

Consummation: God Reigns

Revelation 21-22

Rev. Brian Bill

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Now that Christmas is over, maybe people will start being nicer to each other again. Several years ago, I was at a store doing Christmas shopping and a lady told me that I was ignorant. I almost agreed with her and then decided to ask her what she meant. She glared at me and said, *“I’ve asked you to get out of the way 3 times now and you haven’t moved.”* I apologized to her and mentioned that I hadn’t heard her. As she barreled past me, I couldn’t resist giving her one parting comment. I put a smile on my face and said, *“Merry Christmas!”* She turned back and growled, *“Yeah, Merry Christmas to you, too.”*

A few days after this encounter I was in a parking lot and another woman shook her fist at me because I was driving too slowly. I wanted to wish her a *Happy New Year* but thought better of it. So much for *good will to all men!*

On Monday of this week, the day after Christmas, a bunch of brawls broke out in 15 malls across America. I promise I didn’t start any of them.

We’re all pretty much on overload right now as it relates to the holidays. We don’t know if we can take any more Christmas carols or Christmas cookies. Perhaps you’ve heard enough preaching on Christmas as well. Before we jump back into our study in the Gospel of Mark next weekend, the story about the glory of Christ isn’t finished. Let’s summarize where we’ve been so far in our series called, *“Christmas: From Creation to Consummation.”* If you missed any of the messages, you can watch, listen or read the manuscripts on edgewoodbaptist.net. You could also subscribe to our free sermon podcasts or pick up a CD at Guest Services.

A good way to understand the Bible is not just by looking at small sections but by seeing the overarching meta-narrative. God’s plan and the plotline of the Bible stretch from Genesis to Revelation – all 66 books are woven together by a single storyline. *The story of Scripture is about the glory of the Savior.*

We’ve been learning to view the content of Christmas through a panoramic lens.

- **Creation: God Makes.** *At Christmas Christ came to cover our curse by dying in our place on the cross!* In this first message we discovered that the

opening verses of John 1 parallel the first five verses of Genesis 1. Adam brings death and Jesus brings life. We're all born in Adam and need to be born again through the second Adam in order to become God's new creation.

- **Hope: God Promises.** *Hope is longing for what God has already promised us.* The theme of hope and longing in the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ. *We're to hold on to the rope of hope when it's hard to cope* by clinging to God's past promises, His present provisions and to the fruit that's coming in the future. There's no way to have hope without having a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.
- **Covenant: God Pursues.** God's response to our rebellion was to reach out in relationship by making covenants. Covenants address the catastrophe of the Fall, and they all point to Christmas and the Cross. The coming of Christ is connected to the fulfillment of the covenants found in the Old Testament.
- **Incarnation: God Comes.** On Christmas Eve, we learned that *in a similar way that God dwelt with His people in the Tabernacle and in the Temple He now dwells with people through His only Son Jesus Christ!* In Him, the glory of God has descended and He has pitched His tent to dwell among us.
- **Salvation: God Gives.** On Christmas Day we camped in John 3:16 and celebrated that God loves and He lavishes by giving the gift of His one and only Son, the ultimate Lamb of God, who fulfills the entire sacrificial system. We're called to lean on Him so that we can live forever.

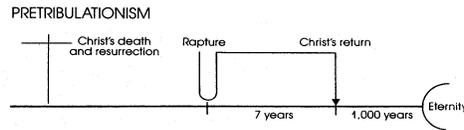
Our title for this weekend is: "Consummation: God Reigns." A simple way to look at Christmas is to see Christ who came in the *cradle*, who died as our substitute on the *cross*, and when He comes again, He'll be wearing a *crown*.

The word "*consummation*" can be defined as, "*the point at which something is complete or finalized.*" History is headed somewhere as everything will be finalized when Jesus Christ returns to rule and reign forever.

Do you know the difference between an optimist and a pessimist? *An optimist stays up until midnight to see the New Year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.* While some of us are happy to say good riddance to 2016 and look forward to a new year, we must keep in the forefront of our minds that the next big appointment on God's calendar is the return of Jesus Christ! And it could happen in 2017!

