

# How It All Ends

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Father, we worship you this morning. We've come to adore you and to set our hearts and the affections of our hearts on you. God, as we're going to read in your word this morning, you are faithful and true and righteous in all your ways.

God, you have perfect perspective on the world. And so, Father, this morning, as we come to set our hearts on you and to remind ourselves that we don't have perfect perspective.

We see the world from a very limited perspective, but you do, God. And so, Father, we've come to trust you this morning. We've come to set our hope on yourself and not ourselves. We've come to set our hope on who you are more than ourself and the things of this world.

Father, thank you for the fact that you promised that, yes, in this world we will face trouble. There is difficulty, that is true, but you promised that you will be with us. Thank you for your leading and guiding.

God, every day we could look back upon the previous weeks and months and years and just say you are such a faithful God. You really are faithful and true, and we honor you for that this morning, God.

[ 1 : 0 5 ]     Jesus, thank you that you promised to give us peace. And for so many of us that have walked with you, that testimony is true. Even in the midst of difficulty, your peace reigns in our hearts.

And we're so grateful for your faithfulness, God. Father, this morning we want to pray for those in our congregation that are facing real challenges, God. We know some of our friends are going through health challenges, really significant health challenges.

We bring them before you, God. We pray for those that are parenting and just finding the reality of parenting is hard, God. Christ, won't you pour out your grace on our parents, Lord.

We pray for those, God, for whom marriage is difficult at the moment, Lord. And we pray for your grace and your gospel to be at work in our hearts. God, help us to take our eyes off of ourselves and to fix our eyes on you, God.

Lord, we pray for those that are making big, life-altering decisions, God. Whether to, yeah, take some big step in a new direction. God, we pray that you will be with them and that you will make your will so abundantly clear.

[ 2 : 0 9 ]     We pray that we will know what your will is, God, in those situations. So we pray for our students and our high schoolers, God. I want you to lead them and be with them. We bring ourselves before you, God.

We need you. And that's why we've come to worship you, God. Father, we want to pray for the young people in our city, God. Those that are part of our church and those that are not. Those who are dealing with trauma and conflict.

God, those who are really cut up and hurting deeply because of what's happened in the last couple of months. God, we pray for your healing power to be at work in the young people of our city, God.

We pray for conflict to be resolved. We pray for conflict in families and churches to be resolved. We pray, God, for those involved in counseling, God, that you're given profound wisdom.

We pray for healing to come to our city. Oh, God, we pray for your healing to come. Jesus, we so need you. Come and heal our city, we pray. Father, we bring our city before you and we long for it to be in Hong Kong as it is in heaven, God.

[ 3 : 09 ] We long for your grace and your priest to rule in our city. And so we pray for the churches, God. Cause us to be salt and light in the city. Cause us to shine, to point to the hope of Jesus.

We pray for our politicians this morning, God. Give them wisdom, Lord. Help them to make right and good decisions for the well-being of our city. We bring these things before you in your wonderful and your faithful name.

Amen. Amen. Let's listen to the reading of God's word. And Jefferson and Echo are going to read to us this morning. The scripture reading comes from Revelation 19 to 21.

Please follow along in your bulletin or on the screen. Then I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse. The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True.

And in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire and on his head are many diadems. And he has a name written that no one knows but himself.

[ 4 : 17 ] He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood. And the name by which he is called is the word of God. And the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.

From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. And he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written. King of kings and lord of lords. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun.

With a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead. Come, gather for the great supper of God. To eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders.

And the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great. And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on a horse and against his army.

[ 5 : 28 ] And the beast was captured. And with it the false prophet, who in his presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image.

These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse.

And all the birds were gouged with their flesh. Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and the great chain.

And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years and threw him into the pit and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were ended.

After that, he must be released for a little while. Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.

[ 6 : 40 ] Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshipped 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 for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is the one who shares the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle.

Their number is like the sand of the sea, and they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.

[ 7 : 49 ] The fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence, earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged by what is written in the books, according to what they had done.

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

[ 9 : 02 ] Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. This is the word of God. Okay, thank you, Jefferson and Echo.

I don't know if you remember this. If you're a student, this might be before your time. I feel very old saying that. But I remember when I was a kid, I don't know if you remember, seeing these 3D images, or it was just a picture, I think I've got one on the screen, of like a blur of lines and patterns and colors, and if you stare at it long enough, you can see some 3D image emerging.

[ 10 : 24 ] Does anyone remember any of those? Okay, just one or two of us. I remember looking at these things, and like really squinting, and trying to like, from every different angle, and I could never see the 3D image.

