

ENDGAME

Understanding the Main Themes of the
Book of Revelation



Home Group Member's Notes

June to August 2019

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OVERVIEW

SERIES PASSAGE

Revelation 21:3-4

“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.’”

THE “ENDGAME” SERIES

The Book of Revelation shows us that God is guiding history to a final goal. A goal which God himself will bring about in the near future in a particular way that he himself has revealed. It’s his providence. In this series, we grapple with the many themes in the last book of the Bible. We begin at the end and work our way back from there. Biblical prophecy comes true and has affected our world history. So, what does God have in store for humanity? And how shall we live in light of what is to come?

Understanding the main themes of the Book of Revelation

ENDGAME APPROACH TO REVELATION

Revelation can be very difficult book as it is a bit out there with such an unusual style full of symbolism and imagery. But don’t let that put you off reading and trying to understand it. In fact, we recommend that you read it in its entirety before the start of this series. Then, as we go through key themes of this study, you will be able to appreciate the truths contained in the book that are reflected in our life and society today as well relating to what happens after death. This is also the approach or lens we will use for this Endgame series. We will keep it focussed on core messages, and for the most part we won’t try to drill down and study what individual symbols could mean or the timing of the events described. If you have any questions or concerns you are most welcome to talk to Ps Chris Ong (chris.ong@fgam.org.au) and he would be very happy to discuss with you further.

A holistic (or Hebrew) way of studying the bible is to look at patterns that repeat. Throughout scripture we see cycles of humanity broken by sin, independence and returning back to God being the recurrent themes. When we encounter the themes again in Revelation they aren’t foreign to us. As well as brokenness we see hope. For

example, types of Jesus in the Old Testament such as Joseph. Temporal judgements that point to ultimate judgement. Some of these things are dialled up dramatically in Revelation, but we won't be speculating on the details. Instead we will look at God's endgame around the themes and for our lives today.

Revelation addresses how God will resolve the unsolvable problems of mankind and bring about great restoration

ABOUT THE SESSIONS

Endgame will take 6 Sessions to cover three major themes from the Book of Revelation found in Chapters 4 to 22. The following table outlines the key points of each Session and what is God's endgame in Revelation:

SESSION	KEY THEME	TITLE	KEYWORD	MAIN POINT	GOD'S ENDGAME
Session 1	Good vs Evil	Why does a good God allow bad things to happen?	Justification	We are part of a problem we cannot solve.	To deal with our personal evil
Session 2	Good vs Evil	Satan	Adversary	We have an enemy	To defeat our adversaries
Session 3	Worship	Counterfeit v's Original	Judgement	The counterfeit comes with an inferior promise	To judge the counterfeit
Session 4	Worship	Who is worthy?	Idolatry	The biggest sin of mankind is idolatry	Judge the Kings
Session 5	Love	Marriage	Marriage	Preparing the bride	Show himself faithful and true to his Bride
Session 6	Love	New Home	<i>Parousia</i> (Greek)	Our eternal dwelling place	Heaven

Keywords: Evil • Sin • Worship • Love • Idolatry • Prophetic • Marriage • Promise
F.A.I.T.H. emphasis: H – Holy & Set Apart

SESSION 1

Good versus Evil (Part I)

Why does a good God allow bad things to happen?

Key Passage *“Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’”*

Revelation 6:15-17

A. INTRODUCTION

Revelation is a prophecy that was received by the Apostle John in a vision. The book is filled with symbolism and imagery, the likes of things we have never seen which makes it difficult to interpret. The key is not to be overwhelmed by the imagery and symbolism, but to know that God is unfolding his plan that he has declared beforehand will happen. As God fulfilled scores of prophecies relating to the first coming of Christ we can be assured he will do it again.

The aim of the “Endgame” Series is to understand three key themes that are repeated in the Book of Revelation: Evil, Worship and Love. In Session 1 we will take a look at the problem of evil in humanity and how God will deal with it. The first step is to recognise that we ourselves contribute to the evil in the world. We often make excuses for our poor behaviour and think that we are not that bad. We don’t stop do ask “Does God judge me?” So, in reality, evil is not just “them” it is a collective problem. As such, if God were to deal with Evil he must deal with us as well. In Revelation we see that God is indeed dealing with it, and like an expert surgeon, he is able to address the problem and bring a solution. But be warned things need will get much worse before they get better. This is the reason for which Jesus Christ died, “the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” ([1 Pet 3:18b](#)).

The keyword term we will look at this session is Justification.

When looking at humanity, there are not just isolated pockets of evil, there is a collective problem of evil.

B. READ SCRIPTURE: Revelation 6:1-17

C. MAIN POINT

Perhaps you have asked at some point, “How could a good God let bad things happen?” Or “Why isn’t God doing something about the evil in the world?” Whenever we talk about evil or what’s wrong in the world, we tend to look only at the evil we see in others. We say we need to stop the violence, abusers and the corrupt who are in power. Even those in our family we can begrudgingly judge and complain about them for their shortcomings. Wait a minute... have we ever done anything bad? When was the last time you cried out to God to be merciful for your own sin and the evil that is within you? If we are honest, it is all too easy to criticise those who do wrong yet we make excuses for our own poor behaviour. We say we’re exhausted, stressed, or having a bad day. Let’s get real, we don’t just have the propensity for evil, we ourselves, all of us, have done evil. If God, being fair, was to deal with evil in the world then he needs to include us.

