

The Story of the NT Lesson 4 - Part 2 (The HOPE of the Kingdom)

Welcome back to Lesson 4 of the Story of the New Testament called the Hope of the Kingdom. This will continue with part 2 of this lesson. When we ended part one, we emphasized that we would pick up with the two main themes in Revelation.

The first theme is the King is coming again. The second theme is the King's new creation. You'll see that the chart at the bottom of page 36 helps to tell the story of the New Testament from the GOSPEL of the kingdom to the MISSION of the kingdom and then to the HOPE of the kingdom.

Let's continue on the top of page 37. The King is coming again.

Do we live every day with a longing to see the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? The pictures at the top of page 37 are meant to provide some help to understand the timeline of the events that appear to be presented throughout the book of Revelation.

There are a number of different theological perspectives related to how best to interpret this book. These pictures represent a more literal interpretation that follows the outline provided in Revelation chapter 1:19. Remember, John was told to write about what he saw, what is now, and what is still to come.

- What John saw was summarized in Revelation chapter 1. This was the vision of the glorified Jesus and the instructions that Jesus gave John.
- "What is now" is represented in chapters 2 and 3.
- "What is still to come" is revealed in chapters 4 through 22. The Rapture of the church is a future event that appears to take place either before the seven-year Tribulation begins, at the midpoint of the Tribulation or at the very end just before Jesus returns. True followers of Jesus believe differently on the timing of when the Rapture may take place.
- The seven-year Tribulation, the reign of the Antichrist, and the progressive judgments of God span chapters 6 through 18.
- The second coming of Jesus is presented in chapter 19.
- The 1,000 year kingdom or the Millennial Kingdom where Jesus reigns on David's throne from Jerusalem is fulfilled in Revelation chapter 20.
- The Great White Throne Judgment where the wicked of all time, dead and alive, are judged and cast into the eternal Lake of Fire is presented in Revelation chapter 20:11-15.
- And the New Heaven and New Earth, the eternal home of the righteous in Christ, becomes a reality in Revelation 21 and 22.

We discuss more of the details of these events related to the doctrine of End Times in our third doctrine course. In this course our purpose is to focus on just telling the story of the HOPE of the Kingdom. The two most important points to emphasize are the King is coming again and secondly the King will set up his new creation the new heaven and new earth.

So let's focus first on the King is coming again.

- Jesus is a King who first came as the lamb in weakness, in poverty, and in humiliation.
- He will come again as the lion in power and glory with all the resources of heaven.
- The king will finally come to fulfill all the messianic hopes and prophecies.
- Then the lion will lay down with the lamb as promised in Isaiah 65. Only when Jesus returns will the prince of peace set up his eternal kingdom.

Let's read Revelation chapter 19:11-21 as we see what the Scriptures say about the return of the King.

"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire and his head on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has the name written King of kings and Lord of lords.

I saw an angel standing in the sun who cried out in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair. Come gather together for the great supper of God so they may eat the flesh of kings generals and the mighty of horses and their riders in the flesh of all people free and slave great and small.

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse and all the birds themselves gorged themselves on their flesh." (Revelation 19:11-21)

This passage speaks about the promised return of Jesus and the battle of Armageddon. The antichrist and the kingdoms of the world will gather against the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem. Jesus defeats Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet. Jesus is coming from heaven with the angels and he is coming with the believers who have been raptured and glorified.

- Jesus comes as the one who is Faithful and True, the righteous Judge. (19:11)
- He brings redemption for all who accept his kingdom. (19:7-10)
- He brings judgment to all those who have rejected his kingdom. (19:11-16)
- He comes as a word of God. (19:13)
- He comes as a king of kings and the Lord of lords. (19:16)
- He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. (Rev 22:13)
- He is the Root and the Descendant or Offspring of David, the Bright Morning Star. (Rev 22:16)

- King Jesus will establish his kingdom on earth and bring judgment on mankind. (Rev 20:1-15)
 - In chapter 20:7-15, we hear the prophecy of the judgment that God will bring as Satan is first bound in the abyss for a thousand years while Jesus is reigning on David's throne from Jerusalem.
 - At the end of that thousand year period, Satan is let loose and he leads a final rebellion against King Jesus.
 - Fire comes from heaven and devours Satan and the armies of the world.
 - This leads to the Great White Throne Judgment where all those who have died without faith in Jesus are brought before his throne. The books are opened and the names of the wicked are not found written in the Lamb's book of life and they are cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity.

