



Revelation

Hope in a world that feels out of control.

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a sermon series of the same name.*

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Key Verse

He who was seated on the throne said,
“I am making everything new!” Then he said,
“Write this down, for these words
are trustworthy and true.”

Revelation 21:5

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Welcome!

WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE.

This guide through Revelation is designed to equip you to dive into God's Word and deepen your faith. You'll find devotional content, a daily reading plan, reflection questions, prayer prompts, and some topical articles. We believe the best way to learn is in community, so join us for the 10-week Revelation series on Sundays at your campus or online, and if you can, meet up with friends or join a group to get the most out of this experience.

Willow,

The Bible is vast and beautiful, and learning how to read it—and hear God through it—is one of the most catalytic things we can do.

Going through entire books as a church is not new for us, so why Revelation? Why now? Of all the books in the Bible, it is one that continues to stump (and split) people. As a pastor, I'm asked about my perspective on it, and people often have more questions about it than any other book of the Bible.

Current events and natural disasters, in virtually every generation, provoke the question, "Are we living in the end times?" Followed up quickly by, "How will we know that we're there? What will be the signs that this is the end?" Young adults and high school students are asking these questions and wanting to know what Revelation says—we all feel it (and it's not just Christians who ask these questions).

Revelation was written by John, one of Jesus' earliest disciples. Tradition states: Later in his life, well after Jesus had died, resurrected, and gone to be with the Father, John settled in Ephesus and was later banished to the island of Patmos by the Emperor Domitian. There, around AD 90 (which makes it one of the latest books written in the New Testament), he received "the revelation from Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1).

Revelation was written in a style that would have been familiar to Jewish readers at the time, called "apocalyptic." Similar to Ezekiel and Daniel from the

Old Testament, this book is a series of symbolic visions that reveal God's perspective on historical events in light of the final outcome.

I want to make it clear: Revelation is complex. The use of symbols and imagery to convey meaning is not easily accessible, especially to us as 21st-century readers. Plus, many godly, intelligent biblical scholars interpret Revelation in different ways. Whose interpretation is right? Whose interpretation is wrong?

On top of all that, it seems every year there is someone telling us the end is here (or coming soon) based on how they interpret historical or present events through the lens of Revelation. It's a lot.

In this guide, we're going to do our best to offer a way through Revelation, some commentary and reflection, and suggested resources to go deeper. You will not find a step-by-step, day-by-day, exact timeline and guide to the end of the world. That's because Revelation is less about predicting the future and more about radically hopeful discipleship. It is less about timelines and predictions and more about a return to our first love in a world that stands in opposition to it all.

While there are many different ways to interpret Revelation, my conviction is this: If you end the book with anything but hope, you're reading it wrong. I can't wait to see what God has for us,

Shawn Williams
Senior Pastor, Willow Creek Community Church

Key Themes

Revelation, or “apocalypse,” comes from the Greek word “apokalyptō,” which means “to reveal.” Revelation 1:1 tells us what this book is revealing—Jesus! The book is considered apocalyptic literature, which would have been very familiar to a Jewish audience because of some of the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures (e.g., certain chapters of Daniel and Ezekiel) and other extra-biblical Jewish texts (e.g., Enoch).

How can Revelation, a book written to a specific people at a specific time, apply to us today? John’s vision of the future shows us that, although every human kingdom eventually fails, through Jesus, we can find hope for the future. And we can look forward to that future hope by loving people, trusting that God is in control, and doing our best to follow Him. One day, Jesus will return to make everything pure and whole again, and until then, we live on purpose in His mission.

Key Terms

Eschatology is the study of the end times. Its origin is the Greek word “eschatos,” which means “last.”

A **prophecy** is a message or revelation from God delivered through messengers called prophets. In the Bible, the primary purpose of prophecy is less about predicting the future and more about calling wandering people back to God, revealing His will, and offering hope or warning.

In eschatology, the **Tribulation** is a specific and intense period of suffering, often known as the Great Tribulation. There are different views as to whether this is a literal seven-year period in the future, a period that has already historically taken place, or one in which we currently live.

The **Millennium** is the 1,000-year period (literal or symbolic, depending on your view) when Christ will reign and rule on the earth.

The **New Heavens** and **New Earth** refer to the final, eternal state of creation when God restores and renews everything. It’s the ultimate hope.

The **Rapture** refers to a future moment when believers will be taken to heaven to be with the Lord. Interestingly, Revelation does not talk about the rapture. Some teachers think the rapture can be found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17. Even then, other scholars think this text points to resurrection.

Are We Living in the End Times?

So much has been said over the years about how to interpret the signs of the end times. For many, the thought of living in the end times feels scary. Revelation, when not properly understood, can elicit fear. As we read through Revelation in the coming weeks, we're going to read about cosmic wars and battles and plagues and destruction. We're going to encounter blood and martyrdom and visions of nightmarish endings for a multitude of people. It might feel intense.

A few things to consider:

- First, we don't have to fear the events described in Revelation. This book tells us how things will end, and it's a good ending. God's people, everyone who has put their faith in Jesus, will have the joy of spending eternity with Him. Will we experience struggle between now and then? Yes. But knowing the end gives us hope.
- Second, in Revelation, we find that rather than wars or plagues or destruction, it's God whom we should fear. This is a common refrain throughout the Bible, but it's important to remember that fearing God doesn't look like cowering in a corner and hiding from Him. It means trusting Him, respecting Him, and recognizing that He deserves full authority in our lives. He is the one true holy God, and His ways are above our ways (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Revelation is the culmination of all of God's story. Revelation's author, John, lays out a vision of what the future holds, a future made possible because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross.

What is that future? For his audience, the seven churches, John's not pulling any punches. It's a future filled with trials, temptation, struggle, and persecution. People will continue to be martyred for their faith. And if death had the last word, then yes, that would be a terrible end. But death does not get the final say. As was true for John's audience, if we hold on, we can be confident that we will experience the incredible future laid out in Revelation 21 and 22. A future with new bodies to populate the new heavens and new earth with Jesus. A future that will return to God's perfect and original design for humanity. A world without sin.

For now, with the breath we have in our lungs, our job is to live as faithful disciples of the one true King, despite the trials, pain, and suffering. Whatever happens to us, Revelation shows us that everything is under God's control and all will be made right one day.

Reflection

When you think about “the end,” what thoughts or feelings come to mind?

What does “fearing God” look like for you? How does your relationship with fear play into the way you experience your relationship with God?

If the end times worry you, how could you reframe your perspective and bring it into a positive light, in full knowledge of the hope we have? If your posture is already hopeful about the end times, how does that anchor you today?

Prayer Prompt

Spend some time in prayer, telling God how you feel about the end times. If you’re worried, ask Him to bring peace. Be honest about your doubts, and allow Him to deepen your trust in Him. Thank Him for the plans He has for the future and for inviting you to be a part of them.

WEEK 1

Bible Reading Plan

Revelation can be complex. If you'd like to dive deeper, a study Bible with commentary is a great supplementary resource.

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 1:1–3
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 1:4–8
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 1:9–16
- ★ Day 4: Read Revelation 1:17–20
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 1

Prologue

¹ The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Greetings and Doxology

⁴ John,

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

⁷ “Look, he is coming with the clouds,”
and “every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him”;
and all peoples on earth “will
mourn because of him.”
So shall it be! Amen.

⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

John's Vision of Christ

⁹ I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and

patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹ which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

¹² I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

¹⁹ “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

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Do the Letters to the Seven Churches Apply to Us Today?

During Revelation 2–3, Jesus specifically addresses seven churches in Asia Minor. Each letter discusses one or two specific things that the churches were struggling with or going through.