Our anchor verse, [Rev 21:3-4](#), describes the final plan of God, his Endgame. There will be peace, healing and safety. But God needs to deal with the problem of evil first. Revelation shows that God is tackling the problem of evil by dealing with it at its root. He is going in like an expert surgeon and is removing all that is evil. Like a physical surgery, where a person is cut open, things need to get a whole lot worse so they can get better.

Evil or sin is a problem that is impossible for us solve. However, God has a plan and a solution that reflects his incredible love and commitment. While we wait for the fullness of evil to be dealt with we have access to a solution of our personal evil through believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But first we come to the realisation there is no other solution ([Acts 4:12](#)).

God’s endgame is to deal with our personal Evil

D. KEYWORD STUDY: JUSTIFICATION (optional)

Most often when we talk about justifying something, we tend to think of making excuses for questionable behaviour. This is particularly true when the thing that was done was inconsistent with the core values of the person. When it relates to something we have done, we rationalise aiming to deny or deflect any negative feedback.

The Biblical term, Justification, is quite the opposite. It is something that God has done, not to cover or deflect our sin, but providing a just cause for it to be completely removed. Justification is the open door to which we can freely pursue a relationship with God knowing we are forgiven and righteous in his sight. Imputed righteousness through the blood of Christ does not only provide justification of our ungodliness and freedom from sin, but brings about our transformation into holiness.

In the simplest terms, the doctrine of justification means that God declares sinners righteous, apart from good deeds, when they believe in Jesus Christ. To those who believe in Jesus all their guilt is absolved and they will not be condemned with the world.

Being made righteous by faith alone is precious not mainly because it frees us from condemnation, but because it frees us legally, psychologically, and emotionally to live with God.

Study these links and then spend some time in discussion and reflection.

- JUSTIFICATION or [*dikaiōma*](#) (Strong's Greek word 1345)
- Read key scriptures [Rom 4:25](#), [Rom 5:16](#), [Rom 5:18](#), [Rom 3:21-26](#)
- Read about Justification <https://biblehub.com/topical/j/justification.htm> or https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/search.cfm?Criteria=justification&t=E&SV#s=s_refWorks
- Scriptures around the topic [Rom 3:23](#), [John 3:17-18](#), [Luke 18:9-14](#)

Reflection Point

- **What makes a person justified? How do we live it out?**

E. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think that the world is so broken that it requires drastic measures to fix it? Or put another way, What is mankind's BIGGEST problem?

2. What is the root of personal evil? (read Mark 7:20-23, James 4:1-10)

4. Why does a good God allow bad things to happen?

F. APPLICATION

Let us take time to come before God and praise and thank him for what he has done for us through the love and obedience shown by Jesus Christ. Let's set things right, if we have done wrong and pray for one another.

G. LOOKING FORWARD

In Session 2, we look at Good versus Evil (part II), as we look at the topic of our spiritual adversary in Satan.

SESSION 2

Good versus Evil (Part II)

Satan

Key Passage: *“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)*

A. INTRODUCTION

We are studying three key themes which are repeated in the Book of Revelation. In the first session on Good vs Evil (part I), we acknowledged that part of the evil in the world is also in us. Evil is a collective problem for all of humanity. We are facing a problem that is impossible for us solve, despite our technology, wealth and power. However, God has a solution. For now, it is by believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Revelation shows God’s plan for the future, to deal with evil in mankind.

If we look thematically through the bible, and even within the book of Revelation, we see there are many enemies of the people of God. It is not just God who does things, but there are real spiritual powers that affect the world’s political or economic climate. We are fighting against conniving and cunning adversaries.

There is a great ignorance coming to our church today, where we rely on best practice and natural remedies to resolve problems. This session reminds us that we have an enemy and we must not be ignorant of the devil’s schemes. Revelation shows that God also has a plan for Satan. In the meantime, scripture helps us to recognise his work and teaches us how to fight God’s way.

We have an enemy

B. READ SCRIPTURE: Revelation 9:1-11; Matt 7:15, 21

C. MAIN POINT

Not only is evil a personal issue in our world and our own lives, but we have an enemy who is intentionally fighting against us. We refer to this spiritual being as our adversary, or the devil or Satan. Our present worldview often leads us to believe all the problems and issues we face have only natural causes, and there is a growing ignorance that we have an actual spiritual adversary. The objective of the devil or evil

spirits is to lead us away from God, primarily through accusation, deception and temptation. The ultimate goal is our death and destruction.

If we look thematically through the book of Revelation we see there are some very powerful and evil adversaries that impact the masses, bringing horrific trials and temptations. These include Satan, beasts and the prostitute. They are devious, cunning and have degrees of power and influence. In Chapter 9 Satan's tries to convey that he is God, but he isn't. If we become caught up in the battle and yield to temptation and lured by what is powerful. We don't see the real problem and think there is no consequence for our actions. Maybe we think no one sees us, or there is no harm in what we are doing. Yet, in reality, all things are connected and the consequence is the destruction of yourself and quite possibly your family as well.

Today is a reminder that we are in a battle and we need to be on guard ([2 Cor 2:11](#)) and resist the devil ([Jam 4:7](#)). As the verse in 1 Peter 5:8 says "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Let us remember that Christ has redeemed us from the one who had the power over death ([Heb 2:14](#)) and will give us victory in our lives too.

The message of Revelation is that as we need to prepare ourselves for what God has right at the end. The scriptures make it clear that we need a high degree of resilience to withstand the trials that come.