I was just useless at it. Sometimes the book of Revelation can feel a little bit like that. It's just this blur of symbols and imagery, and you can stare at it and think, I don't have a clue what's going on.

But hopefully as you look at it long enough, and as you read it enough, you start to see the consistent patterns and images emerge, and you start to see the picture behind it. Now if you've joined us recently, or you've joined us halfway through the series, you might be a little lost.

And to be honest, that's completely fine. If you're lost, and you've been here the whole time, that's also fine. And just by the way, you are welcome to come and ask any questions you want.

I cannot promise I can answer every question, but you're welcome to ask any question. But I do hope for some of us that have been here from the beginning, we're starting to sort of see the consistent patterns and images emerge as we work through the book of Revelation.

[ 11 : 32 ] Because really, this book is one of the most repetitive books. It keeps on just saying the same thing time and time again from various angles. Now, I have good news and bad news for you this morning.

What do you want first? Okay, I would normally choose the bad news, but I'm gonna go with the good news, okay? The good news is this. We are coming to the home straight. I don't know if you've ever run a marathon, and you get like three quarters of the way through, and your legs turn to jelly, and you just think, there's no ways I'm gonna finish this thing.

When is this thing ever gonna end? You might have felt like that through the book of Revelation, right? You might have thought, I've hit a wall. When is this thing ever gonna end? We're coming to the home straight.

The finish line is ahead of us. Two or three more weeks away, we'll finish before Christmas, okay? That's the good news. The bad news is this. Today's passage is probably the most controversial and the most difficult passage in the whole of Revelation, and possibly the whole Bible.

It's one of those passages that has had a gazillion books written about it throughout the history of the world. There are a million different podcasts, everyone with their own opinion, okay?

[ 12 : 41 ] And it's my joint privilege to explain it to us this morning. Part of the reason why it's so divisive is because it talks about how the world, as we know it, comes to an end.

And it talks about this strange period of time, this period of a thousand years, what's known as the millennium. And that is really difficult and has generated a lot of debate for two main reasons.

The one reason is because the Bible's actually not crystal clear on exactly how it all works. And so there's varied opinions. Some people say, no, it definitely works like this. Other people say, no, it definitely works like this.

This is actually the only passage in the Bible that talks about this mysterious millennium, this thousand-year period. The other reason why it's generated controversy is it hasn't happened yet.

And so everything people say is speculative. You know, we can look back on the crucifixion, we can look at secular history and eyewitness accounts and archaeology, and we can piece it together and say this is what happened.

[ 13 : 42 ] But the future, it's all a little speculative, okay? And so we're gonna try and look at this a little bit today. So today, I'm gonna need you to really concentrate and stay with me, okay?

This is gonna, we're gonna dive in and we're gonna do our best to try and make sense of it. And so we've got three questions we're gonna try and answer today. The first one is, what on earth is up with the millennium?

The second one is, what's going on with this passage as a whole? Okay, what is God actually trying to say to us? And the third one is, how should we respond? Okay, so that's where we're gonna try and go today.

Okay, so firstly, let's give a brief overview of what Jefferson and Echo read to us. So in chapter 19, we encounter Jesus Christ. And he's on this white horse, which speaks of authority and intentionality and power.

And his eyes are of fire. He's got the sword coming out of his mouth. And he's riding on the nations and he comes in to judge the nations in righteousness and truth and justice, which is a really good thing.

[ 14 : 46 ] Right, think about it. Even the most perfect judges in our world have limited perspective. Even the brilliant judges in the world don't know everything or the intentionalities of everyone's heart.

But Jesus comes and he brings perfect justice. The things that are going wrong in this world, one day the one who knows everything as it really is will bring righteousness and judge the world in righteousness and truth.

And that's really good news for us. And on his robe is written this title. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Caesar is not King. Rome is not King. The stock market is not King.

Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And he comes as the perfect Lord. And then we see the kings of the earth and the armies and this beast, which is the symbol of idolatrous institutions of power and structures and the kingdoms of this world.

They are conquered by Jesus and his armies and they are thrown into this lake of fire. And then we get to chapter 20. And chapter 20, John sees this angel and he's holding a key to this bottomless pit.

[ 15 : 52 ] And there Satan is seized and he's bound and he's tied up and he's cast into this bottomless pit for this period of a thousand years. And while he's there, we are told that he cannot deceive the nations any longer.

And so for this thousand year period, this millennium, it's kind of like this golden age. It's marked by the reign of Jesus. Jesus reigns in the world with his people. And it's a picture of this golden period for the gospel and the church.

Satan seems to be restricted and bound and Christ together with his people, including those that have been killed and martyred, they reign throughout the world. And then we see at the end of this period, Satan seems to be released and he gathers all his evil forces and they launch one final battle against the church, this Armageddon battle.