More specifically, for those who are reborn, the next event is the Rapture of

believers. This graph shows a simple timeline.



In a *Time* magazine cover story entitled, “*Apocalypse Now*,” almost 15 years ago, Nancy Gibbs wrote these words, “*In an apocalyptic age, people feel that the veil of normal, secular reality is lifting and we can see behind the scenes...*” (“*Apocalypse Now*,” 7/1/02). If that was true then, it’s even more true today.

I can think of four categories in which we’re beginning to see the veil of secular reality lifting:

- Catastrophic events like 9/11 and the threat of more terrorist attacks (ISIS is threatening attacks on New Year’s Eve) remind us that life is a vapor that’s here one moment and gone the next.
- Continuing problems with Russia and in the Middle East make many of us feel insecure. The UN vote this week against Israel is extremely troubling, especially since our country failed to stand with them. Since Israel is a focal point of end-time prophecy, this event may lead to other pieces of the prophetic picture falling in place.
- Capitulation of doctrine. As we move closer to the return of Christ, there will be more false teachers, and a greater emphasis on other religions in our world. As a result, the doctrine of the exclusivity of Jesus Christ will be denigrated. Speaking on BBC Radio, Prince Phillip urged listeners last week to not forget Muhammad on Christmas: “*Normally at Christmas we think of the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ... we might also remember that when the prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina he was seeking the freedom for himself and his followers to worship. Whichever religious path we follow, the destination is the same...*”
- And, our cultural climate is filled with increasing drug and alcohol addiction, the breakdown of the family, and senseless violence. Did you hear that there were 61 shootings in Chicago on Christmas weekend? 11 of the victims died. 7 were killed on Christmas Day alone, more than on this holiday the last three years combined.

We know the end is near, especially for those whose kids can’t get their Hatchimals to hatch!

While it might seem like things are falling apart, according to God's Word, they're actually falling together.

I want to pull out some highlights from the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation as we close out an old year and get ready for a new one. The Book of Revelation was written to comfort persecuted Christians by focusing on the glory and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without this book, the Bible would be incomplete. Four different times we read these words, ***"Behold, I am coming soon!"***

Have you heard about the man who bought a donkey from a preacher? The preacher told him that this donkey had been trained in a very unique way. The only way to make the donkey go was to say, *"Hallelujah!"* and the only way to make the donkey stop was to say, *"Amen!"* The man was pleased with his purchase and immediately got on the animal to try out the preacher's instructions. *"Hallelujah!"* shouted the man. The donkey began to trot. *"Amen!"* shouted the man. The donkey stopped immediately. *"This is great,"* said the man. With a *"Hallelujah!"* he rode off, very proud of his new purchase.

The man traveled for a long time through some hills and soon he was heading towards a cliff. He could not remember the word to make the donkey stop so he tried different commands: *"Stop!"* said the man. *"Halt!"* he cried. The donkey just kept going. *"Bible...Church...Please stop!"* shouted the man. The donkey just began to trot faster and was getting closer and closer to the edge of the cliff.

Finally, in desperation, the man said a prayer, *"Please, dear Lord. Please make this donkey stop before I go off this cliff; in Jesus' name, Amen."* The donkey came to an abrupt stop just one step from the edge of the cliff. *"Hallelujah!"* shouted the man.

In Revelation 19, all of heaven breaks out into praise. The word *"Hallelujah,"* which means, "Praise the Lord," is found only here in the New Testament, and it's used four times in this chapter.

Things are coming to a close, the consummation of all things is at hand as the Lord Jesus Christ prepares to rule and reign! Listen to Revelation 19:6-7: ***"Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him***

the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready.”

Listen to verses 11-12: *“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.”*

The King of Christmas will judge in perfect justice. Jesus will make all the wrongs right. He is the faithful and true witness who will judge all nations, and all people.