God's endgame is to defeat our adversaries

D. KEYWORD STUDY: "ADVERSARY" (optional)

This session we will look at what scripture says about our "adversary". Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we see God's people facing adversaries of many kinds. The first we learn of Satan and his schemes appears in the book Genesis, as the serpent in the garden confronts Eve resulting in the fall of humanity ([Gen 3](#)). God also prophesied that it would be the seed of the woman (offspring, i.e. Jesus) that would eventually crush Satan (v. 15). Satan also appears elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g. [1 Chron 21:1](#), [Job 1:6-2:7](#), [Zech 3:1-2](#)). In the Gospels, Jesus has personal confrontation with Satan in the wilderness ([Luke 4:1-13](#)). Here, the devil's temptations were so powerful Jesus had to fast for 40 days in order to overcome Satan's strategies to destroy his ministry before it began. Where the first humans failed (in the garden), Jesus stood firm.

For this session, take a look at what the Bible says about our adversary.

Suggested links on this topic include those listed below, but you are welcome to use your own:

- Topical study is here <https://biblehub.com/topical/s/satan.htm>
- We can learn about the strategies of our chief adversary by studying his name:

- the devil (which means slanderer), Satan (which means accuser), deceiver of the whole world.
- Jesus calls him "the evil one" ([Matt 13:19](#))
- "the ruler of this world" ([John 12:31](#); [14:30](#); [16:11](#)).
- "Beelzebul, the prince of demons" ([Matt 12:24](#)).
- Paul calls him "the god of this age" ([2 Cor 4:4](#)) and "the prince of the power of the air" ([Eph 2:2](#)).
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-fall-of-satan-and-the-victory-of-christ> has a good summary of the origins of evil ([Appendix I](#)).
- Final defeat of Satan [Revelation 12:10-12](#).

Reflection Point

- **What are some ways you see spiritual adversaries operating in your life, and what do you need to do about it?**

E. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of adversaries that you face? How do we know when it is Satan coming against us?

2. What is the correct Christian response to fighting our adversaries? How can we pray?

F. APPLICATION

The Lord's prayer includes a line asking the Father "not to lead us into temptation and deliver us from Evil" ([Matt 6:13](#)). Perhaps this session you may be wondering if an issue you are currently facing could be due to a spiritual adversary. This could be a temptation, a consistent problem with a colleague, or family member, or even a sickness. Ask the group to pray for you to be strengthened to resist the enemy.

G. LOOKING FORWARD

In Session 3 we look at the second key theme in Revelation, Worship. For this session we will focus on Counterfeit versus Original.

SESSION 3

Worship (Part I)

Counterfeit versus Original

Key Passage: *“Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. ‘Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.’” Revelation 22:11-12*

A. INTRODUCTION

In the first two sessions we looked at the problem of Evil: evil that is within us and evil that fights against us as an actual adversary. We saw that God’s endgame in Revelation is to deal with the problem of personal evil and to defeat our adversaries, while preserving his people.

As we look at part one of the second key theme, Worship, we will compare counterfeit worship to original or authentic worship. The first thing we need to understand is we are made for worship. It is part of our core make up. We are not the Creator, but we are the creation with a built-in desire to worship.

One of the repeating themes of Revelation is the aspect of worship. Revelation 4 opens with a scene from the heavenly throne room where people are worshipping God and the lamb that was slain (Jesus). As we progress through the imagery of various events happening on earth, one of the key themes is idolatry and worship. The beast, the dragon, the false prophet all seek adherents and to be the object of worship.

At its core, worship is to ascribe honour and glory to something outside of us. We end up dedicating our time and resources, even our very lives, to whatever is our object of worship. As we are destined to worship, we need to choose if it will be God or something else - genuine or counterfeit. Revelation show us that there is counterfeit and authentic worship. It helps us by providing imagery of the types of strategies the enemy uses that are intended to draw our worship away from authentic genuine worship of God.

The question is not whether we will worship but what we will worship.

B. READ SCRIPTURE: Revelation 13, Romans 1:24-25

C. MAIN POINT

The counterfeit comes with an inferior promise

We are destined to worship. We all, at some level, are wired to look up to something, and to give it our attention, praise and adoration. These will be things we focus on, that we put our time, energy and resources into pursuit of it. Revelation shows us that there is counterfeit (inferior) and there are original (genuine) objects of worship. Today we ask the question “What are you going to offer your life up to, the counterfeit or the original?”

The imagery presented in Revelation indicates that the imitation is cheap, widely accessible and comes with an array of powerful lures and false promises. The counterfeit has real but limited power ([Rev 13:4, 13](#)), as we see in dragon and the beast. They gain their power by forcing people to worship them or by controlling the world systems, such as creating a new religious order or forcing a new trading system upon the people ([Rev 13:15-17](#)). The counterfeit is never intended for the people of God, but there is a price to pay for commitment to the original. This requires wisdom.

Wisdom recognises that all things are connected. A wise person will understand that what they do today affects tomorrow as all parts of their life are linked. To fall for the counterfeit is in the category of foolishness. You are unable to discern the fake promises from the original and you don't look for God's ways to deal with life's problems. You just go with the flow. Wisdom says that there are strings attached to our actions (or inaction), and if you invest wisely today, and do that hard yards, you will reap rewards.

As in our natural life, the genuine product is always expensive. Revelation shows there is great cost for genuine worship. A costly price that was paid by God to save humanity and Revelation anticipates that being faithful to God will cost us too (e.g. [Rev 13:10b](#)).

There is also a great price paid by all of humanity when sin is judged. Putting things right consumes much of the violent imagery in Revelation. Where injustice prevails and counterfeit is free to rule, when the day of judgement finally comes it will indeed be a time for rejoicing for those who have done right ([Rev 11:17-18](#)). All who do wrong or have wrong intentions will be exposed ([Rev 22:12](#)).

