

TSOG - Week 4 - Consummation
Revelation 21
April 17, 2022

Introduction - Happy Easter!

Once again Happy Easter! He is Risen.

Welcome to new folks - JC FoM + Community Groups.

Tim. Pastor. **1 Corinthians 15.** (will end in Rev 21, what we just read, but have a little bit of work to do first) (Bibles on pews) **Pray.**

A Better Story. Near the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic back over 2 years ago (if you can believe it), **Adam Robinson**, who is this genius educator, chess master, author gave a lecture where he talked about how what the world was about to enter into based on how he read the situation was nothing short of **a spiritual crisis.**

In the talk he traced some of the break down of society - the fracturing of the political left and right, the breakdown of the public square being replaced by the mob mentality of social media, all of the overwhelming statistics behind mental health - and said this health pandemic is going to be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back.

And his argument was that the reason why this was all going to reach this crisis moment is that the world no longer had anything to stabilize itself. This time that we live in is based upon tearing down the old, crushing old systems, old ways of thinking but it had no experience in how to build. There was no alternative being offered of how we were to all move forward.

And his diagnosis is very interesting. Not a Christian. But he says near the end - In order to move forward in hope, **"The world needs a better story."**

Now, regardless of whether or not you agree with his sort of dire read on things, we've been arguing much of the same over the past few weeks.

What we've been trying to do as a church is to look at a better story on offer for all of us - **The story of God.** The story we would say is not only better, but is also the true story of the world and us into which we can place our smaller individual life stories and make sense of the past, the present, and the future.

We said that the story of God has 4 parts, 4 acts.

Act I: Creation - The Kingdom of God Begins

- God creates the world - declaring over it that it is very good (or abundantly pleasant/exactly right). God creates Adam and Eve, first man and woman, to dwell in a place called the garden of eden, to live in deep relationship with Him as His image bearers. To join Him in His work of ruling and reigning, exercising dominion over the earth under His authority so He gets the glory.
- One command of something they can't do - don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil. They eat and that leads to act 2...

Act II: Fall - The Kingdom Rebels against the King

- The Bible teaches that because of the sin of Adam and Eve when they eat from the tree that sin, not just as a concept but as a reality enters into the world. It declares all of us as guilty before God. Not neutral with God. Not

friendly with God. Guilty before God. And also corrupt in our nature. None of us are born as good people or even sort of neutral people but our hearts are turned against God and towards ourselves.

- And yet, God does not leave us in that state...

Act III: Redemption - The King Lives and Dies for His Kingdom

- Christ Jesus, the Son of God, fully God becomes also fully man. Enters into human history, lives the perfect life free of sin that you and I cannot live, and yet goes to the cross. Is beaten and betrayed, mocked, abused - physically, emotionally - and He dies - for us and for our sin - so that through turning from our sin and trusting in Jesus we can be forgiven, washed clean, and brought back into relationship with God.

And that is where we left the story on Good Friday. Jesus on the cross, Savior of the world has died for sin and sinners.

This is the climax point of the story of God. The culmination of thousands of years of promises and prophecies about a coming Messiah and Savior reach their peak moment right here in the cross of Jesus Christ.

As one theologian remarks - **"The cross is the center of the world's history."**

But although the cross is the pinnacle of the story, it is not the end of the story.

The declaration of Christians for thousands of years has not simply been – "Christ has died!" Yes. True. But there's more that has happened and more that will happen.

Act IV in the story → Consummation: The Kingdom is Forever.

Let's talk about the "more" that has happened and will happen after the cross.

Four Part Gospel - 1 Cor 15:1-8

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

1 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. (Bible's terminology for died) 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

Paul says - this is what is first importance. This is the essence of our Christian faith:

1. Christ died.
2. Christ was buried.
3. Christ was raised from the dead.
4. Christ appeared.

One of the reasons we as Christians are so confident Jesus did in fact rise from the dead is how many people he appeared to after his death - more than 500 at one time, many of whom went on to be killed for believing and preaching the resurrection.

Something had to have happened, right? That just a short time after Good Friday - you have these disciples going from scared, denying they know Jesus, on the run, in hiding, to powerfully preaching and proclaiming the gospel such that:

- Peter's crucified upside down.
- Paul is beheaded.
- Thomas is killed by spears.
- Matthew is staked to the ground.

These men go from cowering in fear to dying for their faith, why? They believed Jesus rose from the grave. They believed in the reality of the resurrection.

Because Christ rose from the dead, they began living out of a different story with a different hope.

Resurrection is Crucial

Paul continues, skip down to v12...

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Apparently there were some in the church at Corinth who were saying that there was no life after death. There might be some ethereal spiritual kind of afterlife - but no bodily resurrection.

And Paul says if that's true - there's no bodily resurrection, then why does our faith hinge on a Savior who experienced a bodily resurrection - who got out of the grave bodily?

13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Without the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, everything in Christianity falls apart.

