jesus. They were more than familiar, they were intimately close. But none of that prepared him for the vision that he saw on the island of Patmos many years later. The glimpse of Jesus' glory at the Transfiguration could not have prepared him for this.

[Read p. 460]

The contrast in his Master from 65 years earlier could not have been more stark. **The descriptions of Jesus, from the Old and New Testaments**, were hardly impressive:

- a tender shoot
- no beauty or majesty to attract us to him
- despised and rejected by men
- a man of sorrows
- oppressed and afflicted
- born in a barn
- son of peasants
- "Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"
- "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

But the word "**revelation**" in the Bible means "**uncovering**," "**unveiling**" or "**disclosure**." And what is disclosed and unveiled in the book of Revelation? The matchless, indescribable, hair-raising, heart-stopping, spine-tingling Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory.

Listen to the **descriptors of this same God-man now:**

- The Alpha and the Omega
- The First and the Last
- The Beginning and the End
- The Almighty
- The Living One
- The Lion of the tribe of Judah
- The Root of David
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- The Bright and Morning Star

John saw the throne room of heaven where he was shown visions of future events. God sat upon His throne in unimaginable splendor and beauty. He was surrounded by living creatures and elders who worshiped Him without ceasing. He held a scroll that no one was found worthy to open, until all eyes focused on the one in the midst of the lampstands: a Lamb standing, the scars from Its slaughter still visible as if slain. Here was the One worthy to open the scroll, which contained seals, trumpets and bowls of judgment upon a wicked earth.

Shortly thereafter, the bride who symbolizes all faithful believers was ready, wearing clean linen and prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Then John saw heaven opened, and Jesus descending in full glory on a white horse, ready to wage war and finally eliminate evil for His bride, the Church. The King of Kings was ready to rule with blazing eyes and a blood drenched robe, a sharp sword extending from His mouth signifying that His Word was final and absolute. He was accompanied by the armies of heaven. This definitive Great White Throne judgment is the final event of human history as we know it. The dead stand before Him, and those not found in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire.

Then John saw the New Heaven and New Earth and the New Jerusalem. Are there any more majestic words in all of Scripture than these:

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 21:3-4

I know we've all heard the jokes about heaven being an endless worship service, and who wants that? But I've gotta tell you, when I watch God finally wipe away the last tear from my wife's eyes, from my mom's eyes, and even the last tear from my dad's eyes, I can tell you right now, all I'm gonna want to do is worship.

And our **Equipping Point** for today, for this last chapter, is:

Pray for God to begin lifting your burdens now.

He will wipe away all tears then, but what could He release you from today that would embolden and empower you while you're still here? Men don't normally think in terms of someone wiping away our tears, so think of this verse as "baggage." Is there something you could unload with God's help? A memory or past failure from which you could be freed, so that, in essence, He begins now to wipe the tears from our eyes? Do we have the courage to pray for this? In order to lead our families well, in an act of surrender to God, I believe we must.

In this future re-creation, all the themes from His redemptive Story are consummated in this place where all things are made new. This majestic and glorious New Jerusalem will be home to all the redeemed. Nothing impure will ever enter it. The water of life flows from the throne of God, and the tree of life, first seen in the Garden of Eden, reappears to bear fruit, and all are invited to partake. It is here that the redeemed will enjoy the presence of God and of the Lamb forever, because as it says on page 468 of *The Story*, "...the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp."

Maybe it was this Scripture that inspired this song...

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.

1 Corinthians 2:9

[play a recording of the worship song, "I Can Only Imagine"]

Chapters two and three of the book of Revelation contain seven messages to seven churches. And while we don't have time to read Chapters 2 and 3 in their entirety, I'd like to borrow the words of Jesus to these churches as my final encouragements to you. I tried to write some deep, touching benediction to leave you with, but the words failed me. As it turns out, I shouldn't have even tried, because we have here in Revelation Jesus' words to His churches. So as my final encouragement to you, allow me to adapt Jesus' words from the letters He wrote to these seven churches in Asia:

- From His words to the church in **Ephesus**: continue your hard work, good deeds and service, but remember these **good things cannot replace a relationship with Jesus**. It's possible to do great things, but never substitute doing the best thing, which is offering your heart to God. If your heart is both changed and humbled that God could use someone like you, your service to Jesus becomes a humble act of gratitude, rather than an item on your checklist.
- From His words to the church in **Smyrna**: **fear nothing of the *enemy***. There will be suffering for Christ's sake in this life—some of which you are enduring now. All this is temporal. But your eternal inheritance is being kept safe, where it will never perish, spoil, or fade. Remember Paul's epitaph: a crown awaits the faithful.

- From His words to the church in **Pergamum**: compromise nothing. Test everything you hear against the purity of Scripture. There will never be a shortage of idols; may you guard against the seduction of idols such as sexuality, greed, power, and busyness. The slope is slippery and you'll be sucked in before you know it. So, as the roll call sergeant from Hill St. Blues used to say, "Let's be careful out there."
- From His words to the church in **Thyatira**: remember God searches minds and hearts, and no matter what you do, or where you do it, nothing is hidden from Him. Above all, **do not live a compartmentalized life**. If you are "holy"—or "called out"—"set apart"—it is impossible to bless God and curse men from the same mouth. Your church life cannot be disembodied from your family life or your work life. **You are called to be a "fully integrated package" for God.**
- From His words to the church in **Sardis**: **it's not about appearances**. Some of you need to be watchful, strengthen your faith, and repent. And some of you have not defiled your garments—some of you have not stained your character. If you remain faithful, Jesus will forever be your Advocate, confessing your name before His Father and His angels.
- From His words to the church in **Philadelphia**: Some of you have been through the wringer already. Your strength has been sapped, but you have kept His word and not denied His name. **You will be conquerors**— because you have persevered. YOU will be exalted, and everyone will know Jesus has chosen you.
- From His words to the church in **Laodicea**: Just as the Hebrew writer said, **Jesus loves those He reproves and disciplines**. Don't let what the world gives fool you: your job may be secure, your 401k untouched, but in the end, we are all spiritually poor, blind, and naked. If we all don't start here: admitting we are wretched, miserable, and desperately in need of a Savior, then none of this will make sense. Don't be lukewarm, the pompous Emperor with no clothes. Wear Jesus or remain pathetically naked. He said, **I am here, at the door, knocking; will you hear? Will you open the door?**

For all of us, I pray that because of these last six years, the answer is, "Yes, Lord Jesus, come in. Come quickly."

[Prayer]

Father, my prayer for every one of these men is the same prayer Jesus offered for them: Protect them by the power of your name—so that they may be one. They are not of this world—please protect them from the evil one. Sanctify them by the truth of Your Word. As you sent Jesus into the world, send them into the world to change it forever by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I pray also for those who will believe in Jesus through their message, that each family, each church may be one, even as you, Lord Jesus, are one with Your Father, so that the world may believe that You have sent them. May we all be brought to complete unity to let the world know who we are, and Whose we are, and where we're going.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.