We only have one life, live it wisely. The things done today do impact our future.

God's endgame is to judge the counterfeit

D. KEYWORD STUDY “JUDGEMENT” (optional)

In its simplest terms, Judgement is exposing what is wrong and putting things right. This sums up the whole theme of Revelation. The people of the earth have been exercising their free will for millennia. They have made decisions with eternal consequences, to choose or reject God and his way of doing things. The throne room scene described in [Revelation 11:16-18](#) announces the time when God will assume his position as the righteous judge. He will reward the people who have been faithful and set about to destroy all who have given in to the lure of the counterfeit.

The finality and graphic topic of judgement can be difficult for us to study (and almost impossible to absorb in one session). Our culture often avoids or ignores God’s judgment, as it comes with a fear of punishment or is often perceived as inflicting self-righteousness onto other people. We much prefer grace, but let us not be deceived to put things right God will judge the whole world. We are offered great grace, but we must choose it now.

Rather than be offended by the topic, please take time to pray and rethink what it means. Ultimately God’s judgement will be putting an end to all that is wrong and providing justice and rewarding those who have done right. As Christians, we should be looking forward to the Day of the Lord. Where justice, peace and safety are restored. Destroying the counterfeit once and for all ([Rev 19:1-2](#)). Who wouldn’t want that?

Some scriptures outside of the book of revelation that refer to judgement are listed below:

- *“It is appointed to man to die once, then the judgment”* ([Heb 9:27](#))
- [Acts 10:42](#), [Acts 17:31](#), [2 Tim 4:1](#), [1 Pet 4:5](#), [Rom 10:9-13](#), [Heb 3:12-14](#).
- Judgement for Christians: [Rom 14:10-12](#), [2 Cor 5:10](#), [1 John 4:17-18](#)
- Day of the Lord <https://biblehub.net/search.php?q=Day+of+the+Lord>
- Rewards for Christians: [Matt 16:27](#), [Matt 10:42](#)

Reflection Point

- **Share your opinions on your interpretation of God’s judgement. How does forgiveness for the people of God play out in this scenario?**

E. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What are some of the things that can become objects of worship? What are some likely areas that Satan will counterfeit the Original things of God in the End Times?**

2. If God's judgement will expose and destroy what is counterfeit and provide justice for those who have suffered wrong, why do you think the topic is often avoided or ignored?

3. What is good about Judgement Day?

F. APPLICATION

As you pray for one another, let's give thanks to God that he will end injustice. If any of your group is struggling with the content of this session. Take time to pray for each other that you can receive the peace of God for whatever situation troubles you. Also, take time to pray for family and friends who are yet to know Christ.

G. LOOKING FORWARD

In Session 4 we look at part II of Worship. We look at all the things that draw us to worship and ask the question "Who is worthy of our worship?"

SESSION 4

Worship (Part II)

Who is worthy?

Key Passage: *“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.’”* Revelation 11:5

A. INTRODUCTION

As the battles in Revelation continue to rage, we look at the second part of our Worship theme and ask the question “Who is worthy?”. Last session we acknowledged that there is something within us that compels us to worship, and we were challenged to see whether we are choosing counterfeit or genuine worship. God’s endgame is to destroy all that is counterfeit.

To help us make good and wise choices, we need to see how the counterfeit stems from idolatry. Whereas, only God that is truly worthy and deserves our worship.

The Kingdom of the world belongs to Jesus Christ

B. READ PASSAGE: Romans 1:18-25

C. MAIN POINT

If you were to ask the question what is the greatest sin of mankind what would your answer be? Perhaps you think it’s murder, sexual abuse or human trafficking. Or it could be corrupt or abusive governments that control and oppress people. Which is worse? Through this session we aim to show that the root of wrong is idolatry. The book of Revelation clearly shows the biggest mistake that humanity makes is not choosing God and pursuing our own ways. The Bible calls it sin.

Last session, we saw we are all created to worship. When we don’t give God our worship and acknowledge that only he is the ultimate ruler of the universe, we inevitably pursue other things. When this happens, we become consumed with the “other”; selfish ambition, accumulation of wealth or pleasurable pursuits. Perhaps we seek to have power and control over others to make things go according to our plan. This is idolatry.

God, in his wisdom and mercy, gives us a choice of what we can worship. We have an opportunity to use the power of worship wisely. God even gave Satan the opportunity to do good. Satan chose idolatry (himself) over the worship of God. He used the power he was given to deceive and destroy mankind and build up an army against God. The root of all these destructive actions is idolatry. In the end God will put an end to idolatry no matter how powerful or persuasive it may seem ([Rev 17:1-2](#)).

God's endgame is to judge the Kings

D. KEYWORD STUDY "IDOLATRY" (optional)

The chief sin of mankind is idolatry. We are given free will, so things we prioritise before God become our idols. At some point even Satan elected to turn away from God. He was an amazing powerful angel but chose to rebel against God. Not everyone has to choose what is bad. There are people in Revelation that repent of their foolishness and recognise and worship the right God .

Read [1 Sam 15:22-23](#), [Rom 1:18-25](#), [1 Thes 1:9](#), [2 Pet 3:9](#), [Rev 22:10-13](#). Note down all the things that people did that was considered idolatry from God's point of view.

Reflection Question

- **What is the solution to Idolatry?**

E. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does God give us freewill, if so, why?

2. What is the solution to Idolatry?

F. APPLICATION

Takes some time to praise and worship God together.

Is there an area of life you feel powerless to control? That could be worries, a particular relationship or a health issue, or even an unmet need or want. This is a perfect opportunity to acknowledge and surrender it to God.

