

## *Acts 2: Lesson Ten, Jesus' Revelation to John, Part 3* *Revelation 19-22*

**Subject:** John describes the seven last events of human history, as Jesus revealed them in His Revelation.

**Main Idea:** God's plan from before time is that Jesus would take center stage and be Lord of all.

**Principles:**

1. *Christ's judgments are true and just.*
2. *Jesus' authority is the issue that divides true believers from those who merely profess belief.*
3. *When the old order of things finally passes away and all things are made new, the Lamb will dwell eternally with His bride.*

### **Introduction**

We have been studying the story of the Bible and in this lesson, we come to the climactic conclusion. As you may recall, the story began with God's perfect creation in harmony with Him, but soon after, Adam and Eve chose to move out from under God's authority. That decision impacted the entire universe: God put the earth and all of humanity under a curse. The Bible is the story of God's plan to restore all things to the way He intended them to be and how He has worked out that plan in human history. It is the story of His plan of salvation. The study of future events that will impact the entire universe is known as *general eschatology* (the Greek word "*eschatos*" means "last"). Ephesians 1:10 explains that God's ultimate plan will be "put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment," and that plan is to "bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth *under Christ*." For many thousands of years, the universe has been out of order. When God's plan is fulfilled, Jesus will take center stage and be Lord of all; everything will be set right.

In the past two lessons, we have considered different views about the timing of a period of Tribulation (the "seals," "trumpets," and "bowls" of God's judgment) described in the book of Revelation. Some suggest that it transpired in the past, some suggest it will occur in the future, and others believe it is happening now in the Church Age. However, when we come to the seven last things, described in Revelation 19-22, none of the four groups have reached a consensus in their point of view. The main questions Bible students have about these chapters concern the timing and nature of Christ's millennial reign in chapter 20 and how literally to understand the description of heaven in chapters 21-22. Regardless of the conclusions we come to, the New Testament is clear that at the end of the present age, Jesus will return, judge the living and the dead, and be Lord of all. Some will enter an eternal state that is horrible beyond description. Others will enter a state of blessedness that will be so glorious that John had trouble describing it using human language. Either way, God's plan will be fulfilled, Jesus will take center stage, and every knee will bow and confess that He is Lord (Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10).

## I. Christ's Return and Victory over the Beast – Revelation 19

### A. The Return of Christ (First of the Seven “Last Things”) – 19:1-16

#### i. Rejoicing in Heaven

1. Chapter 19 opens with a great multitude rejoicing in heaven. The word “*hallelujah*” means, “Praise the Lord!” It appears nowhere in the New Testament except in Revelation 19 (however, it is prominent in the Psalms, especially Psalms 113-118). It is unclear who is included in the group, but the reason they rejoice is the defeat of Babylon, the great prostitute. In chapter 18, the prostitute’s lovers (those who have rejected Christ) mourn her downfall, but in chapter 19, heaven rejoices that with her overthrow, the blood of God’s servants has been avenged.
2. The multitude declares, “For the wedding of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready” (19:7). The Bible uses the imagery of a bride to describe the faithful – God’s people – and the imagery of a harlot to describe the unfaithful. The woman’s lovers have lost all of their luxuries and throw dust on their heads (18:14, 19), but the church is wearing in fine linen (representing her righteous deeds [19:8]) and rejoicing. The heavenly crowd appears to be announcing the wedding, although it is not described until chapter 21.

#### ii. The Rider on the White Horse: Chapter 16 told of the gathering of a vast army for war at Armageddon (16:1-16). In the midst of those verses, Christ declared that He would come like a thief, taking people by surprise. 19:11-16 describes Armageddon as the time of Jesus’ second coming; His arrival will take the gathered armies by surprise. Jesus is shown arriving on a white horse, most likely symbolic, but emphasizing that just as Jesus’ first coming was literal and visible, so also will His second coming be physical and visible (Acts 1:11). His coming will be the first of seven “last things.”

