

THE STORY

FINDING YOUR STORY IN GOD'S STORY.

Synopsis & Context – Session #31: The End of Time

Yes, I am coming soon.—Jesus. So it was that these words were given, *revealed* to the author of the Gospel According to John. He had chronicled the climax of salvation history, but God was not yet finished. He had one more message to share and the growing churches to show the people what must soon take place.

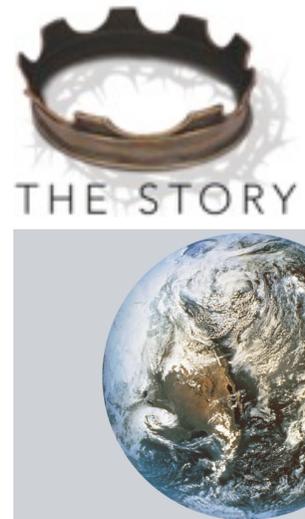
In *The Revelation to John*, the presumed author and apostle is exiled on the island of Patmos for his faith in Jesus. It was here that the glorified Christ appeared to the author with a message of His second coming. *John* saw someone “like a son of man” dressed in a priestly robe and ready to judge. He fell like a dead man at His feet. Jesus presented Himself as the resurrected One who has authority over life and death. He stood among seven golden lamp stands which represent the seven churches located in the province of Asia Minor on the mainland close to the island of Patmos.

Jesus had messages for each of these seven churches. From the three churches addressed in this chapter, a pattern emerges. First, there’s a unique description of Jesus that is related to the message. Then each message contains both a word of commendation and a rebuke for the congregation. He then gives an instruction or warning before an encouraging promise to those who listen and overcome the problem.

John reports seeing the throne room of heaven where he was shown visions of future events. God sat upon His throne in unimaginable splendor and beauty and was surrounded by living creatures and elders who worshiped Him without ceasing. He held a scroll that no one was found worthy to open, causing *John* to weep. But *John*’s hope was restored when he saw the Lamb standing as if slain. For the Lamb was worthy to open the scroll and also to receive power and glory and honor and praise!

Shortly thereafter, the bride, who symbolizes the Church, all faithful believers, was ready, wearing clean linen and prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Then *John* saw heaven opened and Jesus descended in full glory on a white horse ready to wage war and judge mankind. The King of Kings was ready to rule with blazing eyes and a blood drenched robe, a sharp sword and filled with the fury of God’s wrath. He was accompanied by the armies of heaven. His appearance is a dramatic reminder of the described final judgment – God’s final judgment from His great white throne is the final event of human history as we receive it in the Bible. The imagery describe the dead stand before Him in judgment. Those not found in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire. What are we to make of this revelation?

Then *John* saw the New Heaven and New Earth and the New Jerusalem. In this future re-creation, God dwells among His people where He wipes away every tear. Many themes from His redemptive Story find their culmination in this place where all things are made new. The 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, the tree of life bears much fruit, and all are invited to partake. This place is the hope of every believer, for it is where God’s Upper Story and His Lower Story finally merge into one. It is here that the redeemed will enjoy the presence of God and of the Lamb forever. As Jesus concluded His message to *John*, three times He said, “Look, I am coming soon!” Come, Lord Jesus, come!



Chapter #31: *The End of Time* is 'woven' from selections from *Revelation* (1—5, 19—22)*Plot Points for Chapter #31: The End of Time*

God is on the throne of eternity, no matter what we experience on this earth. Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was slain, stands forever before the throne of God, a constant witness to the security of our salvation. One day soon, all things will be made new and God will live with humanity on earth. The book of Revelation is often reduced to a strange blend between a complex crossword puzzle and a tricked-out tarot card. Interpreters become so focused on the things in Revelation that are not clear that they fail to highlight and celebrate the things that are very clear. And there are many clear, inspiring, stunning, and worship-inducing truths in the book of Revelation.

John's vision accomplishes something more than simply showing us the future. It shows us the center. It shows us that at the heart of everything, God reigns. It shows us that the God who reigns on a throne, high and holy, is also the Lord who sent his one and only Son to die on a cross and rescue sinners. The Lamb who was slain is now alive forevermore. For all eternity, we will see, savor, and celebrate the goodness and glory of the God who saves. This is how God wants to be known and revealed. And this is a vision that the church needs to remember—especially in the midst of persecution and suffering.

The story concludes with all that has been broken, restored. The lost have been found. Evil has been defeated. And the world is even better than we could ever have imagined. For in the end, we learn that God does not simply re-create a beautiful world that has been marred and stained by human sin. The story of our redemption, healing, and the new work of creation through Jesus Christ shows us something deeper about God. In response to our sin and rebellion, God is both just and gracious. In his righteous judgment against sin, he has graciously made a way for his people to behold him, know him, and love him. That is what we were made to do, and it is the hope of our future: to live with God forever in a world renewed and freed from the curse of sin.

Cf. Barr, Adam Exploring the Story: A Reference Companion (Story, The). Zondervan.

God's Story – YOUR story!

- **So why do you feel that *Revelation* is an essential part of *The Story*?**
- **How do you contrast “Jesus the Letter writer” in *Revelation* to that of Paul?**
- **Has your notion of the judgment changed? If so *how*? If not, how/where did you form the idea?**
- **How has *The Story* impacted your view of the Bible? How you engage the Bible?**
- **What are your ideas / hopes for next year?**

The Bible as a Dramatic Story

i - Prologue – Creation (context)

ii – Prologue – The Fall (conflict)

Act I – Israel (First Covenant)

Act II – Jesus (Second Covenant)

Act III – New Life

Epilogue – TBD