While we are encouraged to ask and knock and receive, sometimes these things can become idols. The best way to find peace in the situation is to pray and release the situation to God. If it has been an issue consuming your time and strength, it may be appropriate to repent from it becoming an idol.

G. LOOKING FORWARD

In Session 5 we look at the first part of our study of Love in the Book of Revelation.

SESSION 5

Love (Part I)

Marriage

Key Passage: *“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; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”* Revelation 19:7-8

A. INTRODUCTION

In this Endgame series we have been looking at the key themes echoed through the book of Revelation. These have shown us that God’s endgame is to destroy sin by dealing with evil that we are unable to solve ourselves. This is our personal evil or sin and also the spiritual evil that is in the world. God has finally removed all that hinders love. Today we look at the final result, the realisation and experience of the greatest love of all. A love that is consummated in the marriage of Christ and his Bride.

The Bride makes herself ready by her righteous acts. The trials and difficulties faced by the Bride are what have prepared her for this very hour. The choices she has made to honour God, whether that be offering a cup of cold water or surrendering their life, has prepared their heart for complete union with Christ. The bride then echoes the voice of the Bridegroom “The Spirit and the Bride say come” ([Rev 22:17](#)).

The Spirit and the Bride say come

B. READ SCRIPTURE: Revelation 19:4-9

C. MAIN POINT

Stop and think for a minute. Do we sometimes treat marrying God as though we can live our lives any way we like and any way we please then quickly rush off to Vegas and get married to an affluent spouse?

What is the kind of relationship you want from a spouse? Don’t you want someone that cares for you, loves you, wants to spend time with you and show intimacy? The

marriage of the lamb is not all that different. Remember the parables told by Jesus of the 10 virgins, the home owner, those waiting eagerly for their master? Here we see Jesus as the bridegroom. This is why the book of Revelation commences with the 7 love letters, helping his bride to understand how to get love right.

Christ has proven himself faithful in all he has done for the Bride. We have responded to his love. Now he will be married to a wife who has already proved that she loves Him, that she is capable of intimate communication and that she is faithful in every aspect of her life.

God's endgame is to be faithful and true to his Bride

D. KEYWORD STUDY “Marriage” (Optional)

In order to fully comprehend what is happening in Revelation [19:6-9](#), it is first necessary to understand the Jewish wedding system that was common in Jesus’ day and was still used among Jews until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Step	Description	Scriptures
Marriage Covenant	The Father pays for the bride and establishes the marriage covenant.	Acts 20:28 ; 1 Cor 6:19-20 ; 1 Cor 11:25 ; Eph 5:25-27
Bridal Chamber Prepared	The son returns to his father’s house and prepares the bridal chamber.	John 6:62 ; John 14:2 ; Acts 1:9-11
Bride Fetched	At a time determined by the father, the groom fetches the bride to bring her to his father’s house. “Although the bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the time of his coming. As a result, the groom’s arrival was preceded by a shout, which forewarned the bride to be prepared for his coming.”	John 14:3 ; 1 Thes 4:13-18 Matt 24:36
Bride Cleansed	The bride undergoes ritual cleansing prior to the wedding ceremony.	1 Cor 3:12-15 ; Rev 19:7-8+

Wedding Ceremony	The private wedding ceremony.	Rev 19:7+
Consummation	In the privacy of the bridal chamber the bride and groom consummate the marriage.	Rev 19:7+
Marriage Feast	The celebratory marriage feast to which many are invited.	Matt 22:1-14; Matt 25:1-13; Luke 12:36

Reflection point

- **Take a look at some of the verses and see if you can see parallels between the Marriage theme in Revelation and the Jewish Wedding in the table above.**

E. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What would we expect from a partner if we were at the engagement stage of our relationship? What things would be helpful to the future marriage?

2. What kind of love is in view when we get to God's Endgame in Revelation? How is that different to the kind of love offered by the Prostitute? Perhaps read Proverbs 7 and contrast with Proverbs 8 for some ideas.

F. APPLICATION

Before you pray for one another's needs, take some time alone, just between you and God. What is God showing you about your love relationship with him? Is there something you need to do in order to get ready? Perhaps write them down.

G. LOOKING FORWARD

In our final Session 6, as we come to the end of Revelation, we look forward to love winning out and the promise of dwelling in a New Home.

SESSION 6

Love (Part II)

A New Home

Key Passage: *“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[a] 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.” Revelation 21:1-5*

A. INTRODUCTION

We come to our final session on the Book of Revelation. From the first session where we looked at the problems of the earth we were unable to solve, we learnt that God, like an expert surgeon is coming in to deal with the sin and evil on the earth. Rather than remove us from the process, it became a source of purification for us as all who belong to God, the Bride of Christ, made herself ready.

Now we look God’s endgame for us, the beginning of our eternal dwelling with God. The final restoration, actually even better than it was at the beginning way back in Genesis. But throughout this journey all of humanity has intimately experienced the true heart of God. Without bad choices, we are unable to see God’s mercy; without sin we are unable to see the grace of forgiveness; without evil we would be ignorant of the power of Jesus’ blood. We have seen God pour himself out for us, taking our punishment and declaring us innocent, and now we are the reap the rewards of his generosity as we find our final dwelling place with God.

*Revelation shows us our future home so we will
recognise that this is not our home*

B. READ SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 21-22

C. MAIN POINT

Revelation shows us our future home so we will recognise that this is not our home.

The book of Revelation makes some very bold promises. For all the gloom and destruction, there's also an equally extraordinary ending. In this final session we see the culmination of all that God intended, from the very beginning. Like the surgeon who operates to remove the disease and what is broken, then replaces with something new. It gives a new lease of life.