Without the resurrection:

- Gospel = myth (v13)
- Preaching = useless (v14)
- Faith = vain (v14)
- Christians = misrepresenting God (v15)
- Humanity = still in our sins (v17)
- Dead = lost (v18)
- Christians = pitied (v19)

If we don't have the resurrection, we have nothing!!

Gospel = Good News

The cross cannot be the end of the story.

Because what we cling to as followers of Jesus is this message called **“The Gospel”**. We saw it there in v1 - “The gospel I preached to you.” And the Gospel, at its most basic meaning is **“Good News”**.

Before “the gospel” was a religious term, in the ancient world it was a political term. It was the declaration of a messenger who was sent to another land to declare victory in war. The messenger would take the gospel to the land declaring - **“Behold the King is coming. He has won!”**

If Christ stays dead. If the story ends with a crucifixion - there can be no such declaration as followers of Jesus. If the tomb is still full - Christ has not won.

So absolutely essential to our Christian gospel, to our good news we believe as followers of Jesus - why we make such a big deal out of Easter Sunday – is that our Savior did not stay dead – but on the first day of the week, the stone rolled away, the tomb was empty, He rose from the grave - **“He has won!”**

Death could not hold Him. He is the promised Messiah. He has won the victory!

Central to our gospel message, central to our entire way of life and belief as Christians is the reality that: **Christ has died, but Christ has also risen.**

This is the Gospel. This is the good news!!

Firstfruits

BUT...it’s not just good news from the past. The resurrection is not simply something to look back on and celebrate, the resurrection of Jesus also means there’s something to look forward to.

In the words of **NT Wright** - **“What good news regularly does, then, is to put a new event into an old story, point to a wonderful future hitherto out of reach, and so introduce a new period in which, instead of living a hopeless life, people are now waiting with excitement for what they know is on the way. The Christian good news is supposed to be this kind of thing. The Gospel of Jesus Christ comes as news within a larger story. It points to a wonderful new future.”**

The resurrection is not just a past reality we cling to, it is also a future promise we long for.

Here’s why I say that. Verse 20...

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

If Christ didn’t rise from the grave, we have no hope. But He did. And because He did, Paul says He is the firstfruits. Here’s what that means...

Spring is here. A few weeks ago Lindsay and I bought a propane fire pit. It’s awesome. Flip a switch and you have a fire pit right there in our backyard. Thanks tax refund. We’ve been spending a lot of evenings out there just sitting and talking while the sun’s going down and Harper plays on her playset. It’s as magical as it sounds.

A week or so ago we’re outside, and we both had sort of this epiphany moment. Our house backs up to a small little piece of woods and we both looked at each other and said → When did the leaves come back on the trees? It felt like it went overnight from winter to spring.

Maybe you notice this when you're driving around the city - the different flowers blooming and plants starting to blossom. My allergies definitely know spring has started to arrive.

This is a version of firstfruits. It's the first flower, the first harvest, the first fruit to spring up from the ground showing that more fruit is on the way.

The first sign of life as evidence that more life is coming.

That's Jesus' resurrection. It's the firstfruit. Life has broken in. Where there was death, now there's life. Where there was death, now there is resurrection - but it's also evidence that more life is coming. More resurrection is coming.

Look at v21...

21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

In the fall - Adam's sin was placed on all of humanity. We inherited his guilt and corruption.

But just like sin and death came through one man Adam, now life comes through the one God-man Jesus Christ.

23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

Here's Paul's big point:

- *This is the gospel - Christ has died and Christ has risen.*
- *If Christ didn't rise, then we're all hopeless and death is the end.*
- *But if Christ rose from the grave, then all who belong to Him (trust, faith) will also rise from the dead as well.*

Easter is not just about Christ's resurrection, but it is also about our resurrection.

It's about the promise that one day what happened to Jesus will happen to all of His followers.

Resurrection is not just a past reality we celebrate, it is a future reality we will experience.

Death is not the end of the story for those in Christ Jesus! There is life after death! This is where the whole story is leading. Where just as Christ got up out of the grave, so will all who trust in Him. We too will experience a bodily resurrection.

Our bodies will be made new, made right (or to use the language of the NT - glorified) and we who belong to Jesus will be with Him forever!

If our hope as Christians is only in this life, we are to be pitied most of all...but it's not. We have hope in the life to come.
Life after death.

But it gets even better...

24 Then comes the end,

In the Greek - "telos" - the culmination of the goal, the future into which everything else was leading, the completion.

when [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Jesus is not at peace with death. Jesus is not cordial with death. Death is an enemy. Jesus will destroy it.

And here's what this all means, verses 24-26 - **Jesus is not only going to resurrect all who trust in Him, He's going to resurrect the world.**

He's going to make us new **and** He's going to make His creation new.

God's not going to abandon what He created. He's not going to abandon what is His. He's going to remake us and He's going to remake the world as He ushers in His forever kingdom and we will be with God for eternity.