But as he's about to fight the church, he is destroyed and conquered and forever and ever, Satan is thrown into this lake of fire where he is tormented day and night forever and ever and ever.

And Satan is finally and fully defeated. And then all people, Christians and non-Christians, anyone that's ever lived, stands before the judgment seat of God. We are held accountable for our decisions.

[ 17 : 08 ] And finally after that, the new heavens and the new earth appear. That's what Jefferson and Echo read to us this morning. Now here's the question. So what's up with this crazy thousand year period?

And why have people been so interested in it? And the reason is this. Because this thousand year period is meant to be this period sometime at the end of the age before the world comes to an end.

And so Christians for hundreds of years have tried to piece together and work out. Okay, so does Jesus come and then there's this thousand years and the end of the world? Or is there this thousand years and then Jesus comes and it's the end of the world?

How is the world going to end? And can we as Christians bring about this thousand year period? Are there things that we can do? Can we send missionaries to the end of the world that will speed it up?

Or is there nothing we can do and we've just got to get on with life? And so what's going on with this? Now there are three main views, okay? The first one is this. It's called pre-millennialism.

[ 18 : 09 ] I think we've got this up there somewhere. Okay, pre-millennialism. And those that believe this would say this. Before this thousand year period, this millennial period, whether it's literal or figurative, Jesus comes back.

And Jesus is going to come in power and glory with eyes like fire and he's going to conquer the world. And Jesus, along with Christians, are going to reign throughout the world.

It's going to be this golden period where the kingdom of God advances, Satan is defeated, and all Christians who have died will rise from the dead and be alive for a thousand years with Jesus.

And those that have not died, we are going to get our new resurrection bodies. And Christians will reign with Jesus on the earth for a thousand years. And then at the end of that period, Satan will be released.

There'll be this massive Armageddon battle. Jesus will conquer Satan. There'll be the final judgment, the living and the dead, and then the new heavens and the earth. Okay? And so some people say, pre-millennial, Jesus is going to come back and he's going to bring about this golden period of peace and prosperity and the world is going to be lovely.

[ 19 : 21 ] Now, one of the things is this. Pre-millennials generally have a very negative view of the world. So the world's going to get worse and worse and worse and worse. There's going to be more chaos, more destruction, more anarchy, until finally Jesus comes and rescues us all.

Okay? So that's pre-millennialism. Another view is post-millennialism. And those that believe in post-millennialism say, no, no, no, no, no. It's the other way around. There's going to be this period, this golden period of a thousand years.

The church is going to advance. Christians are going to reign. Christians are going to rule the earth. It's going to be wonderful. There's going to be peace and prosperity. And at the end of that period, Jesus is going to come back, destroy Satan.

There's going to be judgment day. And then the new heavens and the new earth is going to come. And post-millennials believe the world is going to get better and better and better. As the church advances, as the gospel goes forward, nations are going to get better, more righteous, more justice in the world.

And it's going to lead to this golden period of prosperity for a long period of time. And when the world is almost perfect, Jesus will come back again. So post-millennials have a very positive view of the world.

[ 20 : 31 ] And generally will say, we can bring this about as we send missionaries to the end of the world. As missionaries go out, it will bring Jesus back sooner. Okay?

Then there's a third view. And this, by the way, is my view, which means that it's the right view. You are welcome to disagree with me.

You have the right to be wrong. But otherwise, you can agree with me. I'm just joking about that. By the way, Chris Thornton and I have spoken about this. We actually happen to agree on this.

And a third view is amillennialism. And that view says, people like me that believe in this would say, no, no, no, there's no future period in the coming of this like thousand either literal or figurative period.

Actually, the millennium is the church age between Jesus' first coming and his second coming. This is it now. And between the cross and the throne, Jesus is ruling and reigning.

[ 21 : 32 ] And his people, Christians, do actually rule and reign as well, even though it doesn't seem like it. And so, amillennials would say that we are living in this period now.

And one day, Jesus will come. He will utterly defeat Satan. There will be judgment day for the living and the dead and then the new heavens and the new earth. Now, to be honest, if you had asked me three weeks ago, what do I think?

I would have said, I don't have a single clue. I don't even know what premillennialism means. But as we've worked through the book of Revelation and as I've thought about it for these weeks, it seems to me this is the best pattern that follows the book of Revelation and the New Testament teaching.

So, in other words, I personally don't think there's this golden period in the future that is coming and Jesus will come before or after. I think this is the period where Christians and reign with Jesus in the world.