Revelation 22 is the final chapter from 929 chapters in the Bible. The journey has finally come to the end. All that hinders love have been destroyed. Sin and injustice have been judged. Now there is complete freedom, true joy and unimaginable pleasure. It will not be dull. As a marriage births new life, likewise it will be for our marriage with Christ.

Friendship with God and dwelling with him cannot be underestimated. *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

We are shown glimpses of what this home will be to inspire us to trust that God will fulfil his promises. To be reminded that we do not live in eternity now, but we live for eternity. Our current home is not our permanent home. We have an infinitely better one to come.

God's endgame is heaven

D. KEYWORD FOCUS “*The Second Coming*” or “*Parousia*” (optional)

Parousia is a Greek word meaning Presence. In modern theology it is often, but not exclusively refers to the Second Coming of Christ. It is also referred to in scripture as the [Day of the Lord](#). While many prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus first coming, there are still many events that will be fulfilled by his second coming.

The books apart from Revelation also describes the events of Jesus' return in apocalyptic images [Mark 13:26-27](#), [Matt 16:27](#), [Acts 1:11](#), [1 Thes 4:16-18](#).

The *parousia* will be unmistakable because it will be accompanied by signs. E.g. [Matt 24:27](#), [Matt 24:14](#), [Mark \(Chapter 13\)](#), [Matthew \(Chapter 24\)](#), and [Luke \(Chapter 21\)](#) all

describe the unmistakable signs with apocalyptic images, [2 Tim 3:1-5](#); [1 Thes 5:2](#); [2 Pet 3:10](#); [Mark 13:33-37](#); [1 Pet 1:13-16](#).

Reflection Point

- **How familiar should we be with the signs of the times?**

E. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think about Heaven? What would it be like and Why do you think that?

2. Why can't we have the New Heaven and New Earth now?

4. What can we do in light of all that we have learned in the Book of Revelation?

F. APPLICATION

Take time to worship God together. Let each person in your group say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for what he has done, is doing and will do. He is faithful and true.

We would love feedback from you about how this series was for your group. Please write to our senior leaders (slt@fgam.org.au) or to Chris Ong (chris.ong@fgam.org.au). Alternatively, if you would like to speak to a pastor directly for your own concerns or walk with Christ please do not hesitate to be in contact with them directly or call our church office on 9296 5200 during business hours.

APPENDIX I

The Fall of Satan and the Victory of Christ

A sermon by John Piper

(<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-fall-of-satan-and-the-victory-of-christ>)

As we come to Genesis 3, all is well, it seems. [Genesis 1:31](#) says, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” God did not create anything evil. It was all very good.

Then, suddenly when chapter three opens, there is this serpent. And he is clearly evil. He is calling God’s word into question. [Genesis 3:1](#): “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” He is devious and deceitful and destructive. God had said in [Genesis 2:17](#), “The day that you eat of [this tree] you shall surely die.” But the serpent says in [Genesis 3:4](#): “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Therefore, Jesus says of him in [John 8:44](#) that he is both a liar and murderer:

He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

SATAN, THAT ANCIENT SERPENT

Who is this serpent? The fullest answer is given in [Revelation 12:9](#):

The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

So the serpent in the garden is the devil (which means *slanderer*), and Satan (which means *accuser*), and the deceiver of the whole world. Jesus calls him “the evil one” ([Matthew 13:19](#)) and “the ruler of this world” ([John 12:31](#); [14:30](#); [16:11](#)). The Pharisees call him “Beelzebul, the prince of demons” ([Matthew 12:24](#)). Paul calls him “the god of this age” ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)) and “the prince of the power of the air” ([Ephesians 2:2](#)).

That’s the one we meet in Genesis 3. He is already evil, already a deceiver, already a murderer when he appears in the garden of God. In [Genesis 3:15](#), God speaks to the serpent and pronounces judgment on him:

“The eternal Son of God had to become man, because it was the offspring of the woman who was to crush the serpent’s head.”

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Notice that at first it looks like the warfare will be between two offsprings: “between your offspring and her offspring.” But in the next words something different is said: “He

shall bruise your head.” Who is “he”? Answer: the woman’s offspring. Who is “your” (“he shall bruise *your* head”)? Answer: the serpent himself, not his offspring.

THE CRUSHING OF SATAN AT THE CROSS

The day is coming, God says, when *you* (not just your offspring) will be defeated and removed from the earth. The offspring of this woman will crush you (see [Romans 16:20](#) and [Hebrews 2:14](#)). That decisive blow was struck by the perfect offspring of the woman, Jesus Christ, when he died on the cross. This is one of the reasons why the eternal Son of God had to become a man — because it was the offspring of the *woman* who would crush Satan.

[Colossians 2:14–15](#) describes what God did for those who trust his Son, when he died on the cross: “[The record of debt that stood against us] he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”

When Christ died for our sins, Satan was disarmed and defeated. The one eternally destructive weapon that he had was stripped from his hand, namely, his accusation before God that we are guilty and should perish with him. When Christ died that accusation was nullified. All those who entrust themselves to Christ will never perish. Satan cannot separate them from the love of God in Christ ([Romans 8:37–39](#)).

THE INSURRECTION OF SATAN

The question that cries out for an answer is: Where did Satan come from? And why does God tolerate his murderous activity? In Genesis he just appears. Between the perfection described in [Genesis 1:31](#) (“behold, it was very good”) and the appearance of evil in Genesis 3, something happened. The good creation was corrupted.