- Ephesus had forsaken their first love for God.
- Smyrna was afraid of suffering.
- Pergamum needed to repent from sexual immorality.
- Thyatira also needed to repent from sexual immorality.
- Sardis had become complacent in their faith.
- Philadelphia needed encouragement to hold firm, even though they were losing strength.
- Laodicea had lukewarm faith.

While the issues were specific to each church (or more specifically, the people who made up each church) at that time, what these letters represent is something we can relate to today. How many of us have become complacent like the church of Sardis, or fear suffering like those in Smyrna? These topics give us a glimpse into the human struggle that spans generations. The call is to acknowledge this struggle and find strength and courage in God through it all.

But these letters aren't only about what the churches were struggling with. Some letters highlight what they were doing well, too. Whether we are struggling and need support or feel we are doing well in a season, God is always calling us to turn to Him.

The letters all follow a similar format:

1. Address: Who is the audience?
2. A description of Christ: What attribute of Christ is most relevant to this audience?
3. What's something the church does well?
4. What's something the church doesn't do well?
5. A call to repentance: How can the church change?
6. A promise from God: What awaits the church once they overcome their struggle?

Have you ever thought about what Jesus might say to you if He were to write you a letter? Let's go there. Check out this week's article on the next page.

What Jesus Might Say to Me

In the book of Revelation, Jesus addressed seven churches, each with its own strengths and struggles. These letters were meant to challenge, encourage, and guide believers to stay faithful in a world pulling them in different directions. They served as a spiritual compass, calling people back to their first love, to truth, and to endurance. His words brought encouragement, correction, and hope to communities navigating persecution, false teachings, and spiritual complacency.

These letters weren't just for ancient churches; they still resonate today, offering reminders to stay rooted in what really matters. So, if Jesus were to write a letter to you, what might He say? Keeping with the format of Revelation 2–3, here's what He might say to some of us:

*To my faithful servant,
These are the words of the One who holds the stars in His hand and walks alongside you each day: I see you. I see the way you show up at work, at school, at home, on the sidelines of the soccer field, and in all the spaces where you're needed. I see how you pour out love for your family, invest in your work, and find ways to serve others. You are doing good work. You haven't given up, even when you're exhausted or wondering if it even matters. And it does. Every bit of it. Yet I hold this against you: Sometimes, in the midst of doing so many things, you lose sight of being with me. The busyness, the noise, the endless to-do lists all make it hard for you to hear my voice. You strive to keep everything running smoothly, but you forget that I'm the one who holds it all together. Come back to me. Not with a perfectly quiet morning or a long checklist of spiritual tasks. Just come as you are. Let's reconnect like we used to.*

Remember this: I didn't ask you to carry it all alone. The work you do as a family member, a coworker, and a friend matters. But it's not meant to drain you. Stay close to me, and I'll renew your strength. Before you pour into everyone else, let me pour into you.

To those who overcome: The one who stays rooted in me, even when life feels chaotic, will find peace that can't be shaken. The moments you think go unnoticed, like the whispered prayers over your family, the grace you extend when you're running on fumes, the ways you live out your faith in quiet—I see it all. Keep going, but don't go it alone. I'm with you always.

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit is saying.

Life comes at us fast, and it's easy to get caught up in the rush of daily tasks, meetings at work, and seemingly endless obligations. But it's in the ordinary moments that Jesus invites us to pause and remember: We don't have to carry it all alone.

He offers us something different: A relationship grounded in rest, trust, and connection with Him. He's not asking us to do more; He's inviting us to be with Him, sit, even if just for a moment, and breathe in the peace of His presence. As you consider this letter, ask yourself: What might shift if you started from a place of abiding instead of striving? And what small step could you take today to simply be with Him?

Now, it's your turn! Sometime this week, take time to pause, pray, and ask God about what He would say today to you. Then, in your own words, but from God's perspective, write a letter to yourself.

Here's the framework reformatted for you:

1. Address: How would Jesus address you?
2. A description of Christ: What attribute of Christ is most relevant to you?
3. What's something you do well?
4. What's something you struggle with or need to change?
5. A call to repentance: How can you grow or change?
6. A promise from God: What awaits you once you overcome this struggle?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing a letter to oneself based on the provided framework.

Reflection

How can you pray for Willow?

How can you pray for the church in America and globally?

What steps are you going to take to pursue the abiding life God wants for you?

Find some verses in the Bible to remind you of who Jesus is in your life.

Prayer Prompt

This week, pray for our church. Pray for our pastors, staff members, volunteers, and attenders. Ask that God would fill the church with love for one another and a renewed passion for sharing the good news of Jesus with people in our community and around the world.

WEEK 2

Bible Reading Plan

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 2:1–11
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 2:12–29
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 3:1–13
- ★ Day 4: Read Revelation 3:14–22
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 2 & 3

To the Church in Ephesus

² “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. ² I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³ You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

⁴ Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.

⁵ Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. ⁶ But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

To the Church in Smyrna

⁸ “To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. ⁹ I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.

¹¹ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

To the Church in Pergamum

¹² “To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. ¹³ I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

¹⁴ Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

¹⁷ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

To the Church in Thyatira

¹⁸ “To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

¹⁹ I know your deeds, your love and

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faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

²⁰ Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. ²² So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. ²³ I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

²⁴ Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets, 'I will not impose any other burden on you, ²⁵ except to hold on to what you have until I come.'

²⁶ To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— ²⁷ that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ I will also give that one the morning star. ²⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the Church in Sardis

☞ "To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight

of my God. ³ Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

⁴ Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. ⁶ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the Church in Philadelphia

⁷ "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. ⁸ I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹² The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God

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and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name.
¹³ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the Church in Laodicea

¹⁴ “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. ¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

¹⁹ Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.
²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

²¹ To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.
²² Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

What Will Heaven Be Like?

It's worth pondering, right?

In comparison to eternity, our time on earth is very, very short.

If we've put our faith in Jesus, life after death will be spent in a place set apart for us with God.

Will heaven be up in the clouds?

Will there be pearly gates?

Will angels be constantly playing the harp?

Is there something beyond heaven that we have to look forward to?

We'll save that last question for later, but for now, John gives us a picture of what heaven will really be like.

According to Revelation 4–5, heaven will be a place of majestic beauty, glorious presence, and unceasing worship, joy, and celebration, with all eyes on the King sitting on the throne.

Notice what John wants readers to see: Everyone and everything in heaven is focused on Jesus. He's the only One worthy to open the sealed scroll—the scroll that will bring God's full judgment and redemption to the world.

On this side of heaven, how often do we focus our eyes and attention on other, less worthy thrones? Things like sports, fashion, social media, and even relationships? But there's a better way for us to live.

Throughout Revelation, John doesn't encourage us to skip over life now so we can get to heaven. No, he wants the future vision, a vision of Jesus on the throne and God's coming kingdom, to inspire our present life today. In fact, because of the Holy Spirit living in believers, it's possible for us to bring God's kingdom to earth. That's one of John's primary messages. Why? Because that's what Jesus wanted for His followers, too.

What does it mean to bring God's kingdom to earth?

When we choose to follow the way of Jesus this side of eternity, we bring heaven to earth. We don't have to wait to worship God; we can do that now. We don't have to wait to create beauty and to celebrate; we can do that now. We don't have to wait to find unity and purpose; we can work toward those things today.

Every time we do, we're making the world a little bit more like God's kingdom. We're bringing heaven to earth.

10 Reasons Why the Hope of Heaven Is for Today

The hope of heaven often feels distant and sort of unreal, like a far-off dream. But that hope is grounded in the reality of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This hope is not just a future expectation; it's a present reality. The hope of heaven is a hope we can live in today, and here are 10 reasons why:

THE HOPE OF HEAVEN BRINGS US ...