Verses 15-16 paint a picture that we seldom have of Jesus. He is more than just the sweet baby sleeping on the hay: *“From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”*

In Revelation 20, we learn that Satan will be bound for 1,000 years, after which he will be released before being thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur. Martyrs for Christ will reign with Christ – this is a great promise for those being persecuted for their faith even now. The chapter ends with a description of the Great White Throne judgment.

Listen to these astonishing words in the first six verses of Revelation 21: *“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. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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. 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.’ 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.’ And he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.’”*

As I read the final chapters in Revelation this week, I wrote down 10 connect points between this book and the Old Testament, showing how the Bible is one, unified narrative beginning with creation and ending with consummation.

1. Genesis 1-2 describe how God created the heavens and the earth. In Revelation 21:1 we read, ***“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...”***
2. Adam and Eve are married in Genesis 2:18-25 and in Revelation 19:7 we read, ***“For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready.”***
3. Genesis 3 ends with the “Tree of Life” being guarded by the cherubim with a flaming sword so that Adam could not go near it. In Revelation 22:2, we hear that the leaves of the Tree of Life are ***“for the healing of the nations.”***
4. In Genesis 2:10 there’s a river flowing out of Eden and in Revelation 22:1, there’s a ***“river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”***
5. In Genesis 3:8, we read that God walked in the Garden of Eden and in Revelation 21:3 we hear these glorious words: ***“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.’”***
6. As a result of Adam’s sin God pronounced a curse in Genesis 3:17-19. In Revelation 22:3, this curse is reversed: ***“No longer will there be anything accursed.”***
7. Genesis 3:19 tells us that death, separation and suffering entered the world through sin and in Revelation 21:4 we read, ***“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.”***
8. In the Old Testament, the Temple of God was the focal point of worship and where God’s glory was on display according to 2 Chronicles 5:14. God’s glory departed from the Temple in Ezekiel 10. In Jesus, God tabernacled with us. Check out what we read in Revelation 21:22: ***“And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.”***
9. In Genesis 22:9-14, God provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice for Isaac. In the Passover, it was the blood of a lamb that caused the angel of death to “passover” the people. In John 1:29, John the Baptist exclaims, ***“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”*** The title “Lamb” is the most frequent title for Jesus, used 28 different times! Here’s just one from Revelation 4:12: ***“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”***
10. The glory of God is the theme of the entire Bible. Isaiah 42:8: ***“I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other.”*** Listen to Revelation

21:23: “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”

I like what Kyle Idleman tweeted recently: *“The first time He came will not be like the next time He comes.”* Part of our problem is that we get so distracted that we don’t think enough about the coming of Christ as King.

One night many years ago, Beth had a meeting at church. As the girls and I watched her get ready, we noticed that she was leaving with two delicious desserts. When we couldn’t get her to give us some before she left, we pleaded with her to bring some home after the meeting. She promised that she would.

As the night went on, the girls repeatedly asked me just one question, *“Dad, when’s mom coming home?”* When it got dark, the questions crescendoed. I told them I wasn’t sure of the exact time but I knew she was going to come. At about 8:30, the troops were getting restless so we went outside to wait for her. No one had shoes on and some of us were in our pajamas (you can tell that I was in charge that night!).

At first we sat on the front porch and just waited. But then, the girls started doing cartwheels in the grass. Eventually, one of them got out her pogo stick and we all tried jumping on it. The girls really laughed when I attempted to hop around. The later it got, the more distracted we became. We were so focused on just being goofy that we stopped asking about mom. Megan got tired so I put her to bed (that way I could eat her portion of the dessert). About 9:20, Beth rolled into the driveway. She was startled to see us outside in our pajamas and we were glad to finally get our dessert.

The second coming of Jesus is a bit like this. We know He’s coming but we don’t know when. While many of us are filled with expectation, several of us are distracted by other things, and some of us have just fallen asleep.

I pray that God will shake us out of our spiritual slumber since the coming of Christ will be sudden and unexpected. We must *prepare for a delay, but be ready today.*

As I was reading the last chapter of the Bible this week, it hit me that our “4 G’s” are found in this passage. Let’s walk through them as action steps for the new year.