False Views of Heaven/Eternity

Now, I don't know what your church background is or if you grew up in church, not in church. To me, growing up - eternity with Jesus was going to be in this place called **heaven** where we're all going to be floating spirits just kind of hovering on the clouds and where it's like half boring church service where we just sing about God forever and half - "do what you want with the characters of the Bible type deal" - so I'm going to play golf with Moses and Paul and only ever make eagles and birdies.

Big House.

But that's not the picture in the Bible. The future reality of the Scriptures is so much richer, so much better.

The picture in the Bible is much less God taking us up there and much more - God bringing His Kingdom down here. It speaks of a day when Christ, who is right now risen and reigning at the right hand of the throne of God, will return.

Christ will come as a King, with trumpets playing, surrounded by chariots and horses - to claim what is rightfully His - both His people and His creation. Our future is not disembodied forever in heaven, but embodied forever in a new heavens and a new earth. An eternal city of perfection in the presence of God.

Revelation 21 + Jesus' Return

This is what we read in Revelation 21. This is the picture the Scriptures give us.

Revelation 21:1-5

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.

There's a recreating taking place - a new heaven and a new earth verse 1 says. The first earth passes away - to use the language of 2 Peter it's not discarded it's refined like fire. God's not abandoning his creation. He is committed to redeeming it. Refining it. Making it new again.

2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

No floating on the clouds in some ethereal state. This is a city. It's material. Elsewhere in Revelation we read about streets and buildings and bridges and vegetation and rivers and trees. It's a material future. It's an embodied future.

There's this sense in which it's a return to an even better, perfected version of where it all began - the garden of eden. A new beginning. More beautiful, more complete version of the garden. God resetting His creation to a more perfect version of the original design.

3 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."

First, it says "they will be His people."

The word there is actually peoples, plural. A beautiful affirmation of God's design for multiethnicity - that God's heart is for all of these different peoples to be drawn to Himself. Elsewhere in Revelation we read about the throne of God being surrounded with folks worshiping Him from every tribe, tongue/language, and nation.

Second, intimacy is restored between God and mankind. They can dwell together again.

This is how it was meant to be. This is how you were created to live. You were designed to be in, enjoy, revel in, dwell in the very presence of God. Sin broke that, but it's going to be restored again.

4 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."

Death, mourning, crying, pain, tears → DONE. GONE. NO MORE.

- No more wailing of parents grieving over the loss of their child.
- No more this country invading that country, this person using violence against this person.
- No more bad CT scans, no more "let's do a biopsy", no more "do I need medication?"
- No more grieving over broken relationships and friendships, the hurt of what was said to you or about you.
- No more replaying the trauma, replaying the abuse, replaying the heartache.
- No more living in fear, crushed by anxiety, wrecked with depression, living in loneliness, isolation, abandonment.

And notice → Christ Jesus wipes away every tear from their eyes. I don't know what your picture of Jesus is, I hope it includes a glorious King who bends down to wipe away tears.

5 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."

This is a guarantee. Death is defeated. Christ is making all things new. He will come again.

This is Our Hope

That's what we remember this Easter.

This is our hope! Christ has died. Yes. Christ is risen. Absolutely. But also → Christ will come again!

And He will make all who trust in Him and all of His creation new again.

Where is it all headed?

A glorious future of perfection in the presence and Kingdom of God.

Our hope for today is not just that we look back at an empty tomb, we look forward to a new city. We look forward to eternity with King Jesus. We look forward to a day when resurrection is something we participate in, that we too are raised to the newness of life, raised in glorified bodies to be with Christ forever in His eternal kingdom.

AW Tozer - "The crux of the whole matter is this: our wonderful, created world will be restored to its rightful Owner...The God who has promised a better world is the God who cannot lie. He will shake loose Satan's hold on this world and its society and systems. Our heavenly Father will put this world into the hands that were once nailed to a cross for proud and alienated sinners. It is a fact. Jesus Christ is returning to earth."

It is a fact, Jesus Christ is returning to earth. This is a sure thing. This is the future. This is what will happen. We can root ourselves in that promise. Tomorrow is uncertain, next week is uncertain, next year is uncertain...And yet eternity is not. Christ will come again.

So the question for all of us: Where will you put your hope this easter?

What story are you living in? What future holds your hope?

- The perfect spouse? Perfect kids?
- The perfect job? More money?
- Science, progress, society?
- Politics and government?

What are you hoping will hold your future? Where are you hoping it all leads? When you suffer, when you hurt, when life feels fragile, when death is an in your face reality — what holds your hope?

You need a better story. You need a better hope. You need the promise of the resurrection for all who belong to Christ Jesus.

- Will you belong to Him?
- Will you put your faith in Him for life forever with God?
- Will you turn from your sins and trust in Him?
- Will you trust that the resurrection we celebrate today means one day Christ will return, we will be resurrected, all who trust in Him will be with Him forever?
- Will you long for his appearing, long for this day, rooting your hope in the promise of what's to come?

Church - that is the hope of easter.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

PRAY.