

Sermon Outline

“How the Story Ends”, Revelation 21:1-8 – Joshua Harris – May 19, 2013

Introduction

1. The book of Revelation was written to give courage to the hearts of Christians who were facing trouble. The word “revelation” means unveiling. Revelation is a book that unveils and reveals the unseen spiritual battle against Satan with which the church is engaged.
2. The central message of Revelation is absolutely clear, and practical and essential for Christians of every generation: in the end, Jesus Christ will be victorious! At the end of the world every enemy of God will be defeated. Human kingdoms will fall. Satan will be cast down. And the greatest enemy – death itself – will be vanquished forever.

God will make the world new (verse 1)

1. John writes in verse 1 that he saw “a new heaven and a new earth.” John is describing our world and the universe, but he sees it rejuvenated and fundamentally transformed. The God who first spoke the world and all creation into existence is going to make the world new. And it’s going to be perfect. It’s going to be freed from the bondage and decay of sin. It’s going to be new and fixed in all the ways that human beings in our wickedness have broken and ruined it.
2. In Revelation, the sea is the symbol of chaos, human rebellion and danger. It’s out of the sea that the enemies of God arise. It’s the sea where the wicked nations ply their trade and rule the earth. When John says, “the sea was no more” he’s saying “all the effects of human sin and treachery and God-hating have been erased!”
 - a. We will not stop being human in heaven. Instead, we will learn what it means to truly be human. We’ll engage in work and creativity and building and scientific study like we’ve never done before. We’ll explore, discover and make music like we’ve never imagined. In Romans 8:20 the Apostle Paul tells us that in the new earth “creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

God will dwell among his people (verses 2-3)

1. In verses 2-3, the holy city, Jerusalem represents the people of God dwelling in God’s place. So the New Jerusalem described here is the church of Jesus Christ. It’s the people of God from every tribe, nation and language.
2. Here is the most incredible news: the God who saved us by grace will dwell among us. This is a present reality for the church – but there is a future fullness yet to be experienced. We have his Holy Spirit and his presence now. But that’s only a foretaste of future glory!

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- a. 1 John 3:2 says “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” We shall see him as he is because we will be freed from the blinding effects of our sin. We will know unbroken, unhindered, and unending fellowship with our Maker and Savior.

God will make all things right (verse 4)

1. Verse 4 tells us that God is not only going to remake the world and eradicate sin, he is also going to take away all lingering effects of sin in our hearts and lives.
 - a. Tears of regret. Tears of guilt. Tears of broken promises. Tears of loss and separation. Tears over what was taken from us. Tears of loneliness and secret anguish. We all have our own stories of how our sin and other people’s sin have harmed us. One day Jesus is going to make it right. The hands that were pierced for us so that all our guilt is gone will One Day wipe away our tears.

Our Response to John’s Revelation (verses 5-8)

Receive God’s free salvation

1. This passage ends with a sober warning: those who turn away from Jesus, those who disobey God and reject his rule will die and be sentenced to the lake of fire. Hell is a real place. Jesus spoke of it more than anything else. God is a righteous judge. All sin and wickedness will be paid for – either by Jesus who died for those who would place their faith in him or by those in hell who refuse his salvation.
2. But God’s mercy and forgiveness is offered to all of us today! His salvation is free! We don’t have to earn it. Verse 6 speaks of this free salvation when it says, “To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”

Believe and persevere

1. If you are a Christian, God is calling you today to believe the promise of his Word. The ultimate victory about which he has spoken will happen. That’s why John could write, “these words are trustworthy and true.”
2. We should not live by our feelings or emotions. We must believe the trustworthy and true Word of God. We must not let the enemy use our circumstances to draw us away from God and his goodness. We must fix our eyes on Jesus, hold on to the promises of His Word and cry out for the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain us.

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Mourn with hope

1. This passage doesn't ignore the reality of the heartache of this world or glibly tell us to cheer up because we're going to heaven. It acknowledges our grief. It acknowledges our sickness and our pain and our tears. It doesn't ask us to pretend that all is right in the world. But it does ask us to believe and hope in the promise that Jesus will one day make things right. Our final comfort will not come in this life.
2. Thomas Brooks wrote, "Ah, believer, it is only Heaven that is above all winds, storms, and tempests; God did not cast man out of Paradise that he might find another paradise in this world." In this fallen world, God has not promised us another paradise or a better life. But he has promised us a better eternity. That's how the story ends.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Revelation 21:1-8.
2. Which truths in Revelation 21:1-8 are the most meaningful to you right now?
3. How does knowing and believing the end of the story encourage your faith and inform this day in your life?
4. As a response to John's vision, have you received God's free gift of salvation? If so, does your life reflect that Jesus is the Lord of your life?
5. We are called to believe and persevere in our walk with Christ. What is hindering you from believing and persevering? What Scriptures strengthen your heart to believe and persevere?
6. In the midst of difficulties and adversity, how does God's abiding presence bring comfort and hope?
7. What does it look like for you to fix your eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-3) during the storm?