

Christ Community Covenant Church
The Story: Chapter 31 – Time’s up!
Pastor Dave Scherrer - May 6, 2012

Well times up! Here we are at the finish line. Today we will draw our year-long study to a close. We have met so many people that God has used to tell His story. Take out your copy of the Story and in a moment I am going to ask you to remember. That is a familiar theme with God - ‘Remembering Him’ that is.

Deuteronomy 8:18

But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

So let’s take that moment to reflect on the story. What have been your impressions left from our study? Themes you have seen, people you have met, things perhaps you have never remember hearing before? Let’s share a few . . .

[Sharing]

This has been a hard message to prepare. I know that it is important to deal with the fascinating and extremely important message of Revelation and I want to do that and we will. But it is also our only chance to put a ribbon around our year-long study and find the Moral to the Story – one last take away gift from God. So we will try to do that too and still save time for communion!

This book is of course amazing. It is about the Apostle John’s vision of Heaven. Jesus wanted us to know about heaven so that we could be encouraged and so that we would have hope. We can tell that right from the get-go of the Revelation vision account:

Revelation 1:1-8

The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

“Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”

So shall it be! Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

We won’t have time today to unpack all that we read in the Story from this book. Not long ago I preached on the first few chapters of this book, the portion that refers to the letters to the seven churches. And I promised then that someday I would preach on the whole book. I am going to renew that promise today...but not today! There is a certain *mystic* to this book and that is because it is dealing with things that we cannot see with physical eyes.

The “Revelation Mystic” or “Things are not as they seem”

This book reminds us that there are spiritual powers and principalities and a world at play that are even more real than the seemingly so concrete world that we live in. Because this world is passing away,

Revelation reminds us that ***“Things are not as they seem.”*** There is an upper story, a reality from God’s perspective that is so very real and eternal. Maybe the best we can do today is to simply unpack a few of the terms that you may hear associated with Revelation:

END TIMES – This refers quite literally to the end of time as we know it. Christians believe that someday Christ will return to earth in His Eternal form and will set all things right. There will be a judgment and all will stand before Christ to give an account of their life and to declare their faith in Christ or confess their unbelief. And from that point on it will be the end of time as all creation is remade to fit eternity with a new earth and a New Jerusalem.

APOCALYPSE - is a disclosure of something hidden from the majority of mankind, i.e. “the veil to be lifted.” It is a genre of literature dealing with revealed mysteries especially dealing with the end times. This book we are looking at this morning could be called the Apocalypses of John and be equally accurate. Daniel is another example of this type of writing. We have movies that are apocalyptic in nature, futuristic science fiction kind of themes.

ARMEGEDDON - The Revelation account tells us that a combined force of all the kings of the earth are gathered to the place that in Hebrew is called Har Magedon most think that it refers to the ancient city of Megiddo, situated South East of Mount Carmel, overlooking and dominating the plain of Jezreel and controlling major North/South and East/ West trade and military routes. Because of its political and geographic significance, many significant battles were fought at this crossroad.



Unlike the *past* battles fought around Megiddo, the *last* battle fought here sometime in the near future will be a global one. For John tells us in Revelation 16:14 that ‘The kings of the entire inhabited earth’ will be opponents of Jehovah and will be mobilized by ‘expressions inspired by demons.’ They will be marching against Israel and it is the classic battle of good versus evil. It is at the apex of this battle that Jesus returns with a shout and stops the destruction before there is nothing left.

“THE BEAST”– Is the enemy of God in these end times. Scripture refers to the beast as kings (Daniel 7:17 and Revelation 17:10-12), and man-made kingdoms (Daniel 7:18, 23 and in Revelation 16:10) that have power to make war and kill (Revelation 11:7; 17:14). In these last days a government will arise, sometimes called a “One World Government with rulers and armies, that are against God and his servants (Revelation 19:19). Other names you will hear like this are the **Anti-Christ and the Dragon**. These are all expressions of satanic workings in these future times.