The little book of Jude and 2 Peter in the New Testament give us clues as to what happened. [Jude 1:6](#) says, “The angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.” And [2 Peter 2:4](#) says, “God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.”

It appears then that once there was a host of holy angels. And some of them, including Satan, “sinned,” or as [Jude 1:6](#) says, “did not stay within their own position of authority.” In other words, the sin was a kind of insurrection. A desire for more power and more authority than they were appointed by God and *under* God. So Satan originates as a created angel who, with other angels, rebel against God, reject him as their all-satisfying king and joy, and set out on a course of self-exaltation and presumed self-determination. They do not want to be subordinate. They do not want to be sent by God to serve others ([Hebrews 1:14](#)). They want to have authority over themselves and exalt themselves above God.

THE ORIGIN OF SATAN'S SIN

So we ask now again: Why? How could this happen? There is not an easy answer. In fact, the ultimate biblical answer creates more questions. So it seems that in this age, while we “know in part” ([1 Corinthians 13:12](#)), some people find help in saying that the angels had free will and God could not exert enough influence to keep them adoring him. But I don’t find that idea helpful. It simply doesn’t answer the question: Why would a perfectly holy angel in God’s infinitely beautiful presence use his free will to suddenly hate God?

This idea that God was helpless to prevent this rebellion, and that it is owing to the innate self-determining wills of sinless angels, is not a solution to the problem. It doesn’t account for why perfectly holy beings would use their wills to despise what they were created adoring. And it doesn’t fit with what the rest of what the Bible says about God’s rule over the devil.

ULTIMATE AUTHORITY AND POWER

My approach to answering the question of how to think about the origin of Satan’s sin is to read the whole Bible with the question: How does God relate to Satan’s will? Is God helpless before the will of evil powers? Is there a power outside himself that limits his rule over them? Or is God presented throughout the Bible as having the right and the power to restrain Satan anytime he pleases? And if so why doesn’t he just destroy him?

So when I read the Bible, here is what I find — just the tip of the iceberg of God’s authority and power.

GOD’S SOVEREIGN SWAY OVER SATAN

“In the end, Satan serves to magnify the power, wisdom, love, grace, mercy, patience, and wrath of Jesus Christ.”

1. Though Satan is called “the ruler of this world” ([John 12:31](#)), [Daniel 4:17](#) says, “The Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom he wishes.” And [Psalm 33:10](#) says, “The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart from generation to generation.” Yes, Satan is the “ruler of this world,” but the ultimate one — God — holds final sway.
2. Though unclean spirits are everywhere doing deceptive and murderous things, Jesus Christ has all authority over them, and [Mark 1:27](#) says, “He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” When Christ commands the devil, the devil obeys.
3. Satan is a roaring lion, prowling and seeking to devour. Peter says, “Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world” ([1 Peter 5:8–9](#)). In other words, “suffering” is the way Satan is trying to devour the saints. But Peter says in [1 Peter 3:17](#), “It is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.” *If God should will it so.* This suffering, these jaws of the prowling lion, are opened and closed only according to God’s will.

4. Yes, Satan is a murderer from the beginning, Jesus said ([John 8:44](#)). But has he taken the gift of life out of the hand of the Giver? No. [Deuteronomy 32:39](#) says, “See now that I, I am he, and there is no god besides me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from my hand.” And James says in [James 4:15](#), “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” Not if Satan wills, we will live and do this or that. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. And his name is blessed ([Job 1:21](#)).

5. When Satan aims to destroy Job and prove that God is not his treasure, he must get permission from God before he attacks his possessions with destruction and before he attacks his body with sickness. In [Job 1:12](#), God says, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” You have my permission to attack, but you will not go beyond the bounds that I set.

6. Satan is the great tempter. He wants us to sin. Luke tells us that Satan was behind Peter’s three denials. He tempted him to deny Jesus. But could he do that without God’s permission? Listen to what Jesus says to Simon Peter in [Luke 22:31–32](#): “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Satan could not do what he wished with Peter without God’s permission. And when he had it, just like with Job, God had set him a boundary: “You will not destroy Peter. You will only make him stumble tonight.” This is why Jesus says, “When you have turned again [not if you turn] strengthen your brothers.” Jesus, not Satan, has the upper hand here. And Satan is allowed to go so far and no farther.

7. Paul says in [2 Corinthians 4:4](#) that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers.” But is this power to blind people an ultimate power? Can God overcome it and resist and nullify it? Yes, he can. Two verses later Paul says, “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” In other words, the blinding effect of Satan gives way to God’s light when he says, “Let there be light.”

GOD GOVERNS SATAN’S EVERY MOVE

So now back to the question about the origin of Satan’s sinfulness. Is God helpless before the will of his own angels? Is there a power outside himself that limits his rule over them? My conclusion is that from cover to cover the Bible presents God as governing Satan and his demons. He has the right and power to restrain them any time he pleases.

“God permitted Satan’s fall, not because he was helpless to stop it, but because he had a purpose for it.”

I conclude, therefore, that God permitted Satan’s fall, not because he was helpless to stop it, but because he had a purpose for it. Since God is never taken off guard, his permissions are always purposeful. If he chooses to permit something, he does so for a reason — an infinitely wise reason. How the sin arises in Satan’s heart, we do not know. God has not told us. What we do know is that God is sovereign over Satan, and therefore Satan’s will does not move without God’s permission. And therefore every move of Satan is part of God’s overall purpose and plan. And this is true in such a way

that God never sins. God is infinitely holy, and God is infinitely mighty. Satan is evil, and Satan is under the all-governing wisdom of God.

