

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabible.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabible.org).

**Date:** Jan. 18, 2009

**Title:** The Story’s Epilogue - The Kingdom of God

**Text:** Revelation 22:1-5

**Theme:** The storyline of the Bible will come full circle. It will end where it began, with God.

**Author:** Patrick J. Griffiths ©2009

Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

## The Storyline of the Bible

Date: Jan. 18, 2009

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Text: Revelation 22:1-5

Theme: The storyline of the Bible will come full circle. It will end where it began, with God.

### **THE BIG PICTURE**

- The Subject of the Story - The Person and Purpose of God
- The Villain Appears
- The Hero Foretold
- The Hero Arrives
- The Hero's Work
- The Hero's Legacy
- The Story's Epilogue

### **Its Eternal Value:**

The value of knowing the end of the story is to fill His people with hope. Because we know how the story will end, we can persevere.

### **The Storyline:**

God has written the end of the story. All that He promised will come to pass. One day we will live in the Hero's immediate presence. It will be a day of unbridled joy.

### **The Problem:**

Our problem is that we do not live in light of the end. We allow ourselves to believe that the villain is winning and that our Hero is not currently working in our behalf. We must remember that the Hero has won and we are living in His victory.

### **Questions:**

1. Think of what we read in Revelation 19-22. What does this tell you about the story?
2. Think of the big ideas contained in 19:20, 21; 21:1-8; 22:1-5. What are the big ideas?
3. Knowing the end of the story, how does this change your thinking and your behavior?
4. What images are used to describe the perfected kingdom?
5. What are the features of life in the new creation?
6. How does it reflect the Garden of Eden?
7. Who will enjoy its benefits?
8. What should be the implication of these truths about the future for our lives now?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

**To Know:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the story will end where it began, with God.

**To Choose:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose to rest in the author's purpose even when we do not understand.

**To Feel:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in the person and purpose of the story's author knowing the end is certain and the finish in sight.

**Introduction:**

While teaching the children in our fellowship the story of God I asked the question, "What do you do if you find yourself in a part of the story you do not understand?" One of the children cried out, "Keep reading the story!" Friend that is the best counsel I could give to any one who finds themselves in the hard place, "Keep reading the story!" I would like us to keep reading and find where the story ends.

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 very 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. In the midst of their hardship, "There is very little sign of the kingdom of God on earth during their persecution. But, whatever it may feel like, God is in control. **There is a throne in heaven and it is not empty.**"<sup>2</sup> 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>3</sup> It is this "last word" that explains our present conflict and provides immediate hope.

**Outline:**

- I. The Villain's Absence (19:11-20:15)

God's judgment against human autonomy (18) and supernatural anarchy (19, 20) is inclusive and conclusive.

- A. The economy of the antichrist is destroyed ["Babylon falls" Rev. 18:8, 17)
- B. The military of the antichrist is destroyed (Rev. 19:17-20:10)
- C. The authority of the antichrist is destroyed (Rev. 19:20; 20:10)
- D. The sentence against the antichrist is completed (Rev. 20:11-15)

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.

This is what hell will be. No matter what imagery we use to depict hell, hell is the absence of God.

## II. The Hero's Presence ([21:3] 21:1-22:5)

Hitherto the prophecy of this book has presented to us a very remarkable mixture of light and shade, prosperity and adversity, mercy and judgment, in the conduct of divine Providence towards the church in the world: now, **at the close of all, the day breaks, and the shadows flee away; a new world now appears, the former having passed away.**<sup>4</sup>

- A. The new heaven, new earth, the New Jerusalem (21:1-8)

This same idea is continued in verses 22-27.

Notice the language of 21:6, "It is done." "All is as sure as if it actually had been fulfilled for it rests on the word of the unchanging God. When the consummation shall be, God shall rejoice over the work of His own hands, as at the completion of the first creation God *saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good* (Gen. 1:31)."<sup>5</sup>

What God does is very good. He is bringing to completion that which He alone began.

The misery of the damned will illustrate the blessedness of those that are saved, and the blessedness of the saved will aggravate the misery of those that are damned. <sup>6</sup>

1. He will dwell among them (21:3).
2. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes (21:4).
3. There will no longer be any death (v. 4).
4. There will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain (v. 4).
5. He will make all things new (v. 5).
6. He will finish what He began (v. 6)
7. He will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost (v. 6).
8. There will be no rebel or rebellion in the city (v. 8)

#### B. The New Jerusalem described (21:9-21)

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).

#### III. The Believer's Joy (21:22-27).

The story ends where it began . . . in the Garden.