Daily Peace | John 16:33

We can live in peace every day because we no longer have to fear death or what comes after. We're not stepping into the unknown but into a place promised to be far greater than anything this earth or our imagination can offer. We can have peace knowing we don't have to earn salvation because it is freely given to us.

Purposeful Life | Matthew 28:19

Before Jesus ascended, He commanded His followers to go and make disciples of all nations. While we all share the same purpose, the way we fulfill it will look different. Our unique gifts and circumstances shape how we spread the message of hope and love. How can you step into that purpose today?

Accessible Joy | Romans 15:13

The joy of heaven isn't dependent on life going exactly how we want it to. It is rooted in something far more lasting: the God who generously pours out joy and peace as we trust Him. This is a promise we can always cling to, no matter what comes our way.

Fresh Perspective | Ecclesiastes 3

Heaven gives us a new perspective, helping us see that both our greatest joys and biggest struggles have purpose. This perspective invites us to trust that every season we go through serves a purpose in God's larger plan. When we view life through the lens of eternity, we can take comfort in knowing that everything, whether joyful or sorrowful, has its place.

Comfort in Grief | Psalm 34:18

The hope of heaven allows us to find comfort in inevitable grief. It assures us that, even in our moments of sorrow, we have a God who draws near to us and a community of believers, too. Because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, we are never truly alone. His Spirit abides in us, providing strength, healing, and comfort.

Impactful Generosity | Matthew 6:19-21

Jesus tells us to store up treasures in heaven because they are eternal. Earthly treasures, whether wealth, status, or possessions, are temporary. They can be lost, get old, deteriorate, or be destroyed. But heavenly treasures, like the way you treat others, build God's kingdom, and grow your relationship with Jesus, have a lasting impact. When we focus on things that align with God's kingdom, we store up treasures that bring eternal rewards and shift our hearts toward what truly matters, and that can impact our contentment today, too.

Strong Faith | Hebrews 11:1

Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we don't see. The Bible gives us glimpses of heaven, like streets of gold and no more pain. But heaven is far greater than anything we can imagine. God's promises have never failed, and the promise of heaven is no exception.

Realigned Priorities | Matthew 6:33

Our priorities change when we recognize that our time on earth is short but full of purpose. This knowledge helps us live in a way that reflects the eternal hope that Jesus offers, prompting us to invest our time and resources accordingly. Practically, this looks like letting go of worry, trusting deeply as we grow in our relationship with Jesus, and living with our eyes fixed on God's kingdom.

Increased Gratitude | Hebrews 12:28

The hope of heaven fosters gratitude. Despite our sinful nature, God desires to spend eternity with us. We are no longer separated by sin and have the promise of eternity in a place free from pain, sorrow, suffering, loss, and heartbreak—where only His perfect love remains.

Motivation to Persevere | James 1:2-4

Because of Jesus' resurrection, we can look forward to an eternity with Him, where there will be no more pain or tears. We can live each day with the assurance that the suffering we endure now is temporary. He even says to consider it pure joy when we face trials. This doesn't make them easier, but we can find joy knowing God is shaping and refining us for something far greater.

Reflection

When you think of heaven, what do you picture?

**Bonus: If art is your thing (or even if it isn't!), take some time to draw, paint, or make a collage of what you're visualizing. It'll be beautiful.*



What are some ways you can practically bring heaven to earth here and now?

What are you most looking forward to about heaven?

Prayer Prompt

Be honest with God about how you're feeling about heaven. Are you looking forward to it? Does it sound intimidating or boring? Allow Him to increase your hope and excitement for being with Him there, while still living with purpose and reflecting His kingdom here and now.



WEEK 3

Bible Reading Plan

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 4:1–6
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 4:7–11
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 5:1–10
- ★ Day 4: Read Revelation 5:11–14
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 4 & 5

The Throne in Heaven

⁴ After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. ⁶ Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

"Holy, holy, holy

is the Lord God Almighty,

who was, and is, and is to come."

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four

elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

¹¹ "You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being."

The Scroll and the Lamb

⁵ Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense,

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which are the prayers of God's people.
⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you
purchased for God
persons from every tribe and
language and people and nation.
¹⁰ You have made them to be a
kingdom and priests to serve
our God,
and they will reign on the earth.”

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice
of many angels, numbering thousands
upon thousands, and ten thousand
times ten thousand. They encircled
the throne and the living creatures
and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice
they were saying:

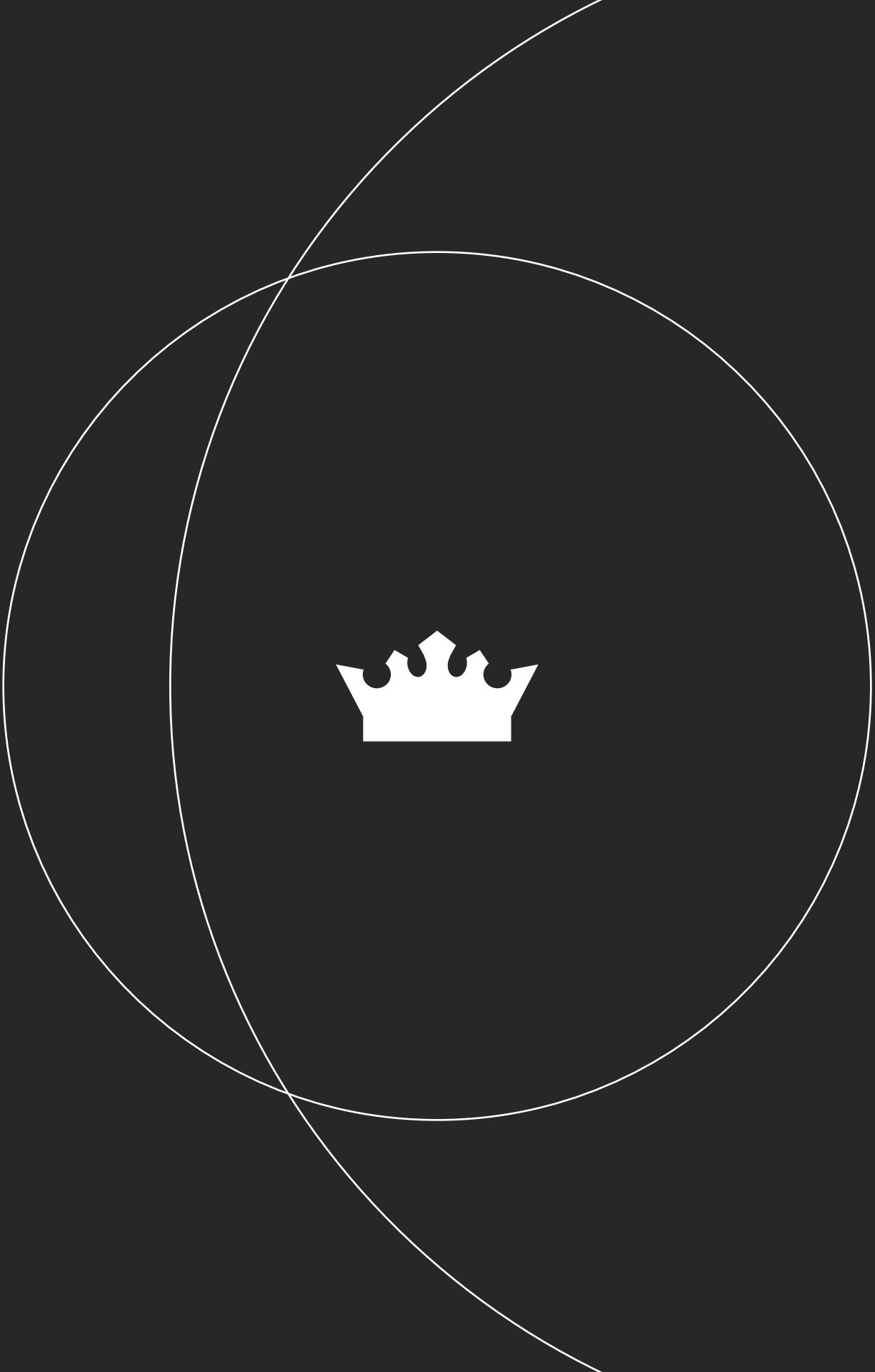
“Worthy is the Lamb, who
was slain,
to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory
and praise!”