Okay, so there it is, the three views of millennialism. Now, you can go and debate with your friends and tell them how the world is going to end. Okay, I somehow think that's probably not going to happen.

[ 22 : 39 ] Now, the truth is this. Many really good theologians and Bible-believing men and women have disagreed on this throughout the ages. Men that really love the Bible and love Jesus have strong views one or the other.

And so, what that means is we shouldn't be so dogmatic. We don't know how the world's really going to end. We can have our views and it might inform a couple of things, but we shouldn't be so dogmatic. We should be humble in the way that we hold them.

But, in some ways, Jesus has left it a little bit vague. But there's a whole lot in this chapter that he hasn't left vague. And so, that leads us to the second point.

What on earth is going on with this passage? The millennium aside, what do we know for certain? What is not vague in Revelation 20 and 21? What is Jesus absolutely clear about and what does Jesus want you to go away from today knowing with conviction and certainty?

Jesus said, nobody knows the hour or the time that I'm coming, only my Father in heaven, but there is some stuff that he does want you to know. Jesus again and again and again says, there's some stuff you don't know, don't worry about that, but there's some stuff I do want you to know and I want you to have conviction around this.

[ 23 : 51 ] And so, imagine this. I don't know if Soda's here. Here we've got the lovely Soda. Soda is expecting a baby in February, right? 14th of February, Valentine's Day. Come, imagine Dan and Soda, first time parents, say, you know, we don't really know how the whole labor thing is going to work.

Like, there's so many things that are unknown. Is the baby going to be lying the right way? Is it going to be breached? Is baby going to come early? Is baby going to come late? Is labor going to be quick? Is it going to be prolonged?

There's things that we don't really know. And so, imagine Dan Soda say, we don't really know how this whole labor thing works. Ah, we're just going to, like, who cares about it? We're not going to read about it. We're not going to think about it.

One day, it'll just come and then we'll deal with it then. Exactly. Yeah, my suggestion, that wouldn't be a very good idea. There's a whole lot of things you don't know about giving birth, but there's a whole lot of things you can know.

And you would be wise to read up and to find out what you can know. So that one day, when your waters break, or those contractions start, you don't think about it for the very first time then.

[ 25 : 00 ] In much the same way, Jesus says, there's a whole lot about the future that we don't know. And you don't need to get overly worried and caught up about that. But there's some stuff you do need to know. And Jesus is telling us in this passage what we do need to know.

There's a day coming that's going to change your life, like giving birth to your first children. We best be prepared for it. And so what can we know for certain? Let me give us three things from this passage.

The first one that we know is this. Jesus is going to come back. And he's going to come back and it's going to be sudden, it's going to be personal, it's going to be visible, and he's going to come back in a bodily form.

However you read Revelation, whether you think there's some golden age in the future, whether Jesus is going to come before that or after that, or this is the golden age, irrespective of the sequence, look at what John writes to tell us.

He's telling us that Jesus is going to come. And when he comes, he will finally and fully and forever defeat Satan and evil and wickedness in the world.

[ 26 : 02 ] Jesus is going to come clothed in power and glory. We read it earlier. He comes with fire in his eyes. He comes with a sword in his mouth. He comes with his robe dipped in blood.

His robe is written, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And following behind him is all the armies of heaven. Listen to how Paul writes it in 2 Thessalonians.

He says, the Lord Jesus, when he's revealed from heaven, will come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting justice on those who do not know God and on those who have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Friends, the New Testament is abundantly clear. Jesus Christ, and not just an image of him, Jesus Christ, the man, the man who died on the cross and rose again, is coming again in human bodily visible form.

Some teachers think, no, no, Jesus won't come, just his spirit will come. Or just his soul will come. Or just the teachings of Jesus will come. No, friends, Jesus Christ, the man, is going to come and everybody will recognize that he is king and will fall down on their knees before him.

[ 27 : 11 ] And Jesus tells us that this is reason for good hope. I don't know if you remember Narnia, C.S. Lewis' Narnia, the first book that he wrote, which isn't the first book in the series, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.

If you saw the movie or you read the book, the way it starts off is these four children, the Pivensi children, are at the train station and their mom is kissing them goodbye.

And why is she doing that? Because it's 1943 or 1942, whenever it is, World War II has happened and the German bombers are bombing London. And so what happened was everybody in London sent their children to the towns and the villages and the countrysides around the UK to protect them and keep them safe.

And so the children go off to the countryside to these foster parents and foster families until the war is over. Now everybody thought the war is going to be over by Christmas. Our boys in beige are going to get them and Christmas time it's going to be over.

And Christmas came and went and then they thought, okay, this year, this year it's going to be done. By Christmas this year the war will be over. And the war was far more prolonged than anyone expected.