1. Grow in the Word. Check out the words of Jesus in Revelation 22:7: ***“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*** The emphasis is on obedience. We’re to hear *and* heed what God says. We’ve said it before but it bears repeating – it’s impossible to grow if we’re not getting into God’s Word on a daily basis. Every December I read over Jonathan Edwards’ 70 Resolutions in preparation for the New Year. This one stood out to me – *“Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.”*

As a way to help us get into the Word this year, we will be providing a new Bible reading plan every month in the bulletin and on the website. The idea is to get us all reading from the same place so that we can encourage one another and hold each other accountable. This will also give us a monthly reset so new people can jump in and those who’ve fallen off can get back on at the start of every month. Can you take out the insert in your bulletin? Our first reading journey will be through the Book of Proverbs.

If you’re not in a Growth Group, can I encourage you to plug in on Sunday mornings or during the week? Spiritual growth happens best in groups. There’s an interest form to fill out on our website.

2. Gather to worship. According to several surveys, the average evangelical gathers to worship just 1.8 times a month. Can I encourage you to step it up in the new year? If you’re out of the habit of gathering each week, get back into the habit. Make it a priority, an anchor in your life. We offer three different service times to give you greater flexibility. Check out Revelation 22:8-9: ***“I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’”*** The main reason we gather together is to worship God. He deserves it, doesn’t He?

3. Give what you’ve been given. Jesus is coming soon and will repay what we’ve done with what we’ve been given according to Revelation 22:12-13: ***“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.”*** Can I encourage you to up your giving game in 2017? If you’re not serving, find a place to serve. If your giving is not at the level you long for it to be, kick it up this year. A tithe, or 10%, is a good place to start. We have

some exciting news coming up this month that will make it easier to give online and by text through a new app.

4. Go with the gospel. I love the gracious invitation that is found in verse 17: *“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.”* The Bride is the church. The one who hears is you and me. We’re to invite people to come to Christ, the only one who can quench spiritual thirst. The water of life is free for the taking. Let’s recommit to evangelism this year, stepping up our go game.

Are you ready to meet the King of Kings and Lord of Lords today? The Babe in Bethlehem became the Christ of the Cross, who is both King and Judge.

Twass the night before Jesus Came, and all through the house
Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.
The Bible was laid on the shelf without care,
In hope that Jesus would not come there.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed,
Not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.
And Mom in her rocker with Baby on her lap
Was watching the late show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter,
I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters, threw up the sash!

When what to my wondering eyes should appear?
But angels proclaiming that Jesus was here!
With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray,
I knew in a moment this must be the Day!

The light of his face made me cover my head.
It was Jesus! Returning just like He’d said.
And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth,
I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.

In the Book of Life which He held in His hand

Was written the name of every saved man.
He spoke not a word as He searched for my name.
When He said, "*It's not here,*" my head hung in shame.

The people whose names had been written with love,
He gathered to take to His father above.
With those who were ready, He rose without a sound
While all the rest were standing around.

I fell to my knees, but it was too late.
I had waited too long, and thus sealed my fate.
I stood and cried as they rose out of sight,
"If only I had been ready tonight!"

Are you ready today? Do you know Christ? Have you received Him into your life? If you have, are you living for Him or for yourself?

Don't leave Christ in the cradle, only to think about Him again next Christmas. Some day, you're going to meet the *Conquering Christ of Christmas* as your Judge – and the only way you'll be able to face Him is if you've received the water of life.

I don't know how to say this any other way. If you don't know Jesus, you have an appointment with judgment. Your future home will be in Hell. And there is no escape unless you put your faith in Jesus Christ this very moment. Flee to Jesus now before it's too late...before you're left outside or left behind.

Invitation Song: "He Shall Reign Forevermore"

New Members

David and Kaylee Hall
Robin Jensen

Benediction

Receive this benediction from the last two verses of the Bible: "*He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.*"