¹³ Then I heard every creature in
heaven and on earth and under the
earth and on the sea, and all that is in
them, saying:

“To him who sits on the throne and
to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory
and power, for ever and ever!”

¹⁴ The four living creatures said,
“Amen,” and the elders fell down
and worshiped.

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Peace When the Future Feels Scary

In Revelation 6, we encounter some of the most intense imagery in the Bible as the Tribulation gets underway. As the first six seals are opened, John describes four horsemen who bring conquest, war, famine, and death. We also see disturbances in the sky and people hiding in fear from the judgment of God.

As we noted earlier in this study, reading about coming cosmic wars, plagues, and destruction can naturally elicit fear. And when we look at the world today—with its devastating earthquakes, wars, and senseless tragedies—it's easy to wonder if we are on a trajectory bound for complete devastation.

But in the middle of this chaos, Revelation 7 offers a profound shift in perspective.

Before the final seal is opened, everything pauses as God marks and protects His servants. John then sees a vast multitude of people from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne in heaven, worshipping God and the Lamb. These people have lived through the devastation of the first six seals, and God comforts them, promising to wipe away their tears.

The juxtaposition of these two chapters shows us a powerful truth: Even in upheaval, God knows His own and promises them eternal protection. We will inevitably face trials, persecution, and suffering in this broken world, but we are secure in Jesus. When the future feels frightening or out of control, we don't need to cower in a corner. Instead, we can anchor our hearts to the truth that God is fair, compassionate, and just.

Our ultimate hope isn't found in a world without trouble; it's found in the presence of the One sitting on the throne. Because of what Jesus accomplished, we can stand firm in the mess, knowing that now and in the end, God is in control, and we can have confidence in His plan.

What Is the Tribulation?

Tribulation. It's a big word. In Revelation, it refers to a specific and intense seven-year period of suffering in the last days. Often, it's known as the Great Tribulation.

When will the Tribulation happen, and what will it be like? These are two hotly debated topics in some Christian circles. And while there are plenty of interpretations, the truth is, no one knows for sure.

Here are a few of the most common theories concerning the Tribulation:

Pre-Tribulation: This is the belief that Christians will be raptured (taken to heaven) before the Tribulation begins. According to this view, Christians will be spared from the seven-year period of God's wrath and judgment on earth.

Post-Tribulation: This is the belief that Christians will endure the entire Tribulation and be raptured at its conclusion, which will be the time of Jesus' return.

Preterist View: This is the belief that the events in Revelation have already happened and were a warning to the early church.

Historicist View: This is the belief that the Tribulation represents a symbolic period of church history rather than a literal seven-year period. It may represent decades or even centuries of persecution.

In this study, you'll encounter seven seals, seven bowls, and seven trumpets. Each of these symbolizes God's divine judgments on earth.

It's a lot to read and try to comprehend.

A few things to consider:

- Several of these symbols are connected to an Old Testament Scripture and prophecy, many of which would have been familiar to first-century Jewish readers.
- There are many different ways to interpret what exactly these judgments mean.
- Being a follower of Jesus and having faith in God does not spare one from suffering and persecution. In fact, we have put our faith in the One who willingly suffered to pay for our sin.
- God is compassionate and just—He provides specific and merciful protections for those who depend on Him.

The point is: Before the end, there will be pain, suffering, and persecution. But God will offer people repeated opportunities to turn to Him and find refuge.

If you want to understand this more, we highly recommend watching The Bible Project's videos on Revelation, found on both YouTube and BibleProject.com.

Reflection

When you read about the intense events and judgments found in Revelation 6, what feelings or thoughts come to mind? How do you usually handle fear or uncertainty about the future?

Read Revelation 7:9–17. How does the image of the great multitude worshipping God—completely comforted and protected—shift your perspective on the trials we face today?

Are there areas in your life right now where the future feels scary or uncertain? How can you trust God's promise of eternal protection in those specific situations this week?

Prayer Prompt

Spend a few minutes being honest with God about the things that make you feel anxious or afraid about the future. Ask Him to replace those fears with His peace. Thank Him that even when the world feels chaotic, He knows you, is in control, and promises eternal protection.

WEEK 4

Bible Reading Plan

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 6:1–8
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 6:9–17
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 7:1–8
- ★ Day 4: Read Revelation 7:9–17
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 6 & 7

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The Seals

6 I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!"² I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

³ When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"⁴ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.

⁵ When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand.⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

⁷ When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"⁸ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

¹¹ Then each of them was given a white

robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.

¹² I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.

¹⁴ The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"

144,000 Sealed

7 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree.

² Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea:³ "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."

⁴ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

⁵ From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed,

from the tribe of Reuben 12,000,
from the tribe of Gad 12,000,
⁶ from the tribe of Asher 12,000,
from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000,
from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000,
⁷ from the tribe of Simeon 12,000,
from the tribe of Levi 12,000,
from the tribe of Issachar 12,000,
⁸ from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000,
from the tribe of Joseph 12,000,
from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

The Great Multitude in White Robes

⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:

“Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵ Therefore,

“they are before the throne of God
and serve him day and night in
his temple;
and he who sits on the throne
will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ ‘Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.

The sun will not beat down on them,
nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of
the throne

will be their shepherd;
‘he will lead them to springs of living
water.’

‘And God will wipe away every tear
from their eyes.’”

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Do Our Prayers Make a Difference?

In Revelation 8–11, we encounter the sounding of the seven trumpets, which symbolize God’s divine judgments on the earth. As we read through these chapters and see the intense consequences of people’s sin and rebellion, it is easy to look at the brokenness of our own world and wonder: Why doesn’t God put a stop to sin now? When is He going to fix this?

But before a single trumpet is blown, Revelation 8 gives us a breathtaking glimpse into heaven. An angel stands at the altar, and the smoke of incense rises before God—mingled directly with the prayers of His people.

If you have ever wondered if your prayers matter (or if they are just bouncing off the ceiling), this passage gives you your answer. Your prayers are an active part of God’s divine plan to set things right. They are not forgotten; they are collected, valued, and responded to by the Creator of the universe.

When God’s timing feels slow to us, we have to remember that God’s justice and mercy are constantly at work. Yes, God is fair and just, meaning there are specific judgments for evil and rebellion. But He is also incredibly merciful. His patience now and the pauses and delays we see in Revelation aren’t accidental; they are moments of grace. God intentionally offers people every possible chance to turn to Him.

Revelation repeatedly reminds us that being a follower of Jesus doesn’t spare us from the suffering of this world. Jesus suffered during His time on earth and told us we could expect times of trouble, too. But we can trust that our prayers are heard and that God is actively working behind the scenes. Even when it feels like the world is spinning out of control, remember the central message of this book: Now and in the end, God is in control, and we can have confidence in His plan.