[ 28 : 21 ] And so what would happen is these parents would write to their children in the countryside saying, I know things are taking longer than you expected. I know you hoped that I would have returned by now. I'm coming soon to come and get you.



Now friends, the children wouldn't lie in bed at night and wondering, is mom and dad going to come on this train or that train? I wonder if they're going to come before sunrise or after sunrise. They didn't care how it was going to happen.

What they needed to know was mom and dad haven't forgotten about me. They're coming to get me. Soon the war will be over and I'm going to come back to my home. And that's what John is writing the book of Revelation.

That's what it's about. Jesus constantly comes and he says to us, I'm coming back. I'm coming back. Don't give up hope. I know it seems like it's been delayed. I'm coming to get you and to take you home.

Friends, this is the hope of the gospel. The gospel isn't just that Jesus died on the cross to forgive us. That is true and wonderful. But that's not the whole gospel story. The gospel story is Jesus is coming again and he's going to vanquish.

[ 29 : 22 ] That means destroy his enemies and he's going to bring the new heavens and the new earth where there will be no more tears and no more pain and no more heartache and no more mourning or crying or distress.

No more anxiety and depression and trauma. Jesus is coming to bring us to our true home. Jesus is coming again. And we have to know that.

Otherwise, in this world we'll get depressed. In this world we'll be overwhelmed. When things go wrong we'll think, what's the point? Where are you God? Jesus says, I'm coming. I'm coming to take you home.

We have to know that. Okay, that's the first thing. The second thing is this. Jesus is coming to bring judgment and to judge the living and the dead. Look at what we read here in chapter 20 verse 11.

John writes this, I saw a great white throne and I saw him who was seated on it. I saw the dead great and small standing before the throne and the books were opened.

[ 30 : 23 ] Then there was another book that was also opened the book of life. The dead were judged by what was written in the books according to what they had done. The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them and they all stood before the throne judged each one of them according to what they had done.

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. John sees these two sets of books that are opened.

And the first set of books is the annals of history. It's the story of everyone's life, your life and my life and everything that we've done in our lives, not only what we've done but even the private thoughts and the personal motivations of our hearts.

Every single thing that we've done or thought about or the intention of our lives is written in these books and are laid bare before Jesus on the throne. I don't know if you've ever heard people talking about one day when you get to heaven there'll be a DVD of our lives shown.

Anyone heard that description? Okay. That comes from this verse. In John's day they didn't have DVDs, right? They had books, they had scrolls. But the point here is they're saying every aspect, every facet of our lives will be laid bare before Jesus and you'll hold us accountable.

[ 31 : 41 ] Not only for what we've done but even the thoughts of our minds. But then John writes and he says there's another book. And the other book well if this if we were solely judged on what we had done friends each one of us would have been in trouble.

Remember the words of the psalm. Oh Lord if you should mark our iniquities who a God could stand? Romans chapter 3 says before the just judge of all the earth every mouth will be stopped.

No more excuses, no explanations, no mitigating circumstances. One day we'll stand before God our mouths will be stopped because we'll have no excuses, nothing to say. And so if we merely judge on the basis of what we've done or how we've lived our lives friends we're in deep trouble.

Who our Lord can stand? But then before the great throne of God there's not only justice there's also mercy. Because look a second book is opened. And what's in this book?

It's the Lamb's book of life. And in this book are written the names of those that have taken refuge under the blood of Jesus. In this book are written the names of those that have trusted Jesus as their only hope.

[ 32 : 48 ] We have appealed to Jesus' death on the cross as their hope for forgiveness and mercy trusting that Jesus was sufficient. And so John sees these two books where our lives are before us and we're held accountable and even Christians will be held accountable.

But then there's this other book and look at what it said earlier. It said those whose names are written in this book over such people the second death meaning final judgment between heaven and hell has no power.

We are all exonerated before God. Friends this is what it means to be a Christian. A Christian is not just somebody who does good things. A Christian is not just somebody who lives a moral life.

A Christian is not just somebody who tries to get God to help them to have the best version of themselves. A Christian is not just somebody who has a nice personality or a good persona. A Christian is somebody who has come to the end of themselves.

Who has realized they have no hope in this life apart from the blood of Jesus. A Christian is somebody who realizes that Christ is the only hope for forgiveness and mercy.

[ 33 : 54 ] Friends a Christian is somebody who rejects all man-made solutions and trusts in Jesus alone. And that's what we see here. That God will hold every one of us the living and the dead every human being accountable for the lives that we've lived.