1. *The Armies of Heaven*: The armies of heaven accompany Jesus and are “dressed in fine linen, white and clean” (19:14), the same attire worn by the saints in verse 8. Other passages indicate that angels will also be part of this army (Psalm 103:21, 148:2; Luke 2:13, Acts 7:42). Whether the Church will be raptured prior to the Tribulation or at Christ’s second coming is a question we will discuss when we come to chapter 20. Regardless, it seems that this army will consist of the saints of all ages and also the angels.

2. *The Names of the One on the White Horse*: Christ is called the “Faithful and True.” He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself (can anyone but Christ know what it cost Him to suffer and die for us?). He also has the name, “*the Word of God*.” On His robe and His thigh is another name, “*King of Kings and Lord of Lords*.” This accords with the statement that a sword is coming out of His mouth. While some believe an actual battle will ensue, others believe this is merely a description of judgment (in other words, by His spoken command He brings it all to an end).

**B. The Judgment of the Beast** (Second of the Seven “Last Things”) – 19:17-21

- i. The Beast and Kings of the Earth: The beast, the kings of the earth and their armies gather to wage war against Christ (19:19) at Armageddon (16:16). In contrast to the rejoicing heavenly multitude (19:6), the beast and the kings of the earth are openly hostile to Christ’s lordship.
- ii. The Lake of Fire: The last verses of chapter 19 tell of the judgment of the beast and the false prophet (the second beast of chapter 13). Their judgment is the second of the seven “last things.” The two are thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Eventually, Satan and all persons who have rejected Christ will follow, but not yet.

**Summary Statement:** Revelation 19 describes Jesus’ second coming and the overthrow of the beasts. It is a chapter that highlights Jesus as Judge. Apparently, the final “Great White Throne” judgment of God will not occur until later (it is described at the end of in chapter 20). But in chapter 19, we read of a judgment against the earthly forces of evil that will occur at Christ’s coming: He will tread the winepress of the wrath of God and avenge His servants, and God’s people will declare, “*Hallelujah! True and just are His judgments*” (19:1-2).

**Principle:** *Christ’s judgments are true and just.*

The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ will be our final Judge. Paul said that God “has set a day when He will judge the world with justice *by the Man He has appointed* [and] given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). Peter pointedly stated that this “Man” who will judge the universe is Jesus Christ (Acts 10:42).

Revelation is a book of judgment: unfavorable for those whose actions and intentions do not conform to the nature of God and favorable for those whose actions and intentions do conform to God’s nature, since God deems them “in Christ.” God’s own nature is the standard. There is nothing outside of Him that compels Him to judge. To say, “Justice compels Him,” is to claim that something higher than God exists. No, God is just because that is who He is! It is in His nature.<sup>1</sup>

God’s judgment of evil is not a matter of personal vengeance but of moral equity in human society. Thankfully, it is also His nature to be merciful and “there is nothing in His justice that forbids the exercise of His mercy.” The 11<sup>th</sup>-century Christian philosopher Anselm concluded, “When God punishes the wicked, it is just because it is compatible with their deserts [what they deserve]; and when He spares the wicked it is just because it is compatible with His goodness; so God does what becomes Him as the supremely good God.”<sup>ii</sup>

It may be difficult for us to read chapters 19 and 20 at the present without terror for those who have rejected Jesus Christ, but according to these verses, when that day comes, we will be in awe of Jesus and rejoice over His utter righteousness, accuracy, and fairness (Revelation 19:1-2, 6). *He* will be our focus.

**Application:** The certainty of final judgment not only quiets our indignation over the world’s injustices, it also helps us to forgive those who have mistreated us and motivates us to share Christ’s salvation boldly.<sup>iii</sup> In light of coming judgment, who do you need to forgive and tell about Jesus?

**Transition:** At the conclusion of history, when God restores all things, Jesus will be at the center. He will come again to claim His own, put down rebellion, and set up His kingdom.

