

The End of God's Restoration Project

Thesis: God's restoration project ends with His New Covenant community living in a recreated and restored world, with unhindered access to God, worshipping Him as He perfectly reigns and rules over them.

Big Question: How does God's story end? And how can we experience the joys of the end of that story?

Scripture Reading: Revelation 21-22

Introduction

I don't know about you but I have a problem finishing books.

- Not so much novels, but I have a hard time finishing my Christian Living and Theology books.
 - Typically, I'll start reading a book, get really excited about it, and then after a 100 or so pages that excitement begins to wane, my focus turns somewhere else, and that book ends up next to my chair in the "currently reading" pile.

Which really isn't a "currently reading" pile because it's currently about 10 books high.

- Some books have been in the pile, I kid you not, for over a year.

Now, eventually a question will arise and I'll get back to that book.

- I might finish it, but that's not always the case.

My other pastor friends and ministry leaders I follow assure me that my reading habit is not a problem.

- They argue books are tools and not all books are meant to be read cover to cover.
 - You use them for the task at hand, then put them away like any other tool in your shed.
 - I like that analogy.
 - I not only think it's a helpful way to think about reading, but it makes me feel better because that pile by my chair isn't getting any smaller.

While I have a hard time finishing books, one book and one story that will eventually come to an end whether we get back to it or not is the biblical story.

- There is no stopping time.
 - It keeps marching forward, which means God's story will eventually come to an end whether we are ready for it to come or not.

As believers, we don't have to fear the end of God's story because we know how it will end.

- God gives us a sneak peek, a spoiler, if you will, of what His restoration project will look like when it is finished.
 - Believe me, you want to be a part of God's restoration project.

Transition: So:

How does God's story end? And how can we experience the joys of the end of that story?

Let's turn to God's Word and answer those two questions. First, we see that

I. God's Story Ends with the New Covenant community living in a recreated and restored world (vs. Re 21-22)

Unless you live under a rock, you know:

A. THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE ISN'T PERFECT.

- All you have to do is turn on the news or open the newspaper to figure that out.
- Apart from documenting the rainfall and what is happening in sports, you frequently see headlines like:
 - Sex offender given life sentence.
 - Driver crashes into tree.
 - CEO on trial for embezzling money.
 - A corruption scandal uncovered.
 - Headlines like these and others are front page news all the time, so much so that we don't even bat an eye when we read or hear about them.
 - That idea that we are desensitized to these shocking stories should clue you into the fact that we don't live in a perfect world.

Transition: But:

Just because we don't live in a perfect world, doesn't mean we don't want to live in a perfect world.

- If we are honest with ourselves, we all long to live in a perfect world.
 - This longing begins when we are children.

ILLUSTRATION: One year for Camden and Bryson's birthday — their 4th and 2nd birthday, we had a super hero themed party.

- I am sure many of you have probably done the same for your kids.
 - It ended up being a fun birthday.
 - All the kids wore their super hero costumes.
 - We handed out super hero party favors.
 - We even had a super hero themed photo booth.
 - It was a fun party.

- **But why super heroes?**

- Why did our boys choose that theme?
 - **Why do grownups watch super hero movies, buy super hero comics, and even super hero costumes?**
 - *I believe it is because we know the world in which we live is broken.*
 - We want this world to be **fixed**.
 - We want it to **operate rightly**.
 - We **long** for **something** or **someone** to **set things right**.
 - *We know we can't set the world right.*
 - But **maybe** someone who is **super human**, who has powers we don't, can push back the darkness and fix the brokenness.
 - Our longing for the world to be fixed is what draws us to super human feats and super heroes.
- **While you might have believed Super Man could fix the world when you were a kid, hopefully you know by now that the Man of Steel isn't going to fix this broken world.**
 - No matter how strong Super Man is, he can't provide the Utopia for which we all long.

But you know who can and who will fix this broken world?

- God can and God will fix this broken world.
 - Through the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus, everything will be set right.
 - Everything that is broken will be restored.

Transition: How can we be so sure the world will be restored?

B. EVEN THOUGH THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE IS NOT PERFECT, WE EXPERIENCE THE BENEFITS OF JESUS' RESTORATION PROJECT AS WE LIVE IN THE ALREADY/NOT YET.