God holds us accountable for how we've responded to Jesus and his offer for grace. Whether we've rejected it and thought we don't need it because our lives are good enough or whether we have come to him and cast our lives at his feet of mercy.

And do you know what that means that every one of us will be judged? It means two things. It means firstly that our longing for justice will be satisfied. Friends, in this world there is so much that is unjust and unfair in this world.

There's so much that happens and you think where's the justice in that? How's anybody going to hold these people accountable? How can somebody just get away with that? It's not right. It's not fair. Friends, every one of us in our hearts has a longing for justice, right?

And that's a good thing. Friends, Jesus Christ, the perfect judge will one day judge the living and the dead. And that means not a single iota of injustice or evil or wrongdoing in the world will ever go unpunished.

[ 35 : 08 ] Not a single iota of it. Every bit of injustice will be fully satisfied in Christ's justice. But you know what it also means? It means, friends, that we can freely forgive those that have wronged us.

Because when somebody wrongs us or hurts us, why do we want to take revenge? Why do we want to get angry and bitter towards them? The reason is we often feel somebody needs to hold that person accountable.

If I just forgive them, where's the justice in that? They need to know that what they've done is wrong. And so we hold resentment and bitterness against them. But friends, if Jesus one day is going to hold every person accountable, it means we can freely forgive those that have wronged us.

We don't need to take vengeance on them because one day, perfect justice will be done. Okay, does that make sense? Great. Okay, so two things we know for certain.

Christ is coming and he's going to come and judge the living and the dead. One last thing that we need to know in this passage, and that is that Christians and the church will triumph even in the face of grace and sufferings.

[ 36 : 14 ] One of the challenges with Revelation chapter 20 is it describes this millennium period where, let me actually read it to us. Let me read chapter 20 verse 4 and 5.

It says this, Then I saw these thrones and seated on the thrones were those that had the authority to judge. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony and for the word of God, those that had not worshipped the beast or its image.

They were alive and they reigned with Jesus victoriously for a thousand years. Now, one of the challenges is that this passage tells us that those that reign with Christ, those that are victorious, are the ones that have lost their lives.

Their heads have been chopped off. They are martyrs for Jesus. And in some ways, that's a strange paradox. How does that make sense? How do those that are killed live?

How do those that die reign? How do those that are killed, how do they end up victorious? But friends, isn't this what Revelation has told us again and again and again?

[ 37 : 23 ] That Jesus and his people are victorious but they reign through apparent defeat. Those who give up their lives for the sake of Christ and others are those that find it.

Tim Chester puts it so well where he says, the church's reign and victory is a cruciform reign. In other words, it takes the form or it takes the shape of the cross, of the crucifixion.

In other words, the reign of Christ Jesus and his church is a veiled reign. It's a hidden reign. It's hidden in what is contrary or upside down. Just think of this.

Jesus, the night before he dies, he goes to his disciples and he says this, now my moment of glory has finally arrived. My moment of glory has come.

And what's he talking about? He's talking about his death on the cross. How is Jesus' death on the cross his moment of glory? How is the most tragic and horrific day in the history of the world also the most glorious?

[ 38 : 22 ] Friends, the reason is because the cross and the resurrection was the day that Jesus defeated Satan and sin and evil and wickedness and death on the cross and his resurrection.

As Jesus died and rose again, he defeated Satan. He defanged death. He disarmed the power of sin. He rescued and redeemed this fallen world from the horror of sin.

At the same time, it seemed like the worst day in the history of the world and yet, it's the greatest day in the history of the world. Jesus' apparent defeat was his moment of victory.

Jesus' apparent defeat was his moment of reigning and ruling over all the world. It was a hidden and veiled victory. Friends, just think about how throughout the New Testament, power is found in weakness.

greatness is demonstrated in service and servant-heartedness like washing your disciples' feet. Think about it throughout the New Testament, wisdom appears to be foolish because it doesn't follow the conventions of this world.

[ 39 : 26 ] Friends, throughout the New Testament, victory and glory are accomplished through what seems like defeat and setback. And we've seen this throughout the world.

In fact, we see this right now. In the Middle East right now, the church is being trampled. In many parts of Asia, the church is being defeated. Christians are being killed daily. Churches are being closed down.

The gospel is being trampled and set back. And on one hand, we may think, oh no, it's set back. Friends, this is the greatest hour of the church in those very regions. Where the church seems to go back, actually it's going forward.

Where the church seems to be dying, actually it's flourishing. It's the blood of the martyrs that's the seedbed of the church. In the very places where Christians are being killed, that place, the church is most alive.

And friends, this is the repetitive message of Revelation. That the martyrs, those that are beheaded, those that lose their lives for their faith, those who trust God even to the point of death, don't reign after their martyrdom, they reign through their martyrdom.