## II. The Millennium and the Judgment of Satan – Revelation 20:1-10

**A. The Binding of Satan** (Third of the Seven “Last Things”) – 20:1-3: Revelation 20 begins with Satan being seized by an angel, bound with a great chain, and locked and sealed in the Abyss (the home of demons [Luke 8:32]) for 1,000 years. This, the third of the seven “last things,” is usually referred to as “the binding of Satan.” The purpose of this binding is “to keep [Satan] from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.” (20:3). The question that has perplexed scholars throughout the century concerns the timing of Satan’s binding. Some believe that he was bound at Christ’s victory on the cross. Others believe it will occur after the future, end-times Tribulation period. One’s view about the timing of Satan’s binding is tied to one’s understanding of the nature and timing of Christ’s 1000-year (millennial) reign.

**B. The Millennial Reign of Christ** (Fourth of the Seven “Last Things”) – 20:4-6:

- i. Prophecy Concerning Christ’s Reign: There are many references in the Scriptures to the reign of the Messiah. These prophecies foretell a time when Messiah will rule with wisdom, authority, glory and sovereign power over all peoples, nations, and men of every language, and the saints will reign with Him. It will be a time of justice, peace, and righteousness. Christ will make His name known among the nations so that it will no longer be profaned and all will worship him. The prophecies indicate that this kingdom will prove indestructible.

ii. Three Views of the Timing and Nature of the Millennium: Nowhere in Scripture is a time period for Christ's reign specifically mentioned, *except in Revelation 20*. Because of its reference to "1000 years," the event has come to be known as "the millennium." The timing and nature of the millennium is the most debated issue in eschatology. Three primary views have developed. The names of these three millennial views reflect their relationship to the timing of Christ's return.

1. *Postmillennialism*

- a. The view known as "postmillennialism" is so-named because of its teaching that Christ's second coming will occur *after* the millennium. Postmillennarians believe that Christians who live in the present Church Age will eventually have such success in evangelism that a good portion of the world's population will be Christianized. With the world largely submitting to Christ's authority, Satan will be symbolically bound and Christ will reign on earth in a spiritual sense.
- b. This view is the most recently developed of the three views. It is usually traced to the seventeenth century. Many scholars abandoned it after the first two world wars because of its optimism about the future. It seems that the world is not becoming a better place.

2. *Amillennialism*

- a. "Amillennialism" essentially means "no millennium." This doesn't mean that amillennialists don't believe in the Kingdom of Christ, but rather that they don't believe Revelation 20 refers to a future or earthly kingdom. For them, the Kingdom Age is *now* and it is *spiritual*. It began with Christ's victory at the cross (at which time Satan was bound) and will conclude at His Second Coming. For some amillennialists, this spiritual reign is occurring on earth in the Church. For others, it is the blessed state of departed believers in heaven, prior to their bodily resurrection at Christ's Second Coming. Either way, the millennium is now and Christ's reign is spiritual in nature.
- b. Augustine advocated this view and many scholars still favor it today. Although it has much to its credit, this lesson and the next will nevertheless be discussed primarily from the *premillennial* perspective.

3. *Premillennialism*

- a. The oldest of all of the views can be traced back to the church fathers. In earlier days, it was known as "Chiliasm" (the Greek word "*chilioi*" means "one thousand"). Today it is

- known as “premillennialism” because of its teaching that Christ’s Second Coming will occur *before* the millennium.
- b. Unlike either of the previous views, premillenarians see the reign of Christ on earth as a literal, historic event. Satan’s binding at the end of the Tribulation will allow for a peaceful, physical one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Since the reign of Christ will occur as part of the future end-times events, premillenarians see the millennium as the fourth of the seven “last things.”
  - c. There are two lines of Premillennialism: historic (or classical) and dispensational (or pretribulational), and three issues that separate them.
    - i. *The Second Coming*: One of the major differences has to do with the timing of the return of Christ and “the Rapture.”
      1. Historic Premillennialists believe these two things are really one event. Deceased believers of all ages will be caught up to meet Christ in the air, living believers will join them by translation, and all of them will receive resurrection bodies “in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52). Then the saints will immediately accompany Christ back to earth to usher in a literal, earthly, historic reign of Christ with His saints on earth.
      2. Dispensationalists hold that the Rapture is a separate event from the second coming of Christ, a *secret event* in which those who have died during the Church Age will rise from the dead, and together with all living saints, meet Christ in the air. Because they view the Rapture as occurring before the Tribulation, this view is also known as pretribulational premillennialism. According to dispensationalists, while the raptured Church will be with Christ in heaven during the Tribulation, the Old Testament saints and those who come to faith in Christ during the Tribulation period won’t be physically resurrected until Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation (the Second Coming). At that time, all of the saints will reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years.