Or to say it another way, we know this world is going to be restored because we experience the benefits of a restored world even now.

Jesus came and lived a perfect life in our place.

- He **performed** when we failed.
 - Jesus rescues us even now from having to live a performance driven life.
 - We can readily admit our failures.
 - We can face them.
 - We can work on them.
 - Our performance doesn't earn us our salvation, nor is it necessary to perform to keep our salvation.
 - Because Jesus performed on our behalf, we are able to enter into God's kingdom.

Jesus also came and died in our place.

- He paid the penalty for our sin.
 - Those who believe Jesus died for them, experienced a restored relationship with the Father, even now.
 - We don't need to **run** from **God** when we sin.
 - We **don't** need to **hide in shame, fear, and guilt**.
 - Instead, we can **admit our sin** and ask God to help us because He is our **Father** and we are His children.
 - As a Father, He is there for us.
 - We experience **God's Fatherly care now** and in the future kingdom.

Jesus also defeated sin, Satan, and death.

- Sin does not have to rule us.
 - We have been freed from the bondage of sin.
 - We can put away our sins and live according to God's will and His wisdom.
 - **We can live as those who have been renewed in heart**, even now.

Even now, we experience the benefits of Jesus' restoration project.

- His life, death, and resurrection:
 - It frees us from a performance driven life.
 - It keeps from sinking away from God in shame, fear, and guilt.
 - And it allows us to live as renewed citizens of the kingdom to come now.

Transition: While we experience those blessings now, you have to know that Jesus isn't finished with His restoration project.

- That doesn't mean He is not going finish it.
 - He certainly will.
 - One day:

C. JESUS WILL COMPLETE HIS RESTORATION PROJECT WHEN HE RETURNS.

- When that day comes, He will completely defeat Satan and judge the world (Rev. 20:11-15).
 - Once that's taken place we are told in Revelation 21 that a New Heavens and New Earth will appear.

Look at the text starting in verse 1,

*"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.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”” (Re 21:1–5)

The longing that begins in us as a kid to live in a perfect world is realized in Jesus.

- He is the One who makes all things new.
- He is the One who will restore this broken world so that it is perfect again.

The world will be perfect because God’s kingly rule will be fully consummated as sinful rebellion is completely and finally eradicated.

- Again, we are able to experience a taste of that now.
- We live in what is commonly called **the already/not yet**.
 - Jesus is reigning and ruling, and we are able to exercise our kingly priestly vocation now, but not fully and completely.
 - **We are still hindered by sin and the world in which we live does not submit to Jesus as if He is King.**
 - The world continues to seek His throne, attempting to live as big “K” kings instead of little “k” kings.
 - But that will not last forever.
 - Jesus will return, He will eradicate all rebellion and setup His perfect kingdom.
 - We will one day, live in the “not yet” of the already not yet.

Transition: And the “not yet” of the kingdom to come will be perfect.

Verse 4 tells us that there will be no tears, no death, no mourning, crying, or pain.

- Cancer
- Aids
- Dementia
- Failing health
- These things won’t exist in the world to come.

And if you skip across the page to **Revelation 22 verse 3**, we learn that:

“No longer will there be anything accursed” in the world to come (Re 22:3a)

When John says there won’t be anything accursed in the kingdom to come, he means there won’t be anyone living in God’s kingdom who is sinful.

- Everyone who lives in the world to come will be sinless.
- The New Heavens and New Earth won’t consist of users and abusers.
- There won’t be any broken relationships.
- God’s perfect sinless people will serve and love one another in ways in which we can only dream.

Transition: In the New Heavens and the New Earth, there will be life and that life will be abundant for all eternity. The reason that will be the case is because:

D. IN THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH OUR LIFE WILL BE PERFECTLY SUSTAINED BY GOD

John makes that point when he writes about the river flowing from the throne of God starting in verse 1 of chapter 22.

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Re 22:1-2)

If you remember, in John chapter 4, Jesus talks with the woman at the well.

- As He does, He offers her living water.
 - Water that would sustain her forever.
 - John's picture in Revelation is connected to Jesus' claim in John 4.
 - The picture John paints in Revelation is that of living water flowing from the throne of God.
 - The water flows from Jesus' throne throughout all the land creating a perfect Edenic paradise.
 - Since the water originates from the throne, it will never dry up.
 - It will flow for all eternity sustaining God's perfect world.