##### A. The Hero's presence (21:22-27)

There the saints are above the need of ordinances, which were the means of their preparation for heaven. When the end is attained the means are no longer useful. Perfect and immediate communion with God will more than supply the place of gospel institutions.<sup>7</sup>

It is here where we see how the shadow gives way to the substance. The shadow is no longer necessary.

As God now dwells in the spiritual Church, His 'temple' (1Co 3:17; 6:19), so the Church when perfected shall dwell in Him as her 'temple'. As the Church was 'His sanctuary,'

so He is to be their sanctuary. Means of grace shall cease when the end of grace is come. Church ordinances shall give place to the God of ordinances. Uninterrupted, immediate, direct, communion with Him and the Lamb (compare John 4:23), shall supersede intervening ordinances.<sup>8</sup>

The presence of God in heaven is the health and happiness of the saints.<sup>9</sup>

1. His presence eliminates the need for the shadow (v. 22).
2. His presence eliminates the need for the sun (v. 23).
3. His presence eliminates the need for security (v. 25).
4. His presence eliminates the sinner (v. 27).

#### B. The Garden of God (22:1-5)

The intent is to take us back to the time before the rebellion and the fall.

The harmonious unity of Scripture is herein exhibited. The Fathers compared it to a ring, an unbroken circle, returning into itself. Between the events of Genesis and those at the close of the Apocalypse, at least six thousand or seven thousand years intervene; and between Moses the first writer and John the last about one thousand five hundred years. How striking it is that, as in the beginning we found Adam and Eve, his bride, in innocence in Paradise, then tempted by the serpent, and driven from the tree of life, and from the pleasant waters of Eden, yet not without a promise of a Redeemer who should crush the serpent; so at the close, the old serpent cast out for ever by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, who appears with His Bride, the Church, in a better Paradise, and amidst better waters (Rev. 22:1): the tree of life also is there with all its *healing* properties, not guarded with a flaming sword, but open to all who overcome (Re 2:7), and there is no more curse.<sup>10</sup>

God makes the Garden. He is what gives the Garden its value.

1. The river of life (1)
2. The tree of life (2)

The language intentionally takes us back to the Garden of Eden to a time before the fall.

“Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; **the tree of life also in the midst of the garden**, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9).

<sup>16</sup> “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; <sup>17</sup> **but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die’” (Gen. 2:16, 17).

“So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction **to guard the way to the tree of life**” (Gen. 3:24).

The tree from which they were barred, they may now freely eat. Some suggest that the tree of life is immutable immortality. Once one eats they can never change.

4. The lifting of the curse (v. 3).
5. The Throne of God and the Lamb of God (vv. 4, 5)
6. Nothing evil is present (v. 5).

What does this mean? Four ideas:

- a. His people will enjoy unhindered fellowship with God.
- b. His people will enjoy unhindered fellowship with one another.
- c. His people will no longer have any occasion for shame, fear, and guilt.
- d. His people will never and can never be tempted again.

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?

For we are slow to believe that God is as good as He is. The news seems to us, habituated as we are to the misery of this fallen world, too good to be true [NANGLE]. They are no dreams of a visionary, but the realities of God's sure word. <sup>11</sup>

The promises of the kingdom will all be completely fulfilled at the end of time. God's people will consist of all those, from every nation, who trust in Christ. They will be united together in God's place, the new creation and new Jerusalem, which is the new temple. And they will all submit to God's rule and therefore know his perfect blessing. The throne of God and of the Lamb is right at the center of everything, and from it a river flows, bringing life and prosperity to everyone (22:1-1). But all of this is still to come. **The New Testament ends where the Old Testament ended: looking forward; waiting for the final fulfillment of the promises of God.** Jesus reassures his people, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' And, if we understand the wonder of what is in store for us, we reply, 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus' (22:20).<sup>12</sup>

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.

**SHEPHERDING THE PEOPLE:** (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. As we read the various stages of the storyline in the Bible, we must ask, “Where are we in the Bible’s storyline?”
2. Because God is the hero of the Bible from beginning to end, and He never changes, we must ask, “What does this passage tell me about Him and my relationship to Him?”
3. How do you affirm the storyline of the Bible in your daily routines?

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

<sup>2</sup> Vaughan Roberts, *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*, 140.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>4</sup> [emphasis added] *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on Revelation 21*

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/jamieson/jfb.xi.xxvii.xxii.html>

<sup>6</sup> *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on Revelation 21*.

<sup>7</sup> *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on Revelation 21*.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/jamieson/jfb.xi.xxvii.xxii.html>

<sup>9</sup> *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on Revelation 22*.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/jamieson/jfb.xi.xxvii.xxii.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/jamieson/jfb.xi.xxvii.xxii.html>

<sup>12</sup> Vaughan Roberts, *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*, 150, 151.