- ii. *Literalness*: Another distinction between the two types of premillennialism lies in the importance of literalness. Dispensationalists take all prophecy as literally as possible. Therefore, they see the 1000-years as a literal time period and Christ's reign to be physical, not merely a symbol of something that is or will occur spiritually. Historic premillennialists are open to the 1000-year length of His future, earthly kingdom being understood literally or as symbolic of a long time and also open to seeing the millennium as including both Christ's future, earthly kingdom *and* his present, spiritual reign.
- iii. *Israel and the Tribulation*: The third major distinction between historic and dispensational premillennialists is the insistence of dispensationalists that the Church and Israel are *distinct* and that God has a special end-times program for the people of Israel that will be carried out after the Church is raptured. According to this view, during the Tribulation a vast number of Jews will recognize Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah, be saved, and become very effective evangelists. Their testimony will make Israel the primary target of the Antichrist. While historic premillennialists allow for some distinction between Israel and the Church, they generally view the Church as "the New Israel" (as do postmillennialists and amillennialists [Romans 2:28, 4:16-17]). Considering the Church as the "New Israel" doesn't negate the probability that a great many Jews of physical descent will still come to Christ in the end-times (Romans 11:26).
- iii. The "First Resurrection" and the Millennial Reign of the Saints: According to Revelation 20:4, John saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. He also saw those who were martyred because of their refusal to worship the Antichrist come to life. John said that they took part in the "first resurrection," that the "second death" has no power over them, and that they will reign with Christ for a thousand years. Who exactly is included in this "first resurrection" and who will reign with Christ in the millennium? It depends upon one's view of the millennium.

1. For postmillennarians, these are not physically resurrected people, but a resurrection (or vindication) of the *cause* or the *spirit* of previously martyred saints, since in the millennium, the world will have been successfully Christianized.
2. Since amillennialists believe that the millennium is happening now, every living saint is currently reigning with Christ in progressive, spiritual victories over sin and saints who have died are reigning with Him in heaven.
3. Premillennialists believe that although John emphasized the narrower group of Tribulation martyrs as those who would be resurrected and reign in the millennium (probably for the encouragement of those in his own day who were facing persecution), *all* believers are going to participate (compare Revelation 20:4-6 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-55).

### C. The Judgment of Satan (Fifth of the Seven “Last Things”) – 20:7-10

- i. Satan’s Release: Revelation 20:3 says, “After that, [Satan] must be set free for a short time.” If the events of Revelation 19-22 are to be understood sequentially (as per the premillenarian view), Satan will be released from his prison at the end of the thousand years to deceive the nations one final time and to gather them for battle against the reigning Christ.
- ii. Final Battle
  1. The purpose of God allowing this uprising may be to reveal the hearts of those born during the millennium to show whether they have truly submitted their lives to Christ or only done so outwardly because of its benefits. Apparently, the wickedness of the sin nature is so great that a large number of those born during this period will ultimately choose to side against Jesus (a number like the sand on the seashore).
  2. John refers to them as “Gog and Magog” (20:8). These terms come from the book of Ezekiel, where “Gog” was the prince of a large number of northern, pagan invaders of Israel and “Magog” was the distant land from which some of them came (Ezekiel 38-39). John found them suitable symbols of those who will gather against Christ at the end of the millennium.
  3. This final rebellion will mark the end of the millennium. When the army gathers around the city of Christ, He will quickly put it down with fire from heaven and cast Satan into the lake of burning sulfur. There, along with the beast and false prophet, he “will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

**Summary Statement:** Although the millennium is understood in a variety of ways, it is clear that some will ultimately reject Christ's reign.