Transition: As if John's picture of the restored creation isn't magnificent enough, next we learn that God's story not only ends with us living in a perfect world, but:

II. God's story ends with us perfectly accomplishing our God given vocation (Rev. 21-22)

In verse 3 of chapter 21, John tells us that he...

"...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." (Re 21:3)

- In the world to come, God will be our King.
 - If you remember, this was something Israel rejected once they were in the Promised Land.
 - They wanted to be like the nations around them and have a human king rule over them.
 - That didn't go too well.

- The nation ended up splitting under Rehoboam and eventually being exiled from the Promised Land by God Himself.
 - While the entire nation sinned against God, it was the failure of the kings to lead their people to worship and obey.
- The kings failed because they weren't perfect.
 - They were sinners just like the citizens of their kingdom.
 - When you have an imperfect person leading imperfect people, there is bound to be failure.
 - Just think about your work.
 - We sin against one another all the time at work.
 - We are not shocked by that because we have imperfect leaders leading imperfect employees

Transition: But that won't be the case in the future because

A. IN THE FUTURE KINGDOM, WE WILL BE RULED BY A PERFECT KING AND WE WILL BE A PERFECT PEOPLE, PERFECTLY ACCOMPLISHING OUR GOD-GIVEN PURPOSE.

- Jesus will do what the Kings of old could not do
 - Instead of leading us into sin, or sinning against us, our future King will always lead us in righteousness.

As His people, who are free from sin, we will accept His reign over our lives.

- No one will set themselves against God.
 - They will recognize His wise leadership for what it is and will perfectly follow it as priestly kings.

This is, of course, something new.

- As Christians we should want to obey God, but that's not always how we live.
 - There are times when we go off and do our own thing because we believe ourselves to be the king.
 - We desire to rule according to our own wisdom, thinking we know what's best, but that's simple not true.
 - We don't know what's best, which is why the world, and even the church at times, is messed up.

But thankfully we have the reign of a perfect King to look forward to as well as a perfect heart which will desire God's reign and rule over our lives.

Transition: And

B. WHEN WE SUBMIT TO GOD AND SEEK TO ACCOMPLISH OUR GOD-GIVEN VOCATION, WE WORSHIP GOD.

- That's something else John tells us he sees in the Kingdom to come.
- In the last part of verse 4 of chapter 22, John says,

“...and his servants will worship him.” (Re 22:3b)

- Now some of your translations may have “*serve*” instead of worship.
- I think that translation is helpful because it is really getting to the heart of what it looks like for us to worship God.
 - It looks like us serving Him, and following His plan, His purposes all for His glory.

The idea of service as worship is what leads one writer to say,

“Worship is to be a way of life, one in which we honor and glorify God for who he is and what he has done. In true worship, we stand in reverent awe before him, acknowledging him to be our God, submitting to his sovereign rule in our life, and giving him our very best. Our lives are offered to him as living sacrifices. All that we do is sacred, because every act is lifted up to him as an offering. Of course, there is something unique and significant about believers coming together in corporate worship. But when they leave, they do not cease to worship but rather continue to honor and glorify God wherever they go and in whatever they do.”¹

You see what he's saying?

- ***All of life should be worship. Not just Sunday. All of life should be worship.***

I believe this is what John is getting at when he paints the picture of Jesus' servants worshipping Him.

- In the kingdom to come, we aren't just going to be gathered together in one big worship service for all eternity.
 - We are going to be active in God's world.
 - In that activity we will be serving God, we will be worshipping Him.

Transition: But worship isn't just something we will do in the world to come.

We should worship God now.

Not just once a week on Sunday. We should worship God daily.

We worship God daily:

- As we seek to live according to His will for our lives.
- As we live out the great commission to make disciples.

¹ Murray Capill, *The Heart is the Target*, 183-84

- As we love and care for one another.
- As we do our work unto the Lord in the vocation in which He has called us.
 - In our day to day lives, we can and should worship God through our day to day activities.
 - That’s something we will do in the world to come and that’s something we can do now.
 - We can worship God now by serving Him each and every day.

