

Destin Church of Christ

November 5, 2023

Chapter 31: The End of Time

(Revelation 1 – 5; 19 – 22)

Introduction:

The book of Revelation gives us insight to how God’s story ends ... and how eternity begins. With beautiful portrayals of Jesus, clear teaching for the church, and vivid word pictures of the end of time, we gain the fresh hope that comes when we realize that God wins. We are inspired to stand strong until all of this becomes a reality ... and we know it will.

Plot Points:

- God is on the throne of eternity, no matter what we experience on this earth.
- Jesus Christ, the Lamb who was slain, stands forever before the throne of God, a constant witness to the security of our salvation.
- One day soon, all things will be made new and God will live with humanity on earth.

Lesson Breakdown:

- The Risen Christ (Revelation 1)
- To the Churches (Revelation 2-3)
- The Center of All (Revelation 4)
- The Lion Is the Lamb (Revelation 5)
- The Warrior-King (Revelation 19)
- The Judgment Throne (Revelation 20)
- Eden Again but Better (Revelation 21-22)
- Live for Then Right Now (Revelation 22)

As you watch the video for Session 31 of The Story, notice some of the main points.

✓ His name will be on their foreheads.	✓ “I am the Alpha and the Omega.”
✓ “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.”	✓ There are trees of life.
✓ He will wipe every tear from their eyes.	✓ God’s Upper Story vision is completely restored.

The book of Revelation is the only book in the Bible that contains a promise to everyone that reads it, and all that hear it will be abundantly blessed. Ken Cayce ... The early church read the book of Revelation in its entirety every time they met.

Revelation is written in symbols so that people cannot understand with their mind but must have faith. To truly understand, we must understand it through the Holy Spirit of God revealing the Scriptures to the believer. But it is a horror story for those who have decided to refuse the free gift of salvation that Jesus offers to whosoever will.

The word “rapture” does not occur in the Bible, but the concept of the “carrying off” or the rapture of the church is clearly taught in Scripture.

The Rapture and Second Coming are similar but separate events. Both involve Jesus returning and both are end-times events, but it is crucially important to recognize the differences. In summary, the rapture is the return of Christ in the clouds to remove all believers from the earth before the time of God’s wrath. The second coming is the return of Christ to the earth to bring the tribulation to an end and to defeat the Antichrist and his evil world empire.

The Second Coming is the most frequently mentioned event in the New Testament. The last recorded words of our Lord are about His Second Coming.

UNDERSTAND THE STORY:

➤ Revelation 1:

The book begins with the revelation of Jesus Christ, given to Him by God to show His servants what must soon take place. This revelation is delivered by an angel to John, who testifies everything he saw - the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It includes a blessing for those who read, hear, and keep the words of this prophecy. (pages 459) [Revelation 1:1-3]

John sends greetings to the seven churches in the province of Asia, offering grace and peace from Him who is, who was, and who is to come. He acknowledges Jesus Christ as the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. There is a declaration of Christ's sovereignty and an affirmation of His eternal nature. (pages 459-460) [Revelation 1:4-8]

John identifies himself as a brother and companion in suffering, kingdom, and patient endurance, who was on the island of Patmos because of his faith in God's word and the testimony of Jesus. He shares that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day when he heard a loud voice like a trumpet telling him to write to the seven churches of Asia. (pages 460) [Revelation 1:9-11]

John turns to see the voice speaking with him, and sees seven golden lampstands, and among them, the Son of Man, described in vivid and symbolic detail, representing majesty, wisdom, purity, authority, and divine judgment. (pages 460) [Revelation 1:12-16]

John falls at His feet as though dead, but Jesus places His right hand on him, telling him not to be afraid. Jesus identifies Himself as the First and the Last, the Living One, who was dead, and now is alive forever and holds the keys of Death and Hades. He instructs John to write what he has seen, what is now and what will take place later. (pages 460-461) [Revelation 1:17-20]

- What do the 7 stars and 7 lampstands represent? (page 461) [Revelation 1:20]

➤ Revelation 2:

- Ephesus ... “The Loveless Church”:

The first message, to the church in Ephesus, commends the church's perseverance and discernment against false apostles but reproves it for forsaking its first love. Christ encourages them to repent and return to their initial devotion or risk losing their place in His kingdom. (page 461) [Revelation 2:1-7]

- Smyrna ... “The Persecuted Church”:

The message to the church in Smyrna brings comfort during tribulation, encouraging them to be faithful even to the point of death. Christ promises the crown of life to those who overcome and assures them they will not be harmed by the second death. (NIB) [Revelation 2:8-11]

- Pergamum ... “The Compromising Church”

In the message to the church in Pergamum, Christ acknowledges their steadfastness amidst a city where Satan dwells, yet reproves them for tolerating the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, which lead believers into idolatry and immorality. He calls for their repentance, promising hidden manna and a white stone to those who overcome. (NIB) [Revelation 2:12-17]