**Principle:** *Jesus' authority is the issue that divides true believers from those who merely profess belief.*

This is true now and it will be in the end. One day, Christ will have final authority and everything in heaven and on earth will be in submission to Him (Ephesians 1:10).

**Application:** What particular area of your life have you struggled to fully yield to Jesus? As we envision the foretold abundance, goodness, and peace of His millennial reign (Isaiah 9:7, 11:3-9, 65:20-25; Jeremiah 23:5; Ezekiel 39:7; Daniel 7:13-14), why is it that we hesitate to submit to Him here and now? Have we deceived ourselves into thinking that our lives will actually be better if we somehow retain control? It is in laying down our lives in submission to Him that we will find a life that is far richer and more rewarding (Matthew 10:38-39, 16:24-25; John 10:10).

**Transition:** The final judgment and the eternal state are the sixth and seventh of the seven "last things."

### III. The Final Destiny of All People – Revelation 20:11-22:21

**A. The Last Judgment** (Sixth of the Seven "Last Things") – 20:11-15: The end of Revelation 20 tells of the resurrection of the unbelieving dead and the Great White Throne judgment that will follow the millennium. No one will escape God's judgment.

- i. Judgment of Believers: Speaking to believers, Paul wrote, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Paul said that the quality of our works will be tested *for the purpose of reward* (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). No penalty for sin will be exacted on us, because God has graciously applied Christ's work to our account. In rewarding us, God will undoubtedly consider our motives (1 Corinthians 4:5), who we worked to please (John 5:44), whether or not we trusted Him with the results of our efforts (Philippians 2:13), and if we correctly handled His word (2 Timothy 2:15). Believers may be judged at the same time as the Great White Throne judgment, after the millennium, or our judgment may occur before the millennium. Regardless, all whose names are written in the Book of Life will ultimately enter the bliss of heaven for eternity.

- ii. Judgment of Unbelievers: The Great White Throne judgment will consummate God’s judgments against the unbelieving world. He alone knows the purpose of evaluating their works. It is possible that some may suffer more than others. Regardless, those whose names are not written in the Book of Life will be sentenced to everlasting punishment in the lake of fire. Revelation 20:14 refers to this place as “the second death”; but it is not death (destruction) in the sense of annihilation. 20:10 and other New Testament passages speak of it as a place of everlasting, *conscious* suffering. As terrible as it will be, it is really what all of us deserve, and according to Ezekiel 33:11, God takes no pleasure in it. While we may imagine suffering individuals, wishing they had made a different choice and sorry for their behavior, there is no clear indication that their sentence will remove the rebellion in their hearts. They will indeed confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). Perhaps they will do so humbly, but it is very possible that it may be with an attitude of resentment.
- iii. End of Death: The very last things to be thrown into the lake of fire will be death and Hades. At that victorious moment (1 Corinthians 15:54), God’s plan to put down evil will be complete and the saying will be fulfilled, “He will swallow up death forever” (Isaiah 25:8).

**B. The New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem** (Seventh of the Seven “Last Things”) – Revelation 21-22: These final two chapters in the Bible are unspeakably precious to every believer. They tell of heaven, our ultimate reward, the place Jesus has been planning for us (John 14:2-3), and they describe the Wedding of the Lamb (announced in chapter 19 [19:7-9]). If chapters 19 and 20 presented Jesus as the coming Judge and Lord and King, these chapters set Him forth as the bride’s beloved Husband. As with the rest of Revelation, these chapters are not without some controversy. Mostly, the discussions revolve around how literally to understand the details of the New Jerusalem and whether the descriptions are only of the believer’s eternal state or whether they may (at least in part) apply to the millennium.

