

CHAPTER 31
The End of Time

TIMELESS TRUTH: The King Is Coming!

CHAPTER SUMMARY: (Have someone in your group read the summary section.)

Yes, I am coming soon. —Jesus. Of the original apostles, only John remained to hear these words. He had experienced the climax of salvation history, but God was not yet finished. He had one more message to share with John and the growing churches to show His servants what must soon take place.

John was exiled on the island of Patmos for his faith in Jesus. It was here that the glorified Christ appeared to John with a message of His second coming. John saw someone “like a son of man” dressed in a priestly robe and ready to judge. He fell like a dead man at His feet. This John who had leaned against Jesus’ breast (John 13:25) could not even stand before Christ’s unveiled glory. Jesus presented Himself as the resurrected One who has authority over life and death. He stood among seven golden lamp stands, which represent the seven churches located in the province of Asia Minor on the mainland close to the island of Patmos.

Jesus had messages for each of these seven churches. From the three churches addressed in this chapter, a pattern emerges. First, there’s a unique description of Jesus that is related to the message. Then each message contains both a word of commendation and a rebuke for the congregation. He then gives an instruction or warning before an encouraging promise to those who listen and overcome the problem. Jesus who stands among the lamp stands was carefully watching His churches.

John then saw the throne room of heaven where he was shown visions of future events. God sat upon His throne in unimaginable splendor and beauty. He was surrounded by living creatures and elders who worshiped Him without ceasing. He held a scroll that no one was found worthy to open, causing John to weep. But John’s hope was restored when he saw the Lamb standing as if slain. For the Lamb was worthy to open the scroll and also to receive power and glory and honor and praise!

Shortly thereafter, the bride, who symbolizes all faithful believers, was ready, wearing clean linen and prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Then John saw heaven opened and Jesus descended in full glory on a white horse ready to wage war and judge mankind. The King of Kings was ready to rule with blazing eyes and a blood drenched robe, a sharp sword and filled with the fury of God’s wrath. He was accompanied by the armies of heaven. His appearance is a dramatic reminder of the awfulness of God’s coming judgment upon those who reject the Lord. God’s final judgment from His great white throne is the final event of human history as we know it. The dead stand before Him in judgment. Those not found in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire.

Then John saw the New Heaven and New Earth and the New Jerusalem. In this future re-creation, God dwells among His people where He wipes away every tear. Many themes from His redemptive Story find their culmination in this place where all things are made new. The majestic and glorious New Jerusalem will be home to all the redeemed. Nothing impure will ever enter it. The water of life flows from the throne of God, the tree of life bears much fruit, and all are invited to partake. This place is the hope of every believer, for it is where God’s Upper Story and His Lower Story finally merge into one. It is here that the redeemed will enjoy the presence of God and of the Lamb forever. As Jesus concluded His message to John, three times He said, “Look, I am coming soon!” No wonder we are called blessed! Our King is coming! Come, Lord Jesus, come!

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Have you ever had a dream that seemed so real that when you awoke you had to convince yourself that it had not actually happened? What was the dream about?

GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. Why might Christians resist studying this book? According to this chapter, what are the benefits connected to studying Revelation? (Hint: p. 459, 469; Rev. 1:3, 22:7)
2. Make a list of the various ways God the Father and God the Son are described throughout this chapter of The Story. For example, on page 459, the Father is “him who is, and who was, and who is to come”; Jesus Christ is the “faithful witness.” After completing your list, discuss what one or two of these descriptions mean.
3. Jesus’ messages to the seven churches usually follow a general pattern: a description of Himself, a commendation, a rebuke, a warning or instruction, and a promise. Compose a letter to your church using this format.
4. Notice the description of the throne room of heaven (p. 463, Rev. 4:1-6). Look up Ezekiel 1:26-28, Exodus 19:16 and 20:18, Job 37:4, and John 12:27-28. What do these images communicate about God?
5. What four-fold reason makes the Lamb worthy to open the scroll and receive praise (p. 464)?
6. Read Matthew 24:29-44, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, and Titus 2:11-14. How should you live in anticipation of Christ’s return?
7. From what you have learned in this chapter about the great white throne judgment and the lake of fire, how might you respond to the person who does not believe that a loving God could ever sentence anyone to hell (p. 466-467; Rev. 20:11-15, 21:8)? See also Revelation 20:10 and Matthew 25:41 for further insight.
8. Find at least three similarities between the original creation (Genesis 1-2) and the new heaven and new earth (p. 466-469; Rev. 21-22). How do these sections of Scripture contribute to our understanding of God’s Upper Story and what would we be missing without them?
9. Share with your group how The Story experience has impacted how you live now.

In the time remaining ask your group members to share any of their personal reflection insights from their journal entries.