- Thyatira ... “The Corrupt Church”:

The church in Thyatira receives commendation for their love, service, and patience, yet they are admonished for tolerating a self-styled prophetess, Jezebel, who misleads the believers into sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols. Christ promises authority over nations and the morning star to those who overcome and hold fast. (NIB) [Revelation 2:18-29]

➤ Revelation 3:

- Sardis ... “The Dead Church”:

The Church of Sardis is criticized for having a reputation of being alive but being dead spiritually. They are called to wake up and strengthen what remains before it dies. Those who haven't soiled their clothes, the overcomers, will be clothed in white, a symbol of purity and victory. (pages 461-462) [Revelation 3:1-6]

- Philadelphia ... “The Faithful Church”:

The Church in Philadelphia receives a much more positive message, as they have kept Christ's command and not denied his name. They are promised to be kept from the hour of trial that will come upon the world. The overcomers in Philadelphia are given the promise of becoming a pillar in the temple of God, with the names of God, the city of God, and Christ's new name written on them. (NIB) [Revelation 3:7-13]

- Laodicea ... “The Lukewarm Church”:

The message to the Church of Laodicea is a stern one, condemning their lukewarm faith. They are criticized for being neither hot nor cold, and thus, they will be spit out of Christ's mouth. The Laodiceans are counseled to buy gold refined in the fire (symbolizing true wealth in Christ), white garments (righteousness), and salve for their eyes (spiritual sight). Jesus calls them to be earnest and repent. Those who overcome are given the promise of sitting with Christ on his throne. (page 462) [Revelation 3:14-22]

“Now John’s Revelation takes a turn ... to a series of mysterious and symbolic scenes. John gets a glimpse of spiritual realities — including the final days of history when the ... glory of God and His plan for the world will be revealed.”

~~ Randy Frazee (“The Story”; pages 462-463)

➤ Revelation 4:

John receives a command to ascend to heaven where he will be shown the events to come. (pages 463) [Revelation 4:1]

In his vision, John finds himself in the presence of God's throne (heaven), radiating like precious stones (jasper and ruby), symbolizing divine authority and majesty. There is a rainbow around the throne. (pages 463) [Revelation 4:2-3]

Surrounding God's throne are twenty-four elders, seated and clothed in white, wearing golden crowns. Lightning, thunder, and seven lamps (representing the seven spirits of God; the sevenfold Spirit) emanate from the throne. (pages 463) [Revelation 4:4-5]

Before the throne, there is a sea of glass, and around it are four living creatures covered with eyes, each symbolizing different aspects of creation. They ceaselessly offer praise to God. (pages 463) [Revelation 4:6-8]

Whenever the creatures give glory to God, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him, casting their crowns and declaring His worthiness to receive glory, honor, and power. (pages 463-464) [Revelation 4:9-11]

➤ Revelation 5:

John sees a scroll in the right hand of God, sealed with seven seals. A mighty angel proclaims a challenge: Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll? However, no one in heaven or earth or under the earth was found worthy, leading John to weep bitterly. (pages 464) [Revelation 5:1-4]

One of the elders comforts John, pointing out the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed and is worthy to open the scroll. Instead of a lion, John sees a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes (representing the seven Spirits of God). This Lamb approaches and takes the scroll from the right hand of God. (pages 464) [Revelation 5:5-7]

Upon the Lamb taking the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before Him. They sing a new song, acknowledging the worthiness of the Lamb to open the scroll because He was slain and has redeemed people to God by His blood from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. (page 464) [Revelation 5:8-10]

John witnesses a multitude of angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, joining in the worship. They exclaim in a loud voice the Lamb's worthiness, followed by every creature in heaven and earth, under the earth and on the sea praising God and the Lamb. The four living creatures respond "Amen," and the elders fall down and worship. (page 465) [Revelation 5:11-14]

➤ Revelation 19:

A loud multitude in heaven praises God for His righteous judgments, rejoicing over the downfall of the corrupt city, Babylon. The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fall down and worship God seated on the throne. (NIB) [Revelation 19:1-5]

The multitude rejoices again, announcing the arrival of the Lamb's wedding feast. The Bride (the Church) has prepared herself, given fine linen to wear, representing righteous deeds. An angel tells John to write down that those invited to the wedding feast are blessed, emphasizing that these words are true. When John falls to worship the angel, he is rebuked and reminded to worship God alone. (NIB) [Revelation 19:6-10]

John sees heaven open and a rider named Faithful and True on a white horse. He judges and wages war righteously. His eyes blaze like fire, and many crowns adorn His head. He has a name unknown to anyone but Himself and is dressed in a robe dipped in blood. His name is called The Word of God. The armies of heaven follow Him, riding on white horses and clothed in fine linen. (page 466) [Revelation 19:11-16]