- i. The New Heavens and the New Earth: At the Fall (Genesis 3), God cursed the earth and mankind with death. The last chapters of Revelation foretell an ultimate reversal of this curse. It began with Jesus’ first coming. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that in a spiritual sense, we who are in Christ are “a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come.” But one day, the restoration will be complete. Just as we longingly await the redemption of our bodies, creation is presently groaning, longing to be liberated from its bondage to decay (Romans 8:22). Revelation 21 speaks of a new heaven and a new earth. Some think that God will completely destroy the present heavens and earth and create an entirely new universe. Others believe that

His plan is to fully restore our present environment. One thing is for sure: Heaven is a real place, not just a state of mind. Jesus said He was going to prepare a *place* for us (John 14:2). In the eternal state, this new heaven and new earth will be God’s home and our home.

ii. The New Jerusalem

1. *The Marriage of the Lamb*: This chapter also tells of a “New Jerusalem,” “the Holy City.” Its relationship to the new heavens and earth is unclear, but the city’s descent seems to represent the wedding of the Lamb and His bride (21:2), the corporate body of saints.
2. *A Real Place with Symbolic Features*: Since the Holy City (the New Jerusalem) is said to be the bride of Christ, is this a real city or a symbol of the community of God’s people? One possibility is that it is a real city that will be “physically structured so as to mimic those spiritual realities instituted by Christ at the cross and currently enjoyed by believers.” This was true of the Old Testament tabernacle. It was a real place of worship, but its elements each had meaning.<sup>iv</sup> The celestial city may actually measure 1400 cubic miles in dimension, have walls with precious stones, and gates, but “1400” may also represent the total number of God’s redeemed people and the walls, precious stones, and gates may symbolize our glorified life. The cubic shape of the City is reminiscent of the Tabernacle’s Holy of Holies, the place of God’s presence. The twelve gates with twelve angels and the twelve foundations of the walls undoubtedly also carry significance (indicating completion and government). This city of God stands in sharp contrast to Babylon, which is the city of man. The people of Babylon worked for its glory but the kings and nations of the heavenly city will do all things for Christ’s glory (21:24, 26).
3. *Is the New Jerusalem a Millennial City?* Does the New Jerusalem describe the people and city of God in the millennium or in the Eternal State or both? These chapters seem to specifically reference the eternal state, but they may also describe aspects of Christ’s millennial reign. One unusual but interesting theory suggests that it will be a satellite city hovering over the earth during the millennium, which will descend from its hovering position (21:10) onto the new earth once God ushers in the eternal state.<sup>v</sup> However, most scholars take the city’s descent symbolically (perhaps representing that it is God’s gift<sup>vi</sup>).

- iii. Reward for Overcomers (21:6-8): The angel told John that those who are victorious would inherit all of this. Jesus promised “overcomers” (the victorious) rewards in His letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor also. 1 John 5:5 explains that all true believers in Jesus are overcomers. We overcome the world and its system by placing our faith in Jesus for salvation. God offers all of the joys of these chapters without cost to anyone who is thirsty (21:6). It is His free gift (22:17). Discipleship is costly, demanding many sacrifices of us, but receiving Jesus is absolutely free. Furthermore, His salvation is intended to satisfy us. It is “the water of life” to all who are thirsty. While it is dangerous to assume that all church attenders are true believers (“overcomers”), it is equally wrong to assume that overcoming is dependent on our personal righteousness. True believers remain loyal to Christ to their life’s end.
- iv. Connection to Themes of Genesis 1-3: God’s plan has always been to restore all things to what they had been before the Fall (Acts 3:21). It is not surprising then that the imagery, themes, and language of Revelation 21-22 are closely related to Genesis 1-3. These passages tell of a creation and a new creation. Like the original creation, the new creation will also have rivers, precious stones, trees and a special Tree of Life. Genesis speaks of the marriage of Adam and Revelation of the marriage of the Lamb. Satan and death are introduced in Genesis and then forever banned from God’s eternal city. At the Fall, man was driven from God’s presence, but in the new heavens and earth, God will dwell with us forever.
- v. Living in God’s Presence (21:3): One of the most significant teachings of Revelation 21-22 is that God will eternally dwell among His people. After Adam was banned from the Garden of Eden and God’s presence, God dwelt symbolically among His people in the Tabernacle’s “Holy of Holies.” Later, He “tabernacled” (dwelt [1:14]) among us in the person of Jesus Christ. After Pentecost, our bodies became the temple of the Holy Spirit. But in the future, there will be no need for a temple because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will be our temple. God will eternally dwell among us.