We should rejoice and be filled with great hope because King Jesus is coming soon and he will make all things right. No matter what we may think about the timelines of these events, the most important thing for each person to be ready for the return of Jesus. The way we become ready is to place our trust in Jesus for salvation and to be living for him, expecting his sure return.

The King's New Creation

The second key theme in the story of the HOPE of the Kingdom is the King's new creation. Revelations chapter 21 and 22 provide an explanation of the new heaven and new earth that the prophet Isaiah and others wrote about. This new Jerusalem is a more glorious recreation of what Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 1 and 2.

They were in the presence of God. There was no sin. They were in perfect relationship with God. Yet the final two chapters of the Bible provides a similar and more glorious picture for all those who have put their faith in Jesus for salvation (as well as those in the Old Testament who had a faith in the promise of the Savior for the Messiah to come).

We will experience the love, peace, and joy of living eternally in the presence of God.

- The Bible says that He will be our God and we will be His people.
- There will be no more death, no more sin, no more sorrow, no more tears.
- In some way this place will even be better than Eden because we'll be aware of all that Jesus has done as a King of kings and the Lord of lords.
- We will know of his atoning work in our place on the cross.
- We will know of his redemption, forgiveness, and reconciliation that brought us back into a relationship with the One True God.

On page 38 we focus on the final two chapters of the book of Revelation and the entire Bible. These chapters are meant to give us a sure hope of what is to come.

Notice that there are seven promises that will be fulfilled. Seven is the number of completion or perfection in the Bible.

As a conclusion of the HOPE of the Kingdom as well as the Story of the entire Bible. These seven promises reveal what God has planned to fulfill all that he's promised related to his kingdom.

Take the time to read through these chapters on your own. I encourage you to read these chapters out loud and allow the Holy Spirit to fill you to overflowing with joy and hope. Here are the seven promises from Revelation chapter 21 and 22.

1. First promise, the promise of a **new heaven and new earth**, Revelation chapter 21:1-5.

At this point all the sinners of all ages, both demons and men, including Satan, the beast, and the false prophet, are in the lake of fire forever. The whole universe has been destroyed by fire. See that in second Peter chapter 3:10-13, and God creates a new universe to be the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed.

The reference to the new Jerusalem here speaks of a new rule and reign of Jesus Christ on earth as in heaven. The old things have passed away and all things that are being made new.

There's a new joy with no tears, no death, no loss, no pain, no sin.

2. The second promise of a **new relationship**, Revelation 21:6 -8.

This is a new and satisfying relationship that's available fully and freely to all who come to Jesus. Those who overcome, which are all true believers, are promised adoption in the God's family. Unbelievers are condemned to an everlasting separation from God.

3. The third promise is one of a **new Jerusalem**, Revelation 21:9-21.

This is a promise of the bride of Christ, the church. John was given the vision of the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like that of a rare jewel. The rest of the passage describes the beauty of this new Jerusalem that sends forth the light of God's glory.

4. The fourth promise of the **new temple**, Revelation 21:22-27.

This is not a physical temple, but instead the Lord God himself and the Lamb. God will then dwell or tabernacle with us. Going to heaven will be entering the limitless presence of the Lord. You see that in John 14:3.

5. **The fifth promise of new life**, Revelation 22:1-5.

The river of life points to the continual flow of eternal life from God's throne to heaven's inhabitants. The tree of life is a symbol of eternal life and continual blessing. The curse of sin will be removed and the presence of sin will be no more. We will serve God in true holiness. The residents of heaven will look on God's face without harm because we will be holy and God's personal possessions and citizens of heaven.

6. The sixth promise is a **new prophetic promise**, Revelation 22:6-9.

Jesus is coming soon. It's been more than 2,000 years, yet in the scope of eternity, it is just a blink of the eye. And this renewed promise is that Jesus is coming soon. He said so himself.