Reflection

Picture your prayers rising before God. How does the imagery in Revelation 8 change the way you view your daily conversations with Him?

In what areas in your life or in the world does God's timing feel slow?

How does understanding God's delay as an act of mercy—giving people more time to turn to Him—shift your perspective on His timeline?

Prayer Prompt

Take a few quiet moments to bring your heaviest burdens and deepest requests to God. As you pray, visualize those prayers rising like incense, directly to His throne. Thank Him that He is a God of perfect justice and endless mercy. Ask Him for patience to trust His timing, knowing that He hears you and is actively working to make all things new.

WEEK 5

Bible Reading Plan

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 8
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 9
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 10
- ✧ Day 4: Read Revelation 11
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 8–11

The Seventh Seal and the Golden Censer

8 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

² And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

³ Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. ⁴ The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. ⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

The Trumpets

⁶ Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

⁷ The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

⁸ The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, ⁹ a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

¹⁰ The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a

third of the rivers and on the springs of water— ¹¹ the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.

¹² The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

¹³ As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"

9 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. ² When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. ³ And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. ⁴ They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. ⁶ During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

⁷ The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of

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gold, and their faces resembled human faces.⁸ Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.

⁹ They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle.¹⁰ They had tails with stingers, like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.¹¹ They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer).

¹² The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

¹³ The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God.¹⁴ It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."¹⁵ And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind.¹⁶ The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number.

¹⁷ The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur.¹⁸ A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths.¹⁹ The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.

²⁰ The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk.

²¹ Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

The Angel and the Little Scroll

¹⁰ Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.² He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,³ and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.⁴ And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

⁵ Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven.⁶ And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay!"⁷ But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

⁸ Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

⁹ So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but 'in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.'"¹⁰ I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour.¹¹ Then I was told,

“You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.”

The Two Witnesses

¹¹ I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. ² But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. ³ And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” ⁴ They are “the two olive trees” and the two lampstands, and “they stand before the Lord of the earth.” ⁵ If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. ⁶ They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

⁷ Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. ⁸ Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹ For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. ¹⁰ The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

¹¹ But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. ¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

¹³ At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

¹⁴ The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

The Seventh Trumpet

¹⁵ The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,
and he will reign for ever and ever.”

¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying:

“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.
¹⁸ The nations were angry,
and your wrath has come.
The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your people who revere your name,
both great and small—
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.

¹⁹ Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.

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Strength When You Feel Under Attack

In Revelation 12–14, the curtain is pulled back to reveal the spiritual realities behind our earthly struggles. John describes a massive battle featuring a dragon, beasts, and intense opposition directed against God’s people. These words remind us that, as followers of Jesus, we have a spiritual enemy.

Have you ever felt like you were facing opposition? Maybe you’ve experienced a barrage of doubts, a season of relentless anxiety, tension in your most important relationships, or direct pushback for standing up for your convictions. In those moments, the struggle can feel real and heavy.

But right in the middle of the spiritual warfare described in Revelation, we are given a moment of hope. Revelation 12:11 says:

“They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”

This passage describes how Christians overcome the work of the accuser, Satan. Notice, this triumph doesn’t happen because these believers were perfect, or by their own willpower or ability to fight their way out. They overcame by the *blood of the Lamb*.

Jesus has already won the ultimate victory on the cross. The enemy we face is loud and intimidating, but when we face opposition, it’s important to remember Satan is ultimately a defeated enemy.

Revelation 12:11 also tells us that these Christians overcame by the *word of their testimony*. When we feel under attack, we can push back by remembering and declaring how God has been faithful in the past. Our stories are powerful weapons against present fear.

As you read through these intense chapters, remember the core promise of this entire study: Now and in the end, God is in control, and we can have confidence in His plan. Because Jesus has already secured the final victory, we don’t have to fight *for* victory, we fight *from* victory. We can stand firm in the struggle, knowing that no matter how fierce the opposition we face might feel today, one day everything will be made right.

The Power of Your Testimony

If you have ever felt like you were facing opposition, you'll understand the temptation to fight your battles in your own power, trying to muscle your way back to peace. But Revelation gives us a different way to respond.

Revelation 12:11 tells us that our enemy is defeated by “the blood of the lamb” and “the word of their testimony.”

Don't overlook that last part. Our personal stories of God's faithfulness are a powerful weapon against our spiritual enemy. When you feel under attack—or even discouraged or devalued—your testimony is undeniable proof of God's goodness in your life.

How often have you shared your testimony? Do you know how to summarize it? Do you reflect back on it when doubts creep in? Try writing it out this week using these three simple steps:

1. Life before God's peace: What did your life, mindsets, or heart look like before you fully surrendered to Jesus—or before He brought you through a particularly challenging season?
2. The turning point: How did God intervene? Was it a realization during a church service, a prayer He answered, or a slow, steady building of trust?
3. How He sustains you now: What difference does Jesus make in your life today? How does His presence give you strength, even when life is still hard?

Yes, the world is broken, and the chaos of life can feel overwhelming. But when we face opposition, remembering what God has already done is the best way to anchor our hearts. Evil doesn't get the final say. Your testimony is the living proof of God's victory in your own life.



The Mark of the Counterfeit

Over the years, there has been much confusion around Revelation 13. Who are these beasts, and what is this mark that John is writing about?

If we want to wrap our minds around this chapter, it's important to remember that Revelation was written to a first-century audience who was accustomed to this style of writing. Reading these verses from a modern perspective won't necessarily serve us well—instead, we'll be better served by allowing the text to speak for itself.

Revelation 13 introduces us to two symbolic figures—the beast of the sea and the beast of the earth. Together with the dragon introduced in chapter 12, they seek to lead the people of the world (which means non-believers) astray. Some scholars see these figures as an “unholy trinity,” and it's important for us to be familiar with these three figures as we consider the mark of the beast.

Why? Because if we flip back a few chapters to Revelation 7:3–4, we read that God's angel commanded believers to be marked. This mark signified that the believers belonged to God and were, therefore, under His protection.

With this in mind, many believe that the mark of the beast is an attempt by the “unholy trinity” to look like God to people who don't believe in God. The mark of the beast is most likely not an actual physical mark but a spiritual one. Believers in Jesus have been sealed (protected) and will not receive the mark of the beast.

You may still be asking yourself, what does 666 have to do with all this? Here are two possible explanations:

1. In Greek and Hebrew, letters also had numerical values. This means a number like 666 could be “spelled” using letters. Some scholars believe that when you do this, 666 corresponds to “Nero Caesar,” a Roman emperor known for his intense and grotesque persecution of Christians. If so, this would have been a subtle way for John to point to a real political power that demanded worship and opposed God's people, without naming him directly.
2. Others suggest that the number is more symbolic. In Scripture, 7 often represents completeness or perfection. If that is true, then 6 falls short. While 777 could represent perfection and the fullness of God, 666 may represent the totality of what is incomplete or counterfeit. Some see it as a representative of the unholy trinity, a distorted imitation of God that looks powerful but ultimately falls short.

In both cases, the message is similar. 666 is less about a number to decode and more about a warning. It points to the reality that there are powers and systems in the world that seek our ultimate allegiance, but can never truly offer what only God can.

Reflection

Where in your life do you currently feel “under attack” or overwhelmed by a struggle?

Revelation 12:11 says we overcome “by the word of [our] testimony.” What is one specific story of God’s faithfulness in your life that you can use to remind yourself of His goodness this week?

How does remembering that Jesus has *already* won the ultimate victory change the way you respond to opposition, fear, or spiritual warfare?

