

## *“The Story’s Epilogue”*

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Where do we go from here? Because the story exceeds the boundaries placed on it, it engulfs everyone and everything that lies in its path. God wrote every detail into the story. He knows what will happen before it happens simply because He is God. There is only one book that gives us “the rest of the story.” It is found almost exclusively in the book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation is notably apocalyptic literature. This means it uses symbolism to communicate its thoughts. **The meaning is not in the symbol but in what the symbol represents.** “It is literature born out of crisis and was a means of addressing that crisis to a religious community.”<sup>1</sup> This means the intent of the literature was to explain present conflict and provide immediate hope. The book of Revelation is remarkably singular in its purpose. Chapter 1 verse 1 opens with the following statement,

<sup>1</sup> **“The Revelation of Jesus Christ,** which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, **the things which must soon take place;** and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, <sup>2</sup> who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. <sup>3</sup> Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; **for the time is near”** (Rev. 1:1-3).

This singular idea cannot be abandoned when seeking to understand what the book contains. Everything about the story is from God, through God, and for the glory of God. The centerpiece to the story is the person and work of Jesus Christ as He works to save His people from their shame, fear, and guilt. The Book of Revelation provides “a last word” that enables the reader to see how the story will end. Neither the beginning, nor the middle, nor the ending of the story are left to chance. **God neither wonders nor questions how the story will end.** The Revelation is not simply speaking of something that is still hundreds of thousands of years in the future. The Revelation speaks of story “which must soon take place.” It speaks of a story that is near and not far off. “When the author walks on to the stage the play is over.”<sup>2</sup> It is this “last word” that explains our present conflict and provides immediate hope.

It is interesting to remember how the last handful of biblical books to be written are the Gospels ([Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John] “The Hero’s Arrival and Work”) and Paul’s last letters ([1 and 2 Timothy] “The Hero’s Legacy”). Most of these works were written 25-30 years before the Revelation of Jesus by John (about 90AD). The Holy Spirit left us with a story that highlights what is necessary for us to continue in the retelling of the story. The story will carry on with the continued expansion of His kingdom on earth until such a time (an exact and predetermined time) when the Father will send His Son once more to fully establish His kingdom on earth just as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). At such a time there will be a revisiting of conditions as existed in the Garden of Eden. The villain will finally and fully be assigned his residency in a place where God’s goodness will no longer be felt. Those who persist in their rebellion against the king will similarly languish in the horror of the Hero’s absence.

*Continued on the other side...*



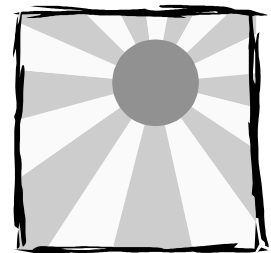
The Hero's work will prove lavish for those whom He calls His own. They will experience the fullness of His unveiled presence in unimaginable ways. They will bask in the King's glory. All those things the created currently deem best will pale in the presence of their Creator, their Deliverer, their Hero, God's Hero. All of the shadows will give way to the substance. No longer will the shadow even tempt those who live in fellowship with the King. Every residue of faith will give way to unhindered sight. In His presence is fullness of joy and in His presence are pleasures forever more (Ps. 16:11). We will forever be at rest. We will never experience discontent again. No sin, in any way, will taint the palatable presence of the King.

There will be no concern as to who is or is not present. There will be no concern of reward or missed opportunity. All regret will be forever removed. We will not concern ourselves with streets of gold or gates of pearl. All those "things" that currently occupy our thinking as it relates to the "end times" will be of no consequence in that day. In that day all of our failure will give way to constant conformity. In that day we will finally and forever lay down the shield of faith used to quench the fire darts of the devil (Eph. 6:16), our relentless adversary (1 Pet. 5:8).

Words like delicious, thrilling, mouth-watering, adrenaline pumping, mind blowing, and exhilarating will be fittingly inadequate to describe that which is exceeding abundantly beyond what we could possibly ask or think (Eph. 3:20). How can a creature possibly capture in language or act the Creator? How can the rescued speak effectively of the Rescuer? How can the delivered thank enough the Deliverer?

Yet this is the story's end. There is coming a time when, "EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10, 11). There is coming a time when, "Every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, [will say], 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.' And the four living creatures kept saying, 'Amen.' And the elders fell down and worshiped" (Rev. 5:13, 14).

The story will end where it began . . . with God: God, in all of His glory, receiving the tribute worthy of His person and work. This is the storyline of the Bible. It has been and will forever be about Him. It will forever be about who He is, what He has done, and who His people are because of Him. Let us never lessen our pursuit of Him. Let us find all He is as being enough in this life and in the life to come. May we now and forever "determine to shout the supremacy of God in all things (Rom. 11:36) by finding, celebrating and declaring He is enough in this life and the life that is to come (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 4, 5) through the systematic study of His Word (2 Tim. 2:15) and to share this message with every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 5:9)."



Amen and amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://faculty.bbc.edu/rdecker/phd/depriest/1defined.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 66.