[ 40 : 33 ] Christians aren't victorious on the other side of suffering. Christians are victorious in the midst of suffering. Christians come alive as they die to themselves and as they live for others.

Remember what Jesus says to the church in Smyrna in the second week. He says, do not fear what you're about to suffer. Satan will come and persecute you. Some of you will be killed. Some of you will be thrown in prison.

But don't worry, those that hold on to me will get the crown of life even as you die. How do you reign when you're dead? Friends, this is the paradox of the Christian life.

That Christians reign in the midst of suffering and persecution. In chapter 11, we saw the two witnesses are killed for their testimony and yet the nations repent.

In chapter 12, we saw that the church conquers the work of Satan. How? Through the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony for they loved not their lives even to the point of death.

[ 41 : 31 ] Friends, how do you conquer your enemy when your life is taken from you? That's the shape and the form of the Christian life. The Christian life is a cruciform life.

It takes the shape and the form of the cross. And this is one of the, part of what makes suffering and embracing suffering and refusing violence so hard is that it often doesn't seem effective.

Think about this. You're witnessing and somebody pushes back against you and persecutes you and you think, what's the point in that? Maybe I should have just quietened down.

How does losing my life for the sake of the gospel, how does that actually work? How does that affect anything? And for the church in Revelation, their non-violent witness to Jesus, rather than taking a position of power and dominance and trying to overthrow the Roman Empire, rather their witness was just through faithful suffering, it doesn't end in a democratic and just Rome.

Rome doesn't turn to the Christians and say, wow, you guys are right, sorry, we should have done things your way. How does it end for the Christians? They lose their heads. They're beheaded.

[ 42 : 44 ] But that doesn't mean it's not effective. Because friends, what happens to the Roman Empire? It comes to an end. What happens to the church? It flourishes and it grows.

Friends, God's kingdom grows as His word is proclaimed. As Christians don't assume positions of power and authority, but as they lay down their lives and are faithful to the message of Jesus.

And so what is Jesus saying to us here? He's saying, friends, if Hong Kong is going to get the gospel, if the gospel is going to advance in our city, if the kingdom of God is going to come, how's it going to come?

It's not going to come through demonstrations of power. It's not going to come through violence and trying to overthrow the kingdoms that we don't agree with. It's going to come through Christians that are faithfully proclaiming that Jesus is Lord, that Hong Kong is not Lord, that the economy is not Lord, that the stock market is not Lord, that Jesus is Lord even in the midst of suffering and persecution.

Friends, the kingdom of God is going to come to our city as Christians faithfully witness to the lordship of Jesus. And that means that we're going to suffer for it. That means that maybe you won't lose your head but you may lose your job.

[ 43 : 59 ] That means that your career may get some setbacks. Friends, I was talking to someone this week, one of our sisters, her company is asking her to do unethical things and she said, sorry, I can't do that.

She had to resign her job. Was out at work for a couple of months. That's suffering. But you know what? That might seem ineffective but that's how the kingdom of God comes.

As faithful brothers and sisters say, our hope is not in this world. Our hope is in Christ and Jesus is Lord. The kingdom of God comes through suffering. Okay, three things we need to know.

Jesus is coming again. Jesus is going to come and he's going to judge the living and the dead. The church and the kingdom will advance in the midst of suffering and opposition. How do we respond?

Well, let me give us three things really quickly and then we don't. First is this. We need to give careful consideration to how we respond to Jesus. Jesus calls us to follow him and his call is of utmost and eternal importance.

[ 45 : 03 ] Friends, what matters is not what works for you or what works for me. It's not just a matter of personal preference. One day when we stand before Jesus we can't just say well truth is relative and you know what works for those guys didn't work for me.

Friends, we need to give careful consideration to our response to King Jesus. Jesus is summoning every single one of us to come and to find our hope in him.

Whether you are religious or not religious whether you are Chinese, American, African, no matter what your background Jesus is summoning all of us to come and lay down our lives before him.

And friends, our eternal destiny is in the balance depending on how we respond to Christ. Friends, what matters is not just whether we went to church or not.

What matters is not just whether we gave money to the poor. What matters is not whether we think we belong to Jesus. What matters is do we love him? Is he first in our hearts? Have we come and given our entire lives to him?

[ 46 : 03 ] Have we surrendered to him because he is our only hope? Have we cast ourselves at the mercy of Jesus? Have we taken our hope in the blood of the Lamb? Friends, we need to give careful consideration to Christ's call to come to him.

Second response is this. It means for those of us that are Christians, this world as we know it is not our final home. And therefore, let's not over capitalize in this world as we currently know it.