Prayer Prompt

Bring the struggles and obstacles you are facing to God. Ask Him to show you His presence in the midst of them and remind you of the victory you have in Jesus. Take time to reflect on your testimony and God’s faithfulness in your life, thanking Him and asking Him to allow it to strengthen you. Pray for opportunities to allow your testimony to not only encourage you, but to encourage others, too.

WEEK 6

Bible Reading Plan

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 12
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 13
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 14:1–13
- ★ Day 4: Read Revelation 14:14–20
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 12–14

The Woman and the Dragon

¹² A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. ² She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. ³ Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. ⁴ Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born. ⁵ She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. ⁶ The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

⁷ Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have come the salvation
and the power
and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his
Messiah.
For the accuser of our brothers
and sisters,
who accuses them before our

God day and night,
has been hurled down.
¹¹ They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their
testimony;
they did not love their lives
so much

as to shrink from death.
¹² Therefore rejoice, you
heavens
and you who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and
the sea,
because the devil has gone
down to you!
He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his
time is short.”

¹³ When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ¹⁴ The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach. ¹⁵ Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus.

The Beast out of the Sea

¹³ The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each

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head a blasphemous name.² The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.³ One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast.

⁴ People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?”

⁵ The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months.⁶ It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.⁷ It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.⁸ All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear.

¹⁰ “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go.

If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed.”

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God’s people.

The Beast out of the Earth

¹¹ Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon.¹² It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.¹³ And it

performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people.¹⁴ Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.¹⁵ The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.¹⁶ It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads,¹⁷ so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

¹⁸ This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.

The Lamb and the 144,000

¹⁴ Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.² And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.³ And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.⁴ These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.⁵ No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

The Three Angels

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. ⁷ He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

⁸ A second angel followed and said, “‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,’ which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”

⁹ A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, ¹⁰ they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.” ¹² This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.

¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.”

Harvesting the Earth and Trampling the Winepress

¹⁴ I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his

hand. ¹⁵ Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, “Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” ¹⁶ So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

¹⁷ Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, “Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.” ¹⁹ The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. ²⁰ They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

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Confidence When the World Shakes

As we reach Revelation 15 and 16, we encounter the final series of judgments: the seven bowls of God's wrath. The pouring out of these bowls results in some intense imagery. Reading about these devastating plagues and worldwide disruptions can make us feel uncomfortable, and these chapters can lead us to a difficult but honest question: How do we reconcile a loving God with such severe *judgment*?

The answer lies in understanding the true nature of what John is describing.

First, God's judgment is not random or cruel. There is no spite or hate in His wrath as it's poured out. What we see in these verses is pure and sinless, priestly in its function, and matchless in its integrity. Unlike the rulers of the earth who may judge from fear, or to be cruel, or cause harm, He judges to bring about the ultimate justice.

Second, God is taking action to set things right. We live in a world scarred by sin, rebellion, and injustice. If God were to ignore this evil forever, He wouldn't be truly good or just. The judgments poured out in these chapters are God's response to the evil that has plagued humanity since Adam and Eve left Eden. Here, in Revelation, God is rooting out darkness in its entirety so He can usher in the ultimate hope of the new heavens and new earth—a place where goodness and righteousness reign, and He is always near.

God is compassionate and just. Before these final bowls are poured out, He offers people every possible chance to turn back to Him.

For those who have put their faith in Jesus, these chapters do not need to elicit panic. On the contrary, they can bring a deep sense of relief—and just as deep, a desire to share the love of Jesus with those around us. We'll dive more into sharing the love of God with others in Week 10. In the meantime, we can be encouraged that just as we discussed in Week 5, our prayers for those we love to find Jesus do not go unheard. And so, we keep praying and keep asking the Holy Spirit to move in their lives. We cannot be our loved ones Holy Spirit, but we can intercede for them and believe that God will move on their behalf. When the world shakes, we can have confidence because we know our future is secure.

Reflection

How does viewing God’s judgment as Him “taking action to set things right” change the way you read the intense imagery in Revelation 15 and 16?

When the world around you feels like it is shaking or out of control, where do you turn for security or comfort?

How does knowing that God is compassionate and just give you confidence to face the uncertainties of your everyday life?

Prayer Prompt

Spend some time today thanking God for His perfect justice. Be honest about the things in the world that make you feel like the ground is shaking, and ask Him to replace your worry with peace. Thank Him that His judgments are not cruel—they are the necessary steps to make all things new, and your eternity is secure in His hands.

WEEK 7

Bible Reading Plan

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 15:1–4
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 15:5–8
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 16:1–7
- ✦ Day 4: Read Revelation 16:8–21
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 15 & 16

Seven Angels With Seven Plagues

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¹ I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God’s wrath is completed. ² And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God ³ and sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb:

“Great and marvelous are your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
King of the nations.
⁴ Who will not fear you, Lord,
and bring glory to your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been
revealed.”

⁵ After this I looked, and I saw in heaven the temple—that is, the tabernacle of the covenant law—and it was opened. ⁶ Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. ⁷ Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever.

⁸ And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

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The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

¹ Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."

² The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

³ The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died.

⁴ The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵ Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say:

"You are just in these judgments,
O Holy One,

you who are and who were;

⁶ for they have shed the blood
of your holy people and your
prophets,

and you have given them blood
to drink as they deserve."

⁷ And I heard the altar respond:

"Yes, Lord God Almighty,
true and just are your
judgments."

⁸ The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹ They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.

¹⁰ The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony

¹¹ and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. ¹³ Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

¹⁵ "Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed."

¹⁶ Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

¹⁷ The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸ Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. ¹⁹ The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰ Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. ²¹ From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.



The Allure of False Promises

As we move into Revelation 17 and 18, John's vision shifts to the dramatic fall of "Babylon." In John's time, Babylon was most likely Rome—the oppressive, persecuting, ruling powerhouse in the region. For John and his readers, Babylon had always represented the corrupt and seductive systems of the world that offered false promises like safety, success, and pleasure. This city is depicted as wealthy, powerful, and deeply alluring—which is exactly why so many people fall to its charms.

Whether in big ways or small ways, we all know what it's like to fall for the false promises of the world (our own Babylons). We grip tightly to our bank accounts, career status, the approval of others, or personal comforts, believing these things will keep us safe and secure. But the destruction detailed in these chapters reveals the truth: These are false securities that will not stand in the end. When the world's systems collapse, anything we have built our ultimate hope on (other than Jesus) will fall right alongside them.

That's why God's message to us in these chapters is urgent and loving. He calls us to release our grip on these false securities. He invites us to step away from the alluring traps of the culture around us and find true, lasting freedom in Him.

Releasing our grip on the things we can physically see and touch requires trust. But remember the core conviction of this entire study: If we end this book with anything but hope, we're reading it wrong. We can boldly let go of the world's empty promises because we know that we can look forward to a future of profound fulfillment, joy, and peace.

Drawing Closer to God Through Fasting

In this week's devotional, we talked about the importance of turning away from the world's false promises and finding lasting freedom in our relationship with God. But how do we experience this freedom? What practical steps can we take in our lives today to more deeply depend on God?

This is where spiritual practices can be helpful. These disciplines have been used by Christians for the past 2,000 years to incline their hearts toward God. And fasting—the practice of giving up things that might be distracting us from God to lean into our relationship with Him—can be a great practice when we want to be more mindful of His presence.

What does biblical fasting look like? Here's a simple guide to help you get started.

1. **Choose a fast.** There are lots of things you can fast from, like social media, sugar, caffeine, or streaming services. Think about what might be distracting you from God and commit to giving it up for a period of time.

An important note: If you've never fasted from food and you'd like to do so for the first time, talk to a medical professional. They can help you decide what type of fast would be best for you.

