

***Pizza with the Pastor* today after the 10:45 AM service**

End of *The Story*

Revelation—a picture of Heaven. If you want a **linear equation**, Revelation is not the place to look. It is a beautiful image of what happens in the end, more like a **Monet painting**, showing what it will be like with symbolism and beauty.

“It is the end. Begin with the end in mind.” —Steven Covey, first habit of highly effective people. I agree.

A business has profitability in mind. A student has graduation in mind. A Big Ten sports team has in mind a Big Ten championship; or, if you are great, a national championship; or, if you are the Illini, just one solid win would be great...

My story as a freshman in high school—if there is any issue in the world I need to get right, that is it!

- Where do I want to go?
- Who do I want to bring with me?
- How does it change the way I live now?

Chapter 31 of *The Story*

August 12 was creation. And since the fall, we have been struggling to get BACK to the original plan. Restoring Eden. We have been through the law and prophets and kings. We have hit the climax of Jesus—life, death, and resurrection. We have seen the spread of the Church in the first century, and the story brilliantly ends at the end of *The Story*. The grand finale where good triumphs, evil is vanquished, and we get our new home. And while it is picturesque, there are a few insights we can gain.

Revelation is like the emotional climax in that old show “Extreme Makeover—Home Edition,” where a family that has had a tragedy gets their tiny home rebuilt into a perfect, usually large, residence to suit their family. And there is always that moment at the end—the “Move That Bus” moment—when the new home that is promised is revealed for a first impression.

Three Very Big Deals:

- 1) Jesus is coming back—Revelation 19:11–16—Rider on the horse, robe and tattoo(!), armies destroyed by him, and the beast thrown into the lake of burning sulfur.
 - a. 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 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 winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

- b. Jesus defeats everything that is evil
 - i. Natural calamities in Revelation 8
 - ii. Demonic forces in Revelation 9
 - iii. The Dragon in Revelation 12 and the Beast in Revelation 13
 - iv. The final battle in Revelation 19—Satan is defeated and thrown into the lake of fire. The end of the story is that Jesus wins!
 - c. Knowing the end creates great security. We know that no matter how much injustice there is in this world, no matter how much abuse takes place or pain is inflicted, in the end, Jesus wins! Right triumphs and justice prevails. Things may not be right now, but they will be made right in the end.
 - d. It also reminds us that God is ruling the world and the trajectory of history. He wins the final battle in Revelation 19 when most thought that Rome was the most powerful force in the world. Their claim that Jesus is Lord and that Jesus is the victor flew in the face of the claim that Caesar is lord and Caesar is the victor!
 - i. Rome did not run the world in the time of John, God did. Washington or Beijing or Tehran does not run the world today, God does. And God will be victorious!
- 2) You will be judged—Revelation 20:11–15
- a. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it (*note Great White Throne Judgment*). The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, (*notice heaven and earth fled—more later*) and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.
 - b. Judgement Day is real. The good news on that day is that Death and Hades (the place of the dead) will be thrown into the lake of fire.
 - c. But much more sobering is this: One day, you will stand before God and be required to give an account for your life. And in that moment, nothing will be hidden. It will all be laid bare for all to see. And everyone will be found to be wanting... but there is one key question...
 - d. Name in the Lamb’s book of life!—You must trust in the Lamb, Jesus! Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the Passover lamb who was slain to save the people from the angel of death. Are you feeling the storyline connections here? Trust the Lamb.
 - e. By what you have done—two judgments, two thrones—Great White Throne and Bema Seat, where heavenly rewards, jewels, and crowns are handed out for faithfulness. Man, if you are not motivated by just sheer desire to please Jesus, there are going to be prizes in Heaven, and not just a cheap gift card! We are talking the good stuff!

3) The New Heavens and New Earth are awesome! (Revelation 21:1–5)

A Garden and a City

- The Garden of Eden—Revelation 22:1–5
 - Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.
 - Genesis tells us God created the heavens and the earth; Revelation describes a new heaven and a new earth.
 - In chapter 1 of the Bible, God made the sun and the stars for light. In the last chapter, the city does not need the sun or stars because the glory of God brings light.
 - The lost paradise of Genesis is the found paradise of Revelation.
 - Satan appears in the first garden and is banished from the last garden.
 - The tree we could not touch in the Garden of Eden we are invited to eat from in the Garden of Heaven.
 - In Genesis man hides from God, but in Revelation God dwells with man!
 - In Genesis, men and women were created to rule over earth together. In Revelation, they will reign over the new creation forever and ever.
- A great city—It starts in a garden and ends in a city. The New Jerusalem promised in Isaiah—Revelation 21:22–26
 - Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.
 - It begins in a garden and ends in a city. If the garden imagery is the same, but we are actually in a city, we must ask, “Why?”. What has God been doing throughout history? What is the difference between a garden and a city? Population. God has been populating the city. This lower story of reaching one more person for their redemption and for Jesus’ sake is the upper story of all time. God is populating the city. And you and I get to be a part of that!
 - Coming from the sky
 - Beautiful, like a radiant bride

I will go up to heaven after I die—wrong!