TRIBULATION - “the Tribulation,” refers to a specific future time of trouble, a special time of judgment from God that will come upon the entire world. It will be unprecedented in its affliction and will be culminated by the personal return of Jesus Christ to earth. There are many passages that anticipate this time of trouble under a variety of names, but two very special passages are Matthew 24:4-21 and Revelation 6-19. It is generally understood as two 3 1/2 ,year periods totaling seven years. The second half of these two periods will be much greater in trial so that Jesus referred to it as “the Great Tribulation.” It corresponds with the opening of seven seals by Jesus from heaven. The tribulation is a very distressing time of judgment of God that is to come in the future and again will see at its climax the return of Christ.

RAPTURE – The rapture is a reference to the "being caught up" referred to in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, when the "dead in Christ" and "we who are alive and remain" will be caught up in the clouds to meet "the Lord." The word gets its name from the Latin word for "*raptor*" like the birds of prey that catch up their prey and carry them into the air. Depending on when you believe this event will happen, either before the tribulation or in the middle of the tribulation or after the tribulation will label you a 'pre', 'mid' or 'post' tribulation Christian. Right here let me say not to worry – how you fall out on this doesn't change our fellowship together.

Revelation is a book that can strike fear into people. It speaks of the unknown and of times yet to come and these things can be unnerving. Tribulations and beasts and wars and rumors of wars. Not very pleasant to think of but there is more to this book (Revelation) . . . and to this book (the Bible) . . . than the first impressions of the printings on the page. We have been calling that the Upper Story. God gave us this so that we could know Him and what is important to Him and so that we could love Him. The moral of 'The Story' is that there is HOPE, real hope for our troubled lives.

The 'Moral of the Story'- Hope!

I am talking about a tangible, practical, touchable hope. A hope that doesn't disappoint. From the very beginning our lives were destined to be difficult, even hopeless, the worst possible kind of eventuality. That is because of Genesis 3. The entire rest of the Story is the giving of hope that this condition we find ourselves in is not the end. Though we are helpless to help ourselves, God has been at work all along in this story to show us that He is in complete control and His love will rescue us, pay the ransom and buy us back out of our 'held hostage' circumstances. You see God has a plan . . .

God has a Plan

. . . and this (The Bible) is an account of Him working His plan. Right from the very beginning of this series we have made it clear that God is sovereign and has never been out of control. Your life may feel like it is spinning out of control, but God is ready to show you His power and plan.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

And more than that you have given your life to Christ and to His Kingdom purpose so that makes you one of the canvases on which God is continuing to paint His Story. You are important. You have a role to play . . .

You have a Role

Did you see this article in the Saturday paper? This is the story of a miniature horse named Sprout who is 35 inches tall.



He visits hospitals just to give a bit of joy to ailing patients. His visits have been inspiring; patients who have not talked talk, patients that have not shown any emotion, smile. You are this horse. In the course of human events all day long you live powered by the Spirit, with streams of living water pouring from you. You bring joy and hope to the lives of others by the hope that you show. You testify of God's goodness, even when things are hard. You remember that there are believers that have gone on to Heaven before you, people you admire and people you love that you will meet and be reunited with and this gives you hope and the ability to persevere. There is a verse in Hebrews that refers to the Church Eternal as a cloud of witnesses:

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NAS)

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

With Heaven in front of us and the world passing away behind us, we hang on. In fact we more than hang on, we are more than conquerors.

Romans 8:31-38

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Story' is not only not over. . . It is just beginning!!

As we prepare for our communion meal, think of this:

After our fall in the Garden of Eden, God had to chase us from there. We had become like God knowing good and evil, and that was a bad thing. Before that day we did not have to make the choice of whether to do wrong. After the fall the curse was upon us:

Genesis 3:22-24

And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

God, in his mercy put a block between the tree of life and us so that we would not live forever in our fallen condition. Now everything has changed! Instead of placing angels with fiery swords between us and the Tree, God say now the curse has been lifted. Now we are to eat of that fruit every day as much as we can until we are satisfied, and then we can eat some more!

Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17

“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

“Blessed are 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.”

“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” 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.”

This supper is from the Tree of Life. This drink is from the River of Life that flows from the throne of the Lamb that was slain. This supper assures us of living with hope day by day and of living a life where God gets the glory.

Living with hope and giving God the Glory

This is the moral to “The Story.” Take, eat and live!