2. **Make a plan.** Once you decide on a fast, start planning! Decide what dates will work best for your fast and give the important people in your life a heads-up. They can help you remain committed to your fast.

3. **Begin your fast.** As you start, the first few hours will probably feel normal, especially if you're fasting food. But eventually, you'll start to feel uncomfortable. When you are tempted to break your fast by reaching for a snack or turning to your phone and pulling up social media, remember: This is an opportunity to lean into God. Talk to Him about what's on your heart and give Him your full attention. This is what your fast is all about.

4. **Finish well.** Experience the joy that comes with breaking your fast. Fasts aren't easy, and you should celebrate reaching the finish line. So go to your favorite restaurant, get some ice cream, or reach out to your friends on social media.

Then reflect on your fast. Ask yourself a few questions like:
*What about my fast went well? What would I do differently next time?
How did I grow closer to God through this practice?*

Reflection

What “false promises” are most tempting in your life? Where do you look to find your safety, comfort, or worth outside of God?

Why do you think the temptations of the world (like wealth, status, or control) often look so good and feel so difficult to release?

How does knowing that these earthly systems “will not stand in the end” help you find the freedom to loosen your grip on them today?

Prayer Prompt

Spend some time asking God to search your heart and reveal any false promises you are tightly holding onto. Be honest with Him about the temptations that look good to you right now. Ask Him for the courage and freedom to release your grip on those things, and pray that He would replace your reliance on the world with a deeper trust in His eternal promises.

WEEK 8

Bible Reading Plan

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 17:1–6
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 17:7–18
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 18:1–20
- ★ Day 4: Read Revelation 18:21–24
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 17 & 18

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Babylon, the Prostitute on the Beast

¹⁷ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. ² With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”

³ Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵ The name written on her forehead was a mystery:

BABYLON THE GREAT

THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES

AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF
THE EARTH.

⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.

⁷ Then the angel said to me: “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. ⁸ The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

⁹ “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. ¹¹ The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

¹² “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.

¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.

¹⁴ They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

¹⁵ Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. ¹⁶ The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled. ¹⁸ The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

Lament Over Fallen Babylon

¹⁸ After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. ² With a mighty voice he shouted:

“‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon
the Great!’

She has become a dwelling
for demons and a haunt for every
impure spirit,

a haunt for every unclean bird,
a haunt for every unclean and
detestable animal.

³ For all the nations have drunk
the maddening wine of her
adulteries.

The kings of the earth committed
adultery with her,

and the merchants of the earth grew
rich from her excessive luxuries.”

Warning to Escape Babylon's Judgment

⁴ Then I heard another voice from heaven
say:

“Come out of her, my people,
so that you will not share in her sins,
so that you will not receive any of
her plagues;

⁵ for her sins are piled up to heaven,
and God has remembered
her crimes.

⁶ Give back to her as she has given;
pay her back double for what she
has done.

Pour her a double portion from her
own cup.

⁷ Give her as much torment and grief
as the glory and luxury she gave
herself. In her heart she boasts,

‘I sit enthroned as queen.
I am not a widow;
I will never mourn.’

⁸ Therefore in one day her plagues will
overtake her:

death, mourning and famine.
She will be consumed by fire,
for mighty is the Lord God who
judges her.

Threefold Woe Over Babylon's Fall

⁹ “When the kings of the earth who
committed adultery with her and shared her
luxury see the smoke of her burning, they
will weep and mourn over her. ¹⁰ Terrified at
her torment, they will stand far off and cry:

“Woe! Woe to you, great city,

you mighty city of Babylon!
In one hour your doom has come!”

¹¹ “The merchants of the earth will weep
and mourn over her because no one buys
their cargoes anymore— ¹² cargoes of
gold, silver, precious stones and pearls;
fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth;
every sort of citron wood, and articles of
every kind made of ivory, costly wood,
bronze, iron and marble; ¹³ cargoes of
cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and
frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine
flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses
and carriages; and human beings sold as
slaves.

¹⁴ “They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is
gone from you. All your luxury and splendor
have vanished, never to be recovered.’

¹⁵ The merchants who sold these things and
gained their wealth from her will stand far
off, terrified at her torment. They will weep
and mourn ¹⁶ and cry out:

“Woe! Woe to you, great city,
dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet,
and glittering with gold, precious stones
and pearls!

¹⁷ In one hour such great wealth has been
brought to ruin!”

“Every sea captain, and all who travel by
ship, the sailors, and all who earn their
living from the sea, will stand far off.

¹⁸ When they see the smoke of her burning,
they will exclaim, ‘Was there ever a city
like this great city?’ ¹⁹ They will throw dust
on their heads, and with weeping and
mourning cry out:

“Woe! Woe to you, great city,
where all who had ships on the sea
became rich through her wealth!
In one hour she has been brought
to ruin!”

²⁰ “Rejoice over her, you heavens!
Rejoice, you people of God!
Rejoice, apostles and prophets!
For God has judged her

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with the judgment she imposed
on you.”

The Finality of Babylon's Doom

²¹ Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder
the size of a large millstone and threw it into
the sea, and said:

“With such violence
the great city of Babylon will be
thrown down,

never to be found again.

²² The music of harpists and musicians,
pipers and trumpeters,

will never be heard in you again.

No worker of any trade

will ever be found in you again.

The sound of a millstone

will never be heard in you again.

²³ The light of a lamp

will never shine in you again.

The voice of bridegroom and bride

will never be heard in you again.

Your merchants were the world's
important people.

By your magic spell all the nations
were led astray.

²⁴ In her was found the blood of prophets
and of God's holy people,

of all who have been slaughtered on
the earth.”

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When Will Jesus Return?

If we're going to talk about the Tribulation, we have to talk about the Millennium. The Millennium is a 1,000-year period when Christ will reign and rule on earth.

Like the Tribulation, there are many different opinions on when the Millennium will happen. Here are the most common:

Premillennialism: This belief comes from a literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1–6. It states that Jesus' return will follow the Tribulation and usher in the Millennium before the eventual complete renewal of all things. Many who hold this view believe that the Rapture will occur prior to the Tribulation, removing Christians from the picture until the onset of the Millennium—which ends in the eventual complete renewal of all things with the new heavens and new earth.

Amillennialism: This is the belief that the 1,000-year reign of Christ is symbolic and happening now. It was ushered in when Jesus came to live on earth, died, and was resurrected. Satan is bound, yet sin is still present and active. We live in the tension of the “already/not yet”—Christ is currently reigning as King, but we are waiting for His return for the full realization of His kingdom in the new heavens and new earth.

Postmillennialism: This is the belief that Jesus will return once the earth comes as close as it can to God's kingdom. In other words, Jesus will return after more and more people come to faith in Him. It's an optimistic view that the earth is trending towards God, not evil, and eventually, once all people are saved (or have the opportunity to be saved), then Jesus will return and bring the new heavens and new earth. It does not adhere to a literal interpretation of a 1,000-year Millennium.

*So the question is: When will Jesus return?
The answer: YES!*

Wait, that wasn't an answer to the question. We know. What matters most is that, one day, Jesus will return. The exact timing is less important than making sure we are ready for Him. Because on that day, a new era will be ushered in for those who have put their faith in Him. That is why our job as followers of Christ is to grow in our discipleship and reach as many people for Christ as we can.

Reflection

Consider this: What do you gain or lose from choosing a specific view of the Millennium?

What excites you most about Jesus' return?

Who in your life needs to hear the good news of Jesus before He returns? List them below.

Prayer Prompt

Spend some time in prayer for the people you know who need to hear the good news of Jesus. Ask God to open doors and hearts for conversation. Pray that God would open your heart to His promptings to start and build relationships. You never know where He might lead you—or who He'll lead you to!