**Summary Statement:** Although we will not know until that glorious day exactly what our eternal home will be like, it is clear that the lost paradise of Genesis will be regained. Our Husband is currently preparing a heavenly home for us that will be a place of great beauty, abundance, and joy. He will forever be among us.

**Principle:** *When the old order of things finally passes away and all things are made new, Jesus the Lamb will dwell eternally with His bride.*

**Application:** What will our lives in heaven be like? That subject is included in our final lesson on what scholars call “personal eschatology.” One thing we know with certainty is that we will be eternally with Jesus, our Savior, Shepherd, Brother, Friend, and Husband. We will see His face and sing His praises. He is our ultimate reward.

Beyond that, one of the few ways in which we can imagine life in heaven is in terms of how much better our lives are now when we keep Him at the center. Some have a mental picture of Christ’s lordship that is along the lines of a priority list, with Christ first, family (church and personal) second, and work third. A better way to think of Christ’s lordship may be in terms of a wheel, with Christ at the center and each of the spokes representing different aspects of our lives (our private devotional life, our work life, our family life, other important relationships, church services and activities, relaxation and exercise, etc.). That kind of model acknowledges that, in the life God has given us, we have a variety of needs. We are not wise to completely ignore any of them. As a matter of fact, when we do ignore some of them, we become unbalanced, like a flat tire. We can hobble along that way for a while, but eventually, we will become physically, emotionally, or spiritually crippled.<sup>vii</sup>

The secret is in maintaining all essential aspects of a healthy life and keeping Christ as the ultimate reason and goal behind each aspect. When we work, we do it for Him; when we pray, we do it for Him; when we relax, we do it because He is the One who ordained rest and we are living in obedience when we rest. Having Christ at the center means that we consult Him about the way we use our gifts, our time, and our energy. All aspects of our life are spiritual. There is no division between activities that are “godly” and activities that are purely “secular.”

You may find that this actually gives you a new and better idea about heaven as well. Imagine a full life that includes relationships and conversations, learning and exploring, worship and singing, feasting and laughing, but all with Christ at the center. It will be the perfect life, as God originally intended for us to live.

## Conclusion

The chapters of Revelation oscillate between the viewpoints of heaven and earth, but in the end, in the new heavens and new earth, there is only one viewpoint: Christ is at center stage. Each of us is currently experiencing the effects of a universe that is out of balance. I imagine you could give a long list of ways that you have been impacted just this week. But it will not be this way forever.

God’s plan, since before time, has been to restore all things and put Jesus at the center as Lord of all. Everything is better when Jesus is at the center. Isn’t that the story of the Bible? Amen! Come, Lord Jesus, the true and just Judge, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and our beloved Husband.

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- <sup>i</sup> Tozer, A.W. (92). *The Knowledge of the Holy* (p. 92). Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, Inc.
- <sup>ii</sup> Tozer, A.W. (92). *The Knowledge of the Holy* (p. 92). Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, Inc.
- <sup>iii</sup> Grudem, Wayne (1994). *Systematic Theology* (pp. 1147-1148). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- <sup>iv</sup> Gregg, Steve (2013). *Revelation: Four Views, Revised and Updated* (p. 552). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing.
- <sup>v</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (1 Jn 5:3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- <sup>vi</sup> Johnson, Alan. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition, New Testament*, p. 1225. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.
- <sup>vii</sup> I believe this illustration is one that I have borrowed but unfortunately, I cannot remember where I read it or from whom I heard it.