An angel stands in the sun and calls all the birds to the great supper of God to feast on the flesh of the fallen. The beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies gather to wage war against the rider on the horse. But the beast and the false prophet are captured and thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest are killed by the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider and devoured by the birds. (NIB) [Revelation 19:17-21]

➤ Revelation 20:

An angel descends from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. The beast/dragon/serpent/Satan is cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years. (NIB) [Revelation 20:1-3]

John sees thrones with souls of people martyred for their faith in Christ sitting on them. They are resurrected to reign with Christ for a thousand years. They will not be subject to the second death. (NIB) [Revelation 20:4-6]

Once the thousand years are over, Satan is released from his prison, will deceive the nations, and gather Gog and Magog to battle. Fire descends from heaven, devours the army, and the devil is cast into the fiery lake to be tormented forever. (NIB) [Revelation 20:7-10]

Finally, a vision of the Great White Throne emerges. All the dead, great and small, stand before the throne, and books are opened, including the Book of Life. Each person is judged according to their deeds. Death and Hades give up their dead, and anyone not found in the Book of Life is thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (pages 466-467) [Revelation 20:11-15]

➤ Revelation 21:

John has a vision of a new heaven and a new earth, replacing the old ones which have passed away. He then describes the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, adorned like a bride prepared for her husband. (page 467) [Revelation 21:1-2]

A loud voice from the throne declares the dwelling of God is now among men. God will live with them, and they will be His people. He will wipe away every tear, and there will no longer be any death, mourning, crying, or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (page 467) [Revelation 21:3-4]

God, seated on the throne, proclaims that He is making everything new. He assures that these words are trustworthy and true. He declares Himself as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty, He will give freely from the spring of the water of life. Those who overcome will inherit all this, while the cowardly, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars will be condemned to the second death in the lake of fire. (page 467) [Revelation 21:5-8]

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues shows John the Bride, the wife of the Lamb, which is the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down from heaven. The city is described in great detail, including its great high wall with twelve gates, and the foundations of the city walls adorned with precious stones. The city and its street are made of pure gold, as clear as glass. (pages 467-468) [Revelation 21:9-21]

John notes there is no temple in the city because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon for light, for the glory of God illuminates it, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. Its gates will never be shut, and there will be no night there. Only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life can enter the city. (page 468) [Revelation 21:22-27]

➤ Revelation 22:

John narrates his vision of a pure river of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of the river, he sees the tree of life bearing twelve kinds of fruit and yielding its fruit every month, and whose leaves of the tree have healing properties. (pages 468-469) [Revelation 22:1-2]

John tells us that the curse of sin will no longer exist. God's servants will serve Him, see His face, and reign forever in eternal light, with no need for a lamp or sun. (page 469) [Revelation 22:3-5]

An angel confirms to John that the prophecies are reliable and true. The angel also reaffirms the imminent return of Christ, pronouncing blessings on those who observe the prophecies written in the book. (page 469) [Revelation 22:4-7]

Overwhelmed, John mistakenly worships the angel, who corrects him, instructing him to worship God alone and to keep the words of the prophecy. (page 469) [Revelation 22:8-9]

John is told not to seal up the words of the prophecy because the time is near. A call is given to the righteous to continue in righteousness and the wicked to persist in their wickedness, emphasizing the inevitability of judgment. (page 469) [Revelation 22:10-11]

Christ announces His imminent return, bringing His reward with Him to repay each person according to their deeds. He declares Himself as the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. (page 469) [Revelation 22:12-13]

Blessings are promised to those who wash their robes (symbolic of righteous deeds), granting them access to the tree of life and entrance to the city. However, those who practice falsehood and immorality are excluded. (page 469) [Revelation 22:14-15]

Jesus sends His angel to testify these things to the churches. He identifies Himself as the Root and Offspring of David and the bright Morning Star. The Spirit and the Bride extend a universal invitation to receive the free gift of the water of life. (page 469) [Revelation 22:16-17]

John warns about the dire consequences of adding to or taking away from the words of the prophecy: for those who add, plagues described in the book will be added to them, and for those who take away, their share in the tree of life and holy city will be taken away. (page 470) [Revelation 22:18-19]

Jesus affirms, "Yes, I am coming soon," to which John responds, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." (page 470) [Revelation 22:20]

The book concludes with a benediction: John prays for the grace of the Lord Jesus to be with God's people. Amen. (page 470) [Revelation 22:21]

- What will we eat in the New Jerusalem that was also in the original garden? [Revelation 2:7; 22:14]

Revelation, the last book of the Bible, has sparked so much hope in believers throughout the ages. It keeps us going in the darkest of times. Regardless of how difficult life may be in the moment, we have, through Christ's sacrifice, this wonderful place to look forward to.

God wins! If we are on his side, we win too.

The Story comes to an end. But it's really the beginning.