WEEK 9

Bible Reading Plan

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 19:1–10
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 19:11–21
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 20:1–6
- ★ Day 4: Read Revelation 20:7–15
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 19 & 20

Threefold Hallelujah Over Babylon's Fall

¹⁹ After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

“Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power
belong to our God,
² for true and just are his
judgments.
He has condemned the great
prostitute
who corrupted the earth by
her adulteries.
He has avenged on her the blood
of his servants.”

³ And again they shouted:

“Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up for
ever and ever.”

⁴ The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

“Amen, Hallelujah!”

⁵ Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

“Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
both great and small!”

⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

“Hallelujah!
For our Lord God Almighty
reigns.
⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb

has come,
and his bride has made herself
ready.

⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear.”

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)

⁹ Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

¹⁰ At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus.”

The Heavenly Warrior Defeats the Beast

¹¹ I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF
LORDS.

¹⁷ And I saw an angel standing in the

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sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small.”

¹⁹ Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. ²⁰ But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. ²¹ The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

The Thousand Years

²⁰ And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed

and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

The Judgment of Satan

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The Judgment of the Dead

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.



What Are the New Heavens and the New Earth?

Revelation 21:4 is one of the most comforting verses of all time.

“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.”

Just think: One day, there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. There will be no more tears. When is that day? When Jesus returns to make a new heavens and a new earth as we reign with Him in our resurrected bodies.

That’s a lot to unpack, right? Let’s start with the new heavens and new earth.

Heaven, as we currently understand it, is not our final resting place—at least, depending on how one interprets the word “heaven.” In the end, there will be a new embodied reality, a flesh and blood place.

Earth itself will be restored and redeemed. There will be a new city with streets of gold and the garden will be in the center of it. It will be like nothing we can even imagine.

The best part of all of this is that the new heavens and the new earth will be one. God will dwell there and us with Him. The new heavens and new earth is the long-awaited home for everyone who has chosen to put their faith in Jesus.

And what about our resurrected bodies? In some way, shape, or form—the same way Jesus was resurrected from the grave and seen amongst people—we’ll be resurrected in God’s eternal kingdom. And that is something to look forward to!

No matter what views you hold, no matter what you believe about the Tribulation or the Millennium, the end is the same—and so is the preparation. We trust in a God who loves us and who will make all things new in the end. In the meantime, we all are on a mission to grow in our devotion to God and extend the love and good news of Jesus to as many people as we can.

How can you start today? Ask your neighbor how they’re doing. Build a relationship with them. Invite them to your small group or to church. Tell them about Jesus.

What Does It Mean to Love My Neighbor?

Jesus put a strong emphasis on loving our neighbors. When asked about the most important commandment, this was second to loving God. But what does this kind of love really look like? Let's start by asking what it means to love.

Dallas Willard once said, "We may say we love chocolate cake, but we don't. Rather, we want to eat it." He was showing the contrast between love and desire. Desire can be good. God puts desires in our hearts (check out Psalm 37:4–5). It's when desire becomes misdirected that problems roll in. But love is something different. Love seeks the good of the other. It chooses to look outward. And there's more.

Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). These weren't just words. He followed through, dying not only for His friends but for those who marked Him as an enemy (Luke 23:34). This means that love requires both action and risk. Jesus' model could be summarized using the four simple words adopted by the Coast Guard Rescue Swimmers: "So others may live."

With this framework, we can now ask, "Who is my neighbor?"

When Jesus was asked this question, He told a story of a man who was beaten, looted, and left for dead. Two leaders in the community ignored the man. But then an outsider came by and picked him up, took him to the doctor, and paid the bill (Luke 10:25–37). Our "neighbors" aren't just the people in our neighborhoods, but anyone God puts in our path.

We could say that "loving my neighbor" means to look out and seek the good of those within our reach in ways that are both concrete and sacrificial.

There are so many different ways we can extend this kind of love to others. Loving your neighbor can look like giving up something you love for someone you love even more. It can look like showing up, day after day, to care for the needs of another person. Love can even look like sharing hard words with someone who needs to hear them.

But one of the most concrete, transforming ways you can love your neighbor is by sharing the gospel with them. And sharing your faith doesn't have to be complicated—it can simply look like living a life that elicits questions about your faith. Often, this means sharing your life with others, opening up and being vulnerable with intention, and endeavoring to love people well.

Our testimony, like we talked about in Week 6, can be a helpful tool when it comes to sharing our faith. The next time a non-believer in your circle mentions a struggle they're dealing with, consider your testimony. What hope or truth have you experienced that you could share with them? Does your coworker seem anxious and like she is often looking for peace? Consider a time when God's peace met you in your time of need and watch as God opens the door to share your story with her. Does your friend struggle with feeling like he doesn't quite belong? Consider how God has made you feel secure in Him and be ready to share when God opens the door.

When you know how the story ends, it's clear: Sharing your faith is one of the most important, and most loving, things you can do.

Reflection

How does the vision of the future seen in Revelation 21 and 22 give you hope for today?

How can you help others experience Jesus here and now?

When you think about your “neighbor,” who comes to mind? How could you love them well this week?

Prayer Prompt

Spend some time with God this week focusing on ways you can be more like Jesus—and reach other people for Him—while you’re here on earth. Thank Him for the life you get to live! Then, thank Him for the hope of heaven and the intentional plan He’s built for His people.

WEEK 10

Bible Reading Plan

- ★ Day 1: Read Revelation 21:1–18
- ★ Day 2: Read Revelation 21:19–27
- ★ Day 3: Read Revelation 22:1-11
- ★ Day 4: Read Revelation 22:12-21
- ★ Day 5: Reread Revelation 21 & 22

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A New Heaven and a New Earth

¹ Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘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.”

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

The New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb

⁹ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance

was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³ There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. ¹⁶ The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. ¹⁷ The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. ¹⁸ The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ 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. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful

or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Eden Restored

²² Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

John and the Angel

⁶ The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

⁷ "Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll."

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. ⁹ But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!"

¹⁰ Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. ¹¹ Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do

right; and let the holy person continue to be holy."

Epilogue: Invitation and Warning

¹² "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

¹⁴ "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll.

¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

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So, Now What?

We've made our way through the complexities of Revelation. We're so grateful you made spending time with God a priority in this season of your life, and we hope this study helped grow your faith and increased your anticipation for what God's going to do in your life (and beyond).

While we'll never know the step-by-step, exact timeline of the end times, what's revealed to us through the book of Revelation is quite possibly even more important: Hope, perspective, and a purpose in our faith and lives today, *here and now*. It's an invitation to trust God and pursue life in lockstep with Him—loving God and loving people.

Yes, the world is broken, and the signs of chaos can feel overwhelming. But Revelation reminds us that, now and in the end, God is in control, and we can have confidence in His plan. Evil doesn't get the final say. And one day, Jesus will come again to make all things new.

In the meantime, keep *growing in your faith*—for more resources and a Bible reading plan, download the Willow app.

Thanks again for taking this journey with us!

Keep Learning

What we've covered in this book is only the tip of the iceberg. If you're interested, keep learning! These resources helped shape this book, and we think you'll love them too:

- Bible Project: *Revelation*
- *Discipleship on the Edge* by Darrell Johnson
- PassionEquip: "*A Pocket Guide to the Last Days*"
- *Revelation* by The Bible Recap
- *Revelation for Everyone* by N.T. Wright
- *Revelation for the Rest of Us* by Scot McKnight & Cody Matchett
- *Reversed Thunder* by Eugene Peterson
- *The Overcomers* by Matt Chandler



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