Last week, Jeremy spoke to us about the fact that in Hong Kong there are so many sojourners. Those that come to Hong Kong for long periods of time, but this city is not their home. They are always going back to another place that will be their home.

The Bible says that if you are a Christian, you are a sojourner, which means that this world as we currently know it, is not your final home. Picture this with me. Imagine you have a home, massive typhoon, a T10, sweeps through Hong Kong, and your home has got severe damage done to it.

You can't live there anymore. And so you've got to move to another place, a temporary accommodation, for six weeks while your home is being repaired. Okay? Maybe some of you had to do that last year.

[ 47 : 10 ] So you're in temporary accommodation for six weeks while your home is being repaired. It would be crazy to overcapitalize on that home, to spend millions of dollars fixing it up because there are slight inconveniences, to bash down walls and redo the whole kitchen just while you're there for six weeks.

There might be some things that are inconvenient, and what do you do? You just put up with those inconveniences because you know you're going home. Friends, Jesus tells us this world as we currently know it is a temporary arrangement.

There is coming a day when we'll be taken home again. And therefore, we don't need to overcapitalize in this world. Our hope is not in the things of this world. Things will go wrong. People will let us down.

We will experience disappointments. That's true. But our hope doesn't lie here. We're living for our home that is coming. And next week, we're going to hear about it. Third thing and final thing is this.

Friends, for those of us that are Christians, keep looking to Jesus. Fix your eyes on Jesus. In the midst of the challenges of this world, in the midst of all the difficulties, in the midst of everything that's going on, fix our eyes on Jesus.

[ 48 : 20 ] Friends, the book of Revelation is not some strange conspiracy theory. It's not some secret code book to let us know how the world is all going to end. Friends, the book of Revelation is given to us because John wants to tell us, in the midst of what's going on, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

The first century Christians had two great temptations. The one temptation was to trust in the power and the prestige and the pomp of Rome. To think, Rome's going to save us. And John writes and says, no, no, no, don't put your trust in Rome, put your trust in Jesus.

The other temptation was this, to hold onto their lives and to think that to avoid suffering was the way to life. And John writes and says, don't put your hope in your life now, put your hope in Jesus.

In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, Jesus has overcome the world. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Friends, Jesus says to us this morning, be faithful even to the point of death.

I will give you the crown of life. Fix our eyes on Jesus. Friends, one day Jesus will come back and in that place you'll conquer all wickedness and evil.

[ 49 : 30 ] One day Jesus will come and bring a new heavens and a new earth. In the midst of all that's going on, Jesus, the one who is faithful in truth calls us to himself, to look to him and to trust him. We know that we may not know exactly how the world ends, we may not know the sequence and what exactly happens, but we do know this, Jesus is coming and Jesus is going to bring us home.

Let's fix our eyes on him. Let's close our eyes and pray. Let's respond to Jesus' words this morning.

Maybe before we pray, I want to give us just a minute of silence. Maybe even the band we can just hold out for a second. And I want to ask you, what is one thing that God has possibly said to you this morning?

I hope in all of this God has said something to you. What is one thing that you feel like Jesus is saying to you and how are you going to respond to that?

What is one thing God? Let's take a minute and just think of that. Let's take a minute and just think of that. Heavenly Father, what do you want to say to us this morning?

[ 51 : 17 ] God, come and speak to us, we pray. Lord, we pray that this week as we go into this city, pray you will remind us that this world as we currently know it is not our home. Father, may we not lose our minds when things go wrong.

May we not lose our minds when disappointments arise, when people let us down, when things don't work out the way that we'd hoped they would. Jesus, I pray help us to fix our eyes on you.

God, I pray that tomorrow morning when we wake up and get ready for work, or to go to class, or to take exams, that God, we will fix our eyes on you, God.

I pray that on Tuesday, God, as we look after kids, or make business deals, or we travel, for work, that Jesus will fix our eyes on you, Lord. I pray, God, on Wednesday, when we have to make some presentation, or our boss is disappointed with us, or we make some mistake at work, and we think it's the end of the world, help us to fix our eyes on you, God.

Father, I pray that this week, we will be faithful witnesses. We'll be courageous, God, and point to the hope of Jesus, Lord. God, when things go wrong, may we remember that you, Christ, are coming again.

[ 52 : 30 ] That you will put an end to all that is wrong and broken of this world. You are bringing your new heavens and your new earth, God. Will there be no more tears and no more mourning, no more pain and anxiety.

Jesus, we long for that day. Help us to live in hope and anticipation of the day, we pray. We pray these things in your wonderful name. Amen.