Transition: Continuing on in the narrative, we also learn that:

III. God’s story ends with us experiencing unhindered access to God (21:3; 22:4a)

Again, verse 3 of chapter 21 tells us God will dwell with man, and verse 4 of chapter 22 tells us we will not only dwell with God, but

“[We] *will see his face,*” (Re 22:4a)

- In other words, we will have an intimate relationship with God.
 - He won’t just be a King who lives in a castle that you never interact with.
 - We will be able to approach Him without fear of death.
 - We will be able to come boldly into His throne room.
 - We will be able to walk with Him in the cool of the garden like Adam and Eve.
 - That is what we have to look forward to — unhindered access to God.

The end of God’s story tells us that we will:

- Live in a perfect world
- Worshipping and serving a perfect King who perfectly rules over us.
- And we will have unhindered access to Him.

That is the picture of the world to come these two chapters capture for us.

- That’s what we have to look forward to.

Transition: I don’t know about you, but that sounds pretty great to me. But there is just one more question we need to answer, and that is:

IV. How Can We Experience the Joys of the Kingdom? (vs. Re 21-22)

In verse 27 of Revelation 21, John tells us that,

“...nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Re 21:27)

And again in verse 14 and 15 of Revelation 22 John tells us that only

“...those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”
(Re 22:14–15)

Clearly not everyone is allowed to enter and experience the joys of the kingdom.

What is the dividing line? What determines whether a person is in or out?

In verse 27, John mentions the Lamb’s book of life.

- He reveals that our names have to be written in it if we are going to enter.

Transition: As well as he tells us that:

No one who is unclean will be granted entrance to the Kingdom.

- In order to be clean, we have to have had our robes washed.
 - It is not clear from this verse how or in what way our robes must be washed, but back in chapter 7 in verse 14, John tells us that those who have already entered into Jesus’ presence have washed their robes in the blood of Christ.

How do we wash our robes in the blood of Christ?

Jesus blood isn’t a product we can run down to Walmart and purchase.

- So

How can we have our robes washed in Jesus’ blood?

The only way we can wash our robes in Jesus’ blood is to believe the gospel.

- The gospel is short hand for good news.

In biblical terms, the good news is that Jesus has taken our punishment for us.

- We are sinners who have sinned against God. In other words, we live in rebellion.
 - We want to do our own thing.
 - As those who have rebelled against God, we deserve to be punished by Him.
 - But God sent Jesus, who not only lived a perfect life, but also died the death we deserve.
 - He took our punishment on Himself when He hung on the cross at Calvary.

All those who would admit that they live in rebellion to God and deserve His punishment for doing so.

- As well as all those who believe that Jesus suffered and died in their place, in order to make a way for them to have a relationship with the Father...

- All those who would repent and believe those things will be covered or washed in the blood of Christ.
- When the Father looks down on us, He doesn't see an unclean people but a people who have been made holy through Jesus' blood.
- As a result we are able to enter and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom to come.

Apart from repenting and believing in Jesus, there is no other way to enter the kingdom and enjoy the blessings that come with it.

Transition: And

The good news in all of this is the ability to be washed in Jesus' blood is open to all.

Look at verse 17 of chapter 22,

"The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price." (Re 22:17)

We all can come. All peoples from all nations, all races, all socioeconomic statuses can come.

- Coming costs us nothing, even though it cost Jesus everything.
- We don't and we can't pay for the water of life.
- It's freely given to those who repent and believe.

It is the gospel that is going to heal our broken world.

- It is the gospel that will bring us together and create unity in this country and in this world.
- And that's why we must center in on Jesus.
- That's why we must focus on him and him alone.
- That's why we must turn to Jesus.

Conclusion

So if you haven't yet repented and believed, heed Jesus' words and come.

- If you are thirsty and desire life eternal, come.
- If you want to experience the joys of the kingdom, come.
- Come to Jesus!

And if you have turned to Jesus, if you believe in Him, then praise God because:

God's restoration project ends with His New Covenant community living in a recreated and restored world, with unhindered access to God, worshipping Him as He perfectly reigns and rules over us.

That's how God's restoration project ends.

- That's how we can experience the joys of the kingdom to come.

Will you experience those joys?

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.