BUICK: “Brought up in church kid”—How many? We believe wrong stuff about Heaven without even questioning it.

- **Up**—New Jerusalem will come down
 - Heaven is used in two ways through most of the Bible
 - The sky region
 - The place where God, angels, and otherworldly beings exist
 - Revelation 21:2—Old Heaven and Earth passed away
 - I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.
 - New Heaven and New Earth
 - New Jerusalem comes down from “New Heaven”
 - We live in the New Jerusalem. But it comes down, we don’t go up.
- **I will go to Heaven**—Heaven and Earth are a pair in the Bible—200x
 - Interestingly, we think of heaven and hell as after earth, but the Bible teaches Heaven and Earth are together from the opening chapters of the Bible.
 - Hell is real, just not associated as the flipside of the Heaven coin.
 - Complicated, emerging diagram—Heaven and Earth—8x
 - Genesis 1: Heaven and Earth
 - Old Testament: Heaven and Earth with squiggle/fog
 - Jesus/Spirit: Heaven with arrow toward Earth
 - Arrow becomes a cross
 - Application: volunteer for flood relief
 - Revelation: Heaven to Earth with sword
 - Arrows from earths in Old Testament, Jesus, and Revelation to Sheol/Gehenna
 - Final: New Heavens and New Earth with New Jerusalem coming down
 - Revelation says that Heaven and Earth will flee, and the New Heavens and New Earth will take their place.
 - The CITY—New Jerusalem will fill its place
- **After I die**—The Kingdom of Heaven came to Earth 2,000 years ago.
 - Jesus crashed Heaven into Earth when he came.
 - Matthew says, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” That’s a big message!
 - Eternity starts today.
 - “Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.”
 - Our job is to change this world to be more like that world. Hospitals, universities, leprosariums, mercy ships, and flood relief are all evidence that Jesus is alive and his people are obeying “on earth as it is in heaven.”
 - Volunteer for flood relief
 - 200 people are coming between now and Tuesday from all around the country. They took days off of work to come here to serve. You can, too!
 - Pick a day between April 2–16 and join the crew.
 - Show up at 7 AM. You’ll be home in time for dinner.
 - Bring any tools you think you might need, plus grubby clothes and work gloves.

- In the name of Jesus, we will bring just a little bit of heaven to planet Earth.
- Even if you can't do hearty work, there is value in showing up to pray, to love, to talk to homeowners, to deliver water, or to run errands. Come on out and they will put you to work!

Application:

- Just a reminder—you are going to die. Some research has been done lately on death rates and there is universal agreement. Still pretty much a 100% chance of death. Some are scared of this moment, but you can know what is happening. Die with confidence. There are tough guys who say, "I laugh in the face of death." You can do it for real. Dozens of funerals. HUGE difference in tone—do they mourn with hope, or without hope?
- So, if you begin with the end in mind, how would you answer the questions from the beginning? Where do you want to be? Who will you bring with you? How does that make a difference today?

Musicians come up and start playing

The Story is over! Can you believe it? This is the story of the ages—creation, fall, Israel, Jesus, Spirit, the Church, a big _____GAP_____, and the end of times in Revelation.

- You are this chapter of *The Story*. You are in the gap... because the story continues. It isn't in the book, it is spreading around the globe—resonating out from Israel originally, but now from many cities all around the world. One of those cities is Omaha, Nebraska. If you are beginning with the end in mind, you are asking, "Who do I want to be sure is with me in eternity? Who do I want to see every day in the New Heavens and the New Earth?"
- At this point, I want you to move from *Story* READER to story TELLER. You are a storyteller—get good at it! Now you know the story cover-to-cover. It is time to pass your learning on to others. Let them in on the best deal ever. Share with them the best news ever. Invite them into the community in Student Ministry, in Men's Groups, at Easter services.
- Go to that Storyteller Workshop. Sharpen your skills in listening to their story, articulating your story, and telling the God story. There is no better story, and God invites every last one of us to be tellers of the STORY!

Conclusion:

- I want to finish with the words of Revelation. Come, Come, Come—Revelation 22:17
- The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.
- Come to enjoy life in Jesus NOW
- Come to experience life to the full
- Come to the security of eternal life
- Come to the hope of the New Heavens and the New Earth
- Come to worship the KING!

Final Song