7. And the seventh promise is of **new hope**, Revelation 22:10-21.

The focus of the story of the New Testament comes to a close with the hope of the kingdom. All things will be made new. Judgment will be administered perfectly. We will have glorified bodies. There will be no more presence of sin. We will be fitted for eternity with God in the new heaven and new earth. Sin will be removed through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The story of the New Testament is the GOSPEL of the Kingdom, the promise of the coming of the King and the conquest of the King through Jesus' death and resurrection.

It is the story of the MISSION of the Kingdom as Jesus establishes his new community called the church. The book of Acts tells the story of the first 30 years of the church and its supernatural growth. The 21 epistles provide the teaching and doctrine for how this new community is to live on mission through the indwelling Holy Spirit. And this mission is clear, to call people out of darkness and into the kingdom of light, to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, in the name of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded, and to know that he is with us always, even to the end of the age.

And a time is coming when the HOPE of the Kingdom will be fulfilled. This is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords to judge the earth and to establish his eternal kingdom. There will be a new heaven and a new earth where we will live and reign with him for eternity.

1 Peter 1:3 to 9 reminded us that we have been given new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. It's kept in heaven for us. We can rejoice because the time is coming soon when we will receive the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

This lesson concludes on page 39 with the application question: **Are you anticipating the kingdom?**

1. **We can look for Jesus appearing.**

We must recognize the temporary nature of this world and look forward to the time when there will be no more sin, no more sorrow, no more sickness, no more separation from God. As we look for Jesus is appearing, we can be convinced of the eternal importance of the mission that God has given us and we can persevere by God's grace and live as overcomers because Jesus has already overcome.

2. We can also live for Jesus is appearing.

We must pursue holiness in all areas of our lives. We must proclaim the gospel to all peoples of the world. We must persevere in suffering in the name of the Lord Jesus for his glory.

3. Thirdly, we can long for Jesus is appearing.

Jesus said that he is coming soon. The cry of the church is Maranatha! which means "Amen. Come Lord Jesus." The best way to long for his return is to be ready. We trust Jesus as Savior. That's the first step in being ready and then we continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

As we consider all this, one last thought is that our hearts would break for the things that God's heart breaks for. May we never forget who we were.

May we never forget that there was a point when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We were separated from God. We were without hope, without Christ.

Yet, by his grace he made us alive. When we were dead in our sins, he made us alive in Christ. It's because of his great love and mercy that he drew us to himself. He offered us the free gift of forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and a renewed relationship with God. We became a new creation in him.

As we look at others who may not know Jesus yet, may our hearts break. May there be a motivation to share the love of Jesus with those that God puts in our path. May those around us have the opportunity to hear, see, and respond to this Good News, this gospel of grace. May we never think so much about the study of theology as just facts and information that we can place in our head.

Truth is important and we should fill our minds with God's Word. But God's Word should also impact our hearts. It should inspire us. We should believe deeply in what we know to be true. But it shouldn't stop there either.

It should also impact our hands. It should impact our lives. We should take the things we know, the things that we believe, and share them with others. We must live them out and share them with the world around us so others would come to know the saving love of Jesus Christ and begin to live for him and then to make him known and to go make more disciples.

So this will conclude Lesson 4, Part 2, on the HOPE of the Kingdom and the Story of the New Testament.

There will still be a short lesson to follow that will explain the toolkit that we've included in your handout. It's a helpful tool to study every book of the New Testament.

And then there will also be a final lesson to model how you might share or tell the Story of the New Testament in 10-15 minutes or less, much like we did when we were studying the Story of the Old Testament.

When you combine the Old Testament and New Testament stories, you will be able to provide someone with an overview of the story of the Bible in about 20-30 minutes. This can be a helpful tool to teach others as well as share the Good News with those who the Father may be drawing to Jesus.

I pray that this course has blessed you and equipped you to teach others about the GOSPEL of the Kingdom, the MISSION of the Kingdom, and the HOPE of the Kingdom.

God bless you.