

Ending with the Beginning

Revelation 22:12-21

INTRO:

A few months ago we set out on this adventure through the Bible!

When we started, when we began a couple of months ago, we remembered that God is a God of beginnings:

*the story of God begins that way— — “**in the beginning . . . God.**”*

Today we are at the end of our concentrated, but attentive journey through the Bible.

Even though we are at the . . . **end** . . . of this mini-journey, we will discover that we are still celebrating . . . **beginnings**.

As the biblical story closes, it is not with “**the end**,” but with a word that has about it all the feelings of *beginnings*.

The word is *come* .

That is a word of *invitation*, and its by anyone’s count the dominant word in the last half dozen verses of Revelation.

It is used **First** as an invitation for us to come to God, then as a prayer from the author of the book, urging Jesus to . . . **come** . . . to us as quickly as possible.

And those closing paragraphs are consistent with the last two chapters of the Bible, as contained in the book of Revelation.

Popular religion is pretty hung up on the “**end of the world**.”

BUT, and again this is a big but, Revelation speaks, instead of a whole new, wonderful **beginning**.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.”

It is true that the first earth has passed away, but that is not the point of it all:

the point is the new, and to get to the new, we'll have to see the end of the old.

This “**newness**” is so vast and complete that the One on the throne says, “**See, I am making all things new.**”

So, obviously, we are not coming to the end of the story.

Instead, we are at a whole new beginning.

Don't you think that's exciting?!

ME:

Popular religion is pretty hung up on the “**end of the world** and the ends times.

That’s not something that excites me.

It is mostly **speculation** and guess work anyway.

I would rather stick with what the Bible says about it.

And Revelation speaks, instead of a whole new, wonderful beginning.

YOU:

Are you concerned about the end times?

Well, love and serve God, love and serve people, repeat whenever possible.

Then there's nothing to worry about.

Do you sense God's presence wherever you are?

Is God present wherever you are?

Let's see what God can teach about this through the Revelation of John:

Let's pray together for eyes to see . . .

GOD:

Revelation 22:12 “See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work.

13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.

15 Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 “It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let everyone who hears say, “Come.” And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book;

19 if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

20 The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

WE:

What a great way to end the whole story of the Bible!

Ending with the beginning.

This passage highlights that God's promises are "**trustworthy and true**" and that he will fulfill them.

This idea encourages us about the individual promises we feel we are waiting on in our own lives.

The text speaks to something much larger, though:

God's entire purpose in redemptive history.

We may not live to see every fulfillment even of what God has called us to do in this life.

Biblical figures like Jeremiah and Paul did not, but God fulfilled his good words anyway.

Thank about it.

Often, when a sports team is losing and the game is almost over, fans will start to head for the exits.

Sometimes they want to beat the traffic home, but often, they're just disgusted with the way the game is going and can't watch any more.

It's interesting to note the human movement:

when the team seems sure to lose, the people move away, literally leaving the arena.

If a miracle happens, and the team looks like it might win, they come streaming back.

This is what we do.

We are **desperate** to associate with winners, and **terrified** that we'll be associated with losers.

This is true in high school cafeterias, high powered board rooms, NBA arenas, and even in church pews.

We want winners around us, and we shield ourselves (always politely, of course!) from losers.

Jesus moves the other way.

He would be found coming into the arena as the clock was ticking to zero on the home team's failure.

Jesus showed over and over again that his life's work was to associate with **losers**.

The most common insult sent Christ's way was "**He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.**"

Paul knew the power of Christ's habit:

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

What does this mean?

Jesus is for Losers.

Jesus came for losers.

God, though, shows his love in one special way:

while we were losers, he sent his son for us.

While we were at our worst, God gave us his best.

Jesus went repeatedly to the down-and-out, the leper, the demon-possessed, the sick, and even the dead.

The movement of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is toward overwhelmed losers like you and me.

That's just a little different from what we would expect.

Or, or, or is it *radically* different than what we **expect**, and *different from* what we **deserve**.

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

Ending with the Beginning means beginning to live in response to God's grace.

YOU:

Can you think of ways to apply this to your life?

What will you do about this new beginning in your life now?

CLOSE:

It is especially exciting if you've been traveling through the Bible with us these last 90 days.

You've seen as we've gone along, that we human beings have a remarkable habit of getting in trouble.

Give us Eden, and we'll quickly find a way to be evicted:

wash the world clean with a flood and we'll soon dirty it up again:

find us a chosen people and they'll soon enough make us wonder why they were chosen:

send us the Son of God, and we will crucify him.

We are so good at messing things up that it's clear we need an absolutely new beginning.

The issue throughout much of this book is to get the world in order for its new beginning.

And in a sense, that involves some massive birth pains.

The old system, with its degradation and brutality and accumulated ugliness, must go; and that is not a tidy process.

Marvel not that is messy; marvel, instead, that a remedy is even possible.

And the word to end it all is a word for beginning again— —*come*.

It is about a land where all tears are wiped away (with our very God tending to the task), where death is no more, and where “**mourning and crying and pain will be no more.**”

There is an African American preacher who said it well, because he said it so simply:

Heaven, he said will be “howdy—howdy land,” because good-bye wont be part of the vocabulary.

In other words, it will be a land of beginnings.

Because our Lord is a Lord of beginnings— —even when we've come to a book we thought would be the end.

Let's begin to pray together now ...