WHY NOT WIPE OUT SATAN?

Why, then, does God not simply wipe Satan out? He has the right and power to do this. And [Revelation 20:10](#) says he is going to do it someday. Why didn't he cast him into the lake of fire the day after he rebelled? Why let him rampage through humanity for centuries?

The ultimate answer is that "all things were created through Christ and for Christ" ([Colossians 1:16](#)). The Son of God, Jesus Christ, will be more highly honored in the end because he defeats Satan through longsuffering, patience, humility, servanthood, suffering, and death, rather than through raw power. And the more highly honored the Son is, the greater the joy of those who love him.

FOR THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST'S GLORY

The glory of Christ reaches its apex in the obedient sacrifice of the cross where Jesus triumphed over the devil ([Colossians 2:15](#)). Jesus said, "Now [in my final hour] is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him" ([John 13:31](#)). Paul said, "We preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God" ([1 Corinthians 1:23–24](#)). Jesus said to Paul about Satan's thorn in Paul's side, "My power is made perfect in weakness" ([2 Corinthians 12:9](#)).

In the end, Satan and all his pain serves to magnify the power, wisdom, love, grace, mercy, patience, and wrath of Jesus Christ. We would not know him in the fullness of his glory if he had not defeated Satan in the way he did.

HOW TO RELATE TO EVIL

So I close with the urgent and practical question: How then should we relate to evil? How should we think and feel and act about Satanic evil — the death of little Zach at the attack of a pit bull? The deaths of three more miners trying to save their buddies? Five hundred dead in the Peru earthquake? The evil you confront in your own lives? Here is my summary answer: eight things to do with evil, four things never to do.

EIGHT THINGS TO DO WITH EVIL

1. *Expect* evil. "Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you" ([1 Peter 4:12](#)).
2. *Endure* evil. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" ([1 Corinthians 13:7](#); see also [Mark 13:13](#)).
3. *Give thanks* for the refining effect of evil that comes against you. "Give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" ([Ephesians 5:20](#); see also [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#); [Romans 5:3–5](#)).

4. *Hate* evil. “Let love be genuine. *Abhor* what is evil; hold fast to what is good” ([Romans 12:9](#)).
5. *Pray for escape* from evil. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” ([Matthew 6:13](#)).
6. *Expose* evil. “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” ([Ephesians 5:11](#)).
7. *Overcome* evil with good. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” ([Romans 12:21](#)).
8. *Resist* evil. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” ([James 4:7](#)).

FOUR THINGS NEVER TO DO WITH EVIL

“Satan is the ‘ruler of this world,’ but God, the ultimate ruler, holds final sway.”

1. Never despair that this evil world is out of God’s control. “[He] works all things according to the counsel of his will” ([Ephesians 1:11](#)).
2. Never give in to the sense that because of random evil life is absurd and meaningless. “How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! . . . For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever” ([Romans 11:33, 36](#)).
3. Never yield to the thought that God sins or is ever unjust or unrighteous in the way he governs the universe. “The Lord is righteous in all his ways” ([Psalm 145:17](#)).
4. Never doubt that God is totally for you in Christ. If you trust him with your life, you are in Christ. Never doubt that all the evil that befalls you — even if it takes your life — is God’s loving, purifying, saving, fatherly discipline. It is not an expression of his punishment in wrath. That fell on Jesus Christ our substitute. “The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” ([Hebrews 12:6](#)).

When we renounce the designs of the devil and trust the power and wisdom and goodness of God through Christ, we fulfill God’s purpose in letting Satan live. We glorify the infinitely superior worth of Jesus.

APPENDIX II

Looking Forward to a Heaven We Can Imagine

Article by Gavin Ortlund

What difference is heaven supposed to make in our lives now? Why do you think many Christians don't look forward to heaven anymore? What are some of the biggest misconceptions about heaven?

Christians faced with death often feel they're leaving the party before it's over, going home early. They're disappointed, thinking of all the people and things they'll miss when they leave.

But for God's children the real party awaits—think of the Father making merry and celebrating with a feast for the prodigal son who's come home ([Luke 15](#)). The celebration is already underway at our true home, where we've not yet lived—and that's precisely where death will take us. As others will welcome us to heaven's party, so we'll one day welcome those who arrive later.

God commands us in his Word to set our minds in heaven where Christ is (Col 3:1). We focus on an actual place where the eternally incarnate, resurrected Christ lives. We're commanded to be "looking forward to the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:13)—the resurrected cosmos, our future and eternal home.

Paul says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). If we don't understand this future glory of heaven that awaits us, we won't see our present sufferings shrink in comparison to its greatness.

What God made us to desire is exactly what he promises to those who follow Jesus Christ: a resurrected life in a resurrected body, with the resurrected Christ on a resurrected earth. Our desires correspond precisely to God's plans. It's not that we want something, so we engage in wishful thinking. It's the opposite—we want real human lives as real embodied people because God has wired us that way, and has always planned for it.

Will heaven ever be boring?

We will be more likely to think of heaven as boring if we think of it as a disembodied state. But the ultimate heaven where we'll live forever is defined by resurrection, and resurrection is by definition embodied. Jesus spoke of the coming "renewal of all things" (Matt 19:27-28). Peter preached of "the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets" ([Acts 3:21](#)). For resurrected people in a renewed universe, boredom will be unthinkable.

Our belief that heaven will be boring betrays a heresy—that God himself is boring. There’s no greater nonsense. Our desire for pleasure and the experience of joy come directly from God’s hand. He made our taste buds, adrenaline, and the nerve endings that convey pleasure to our brains. Likewise, our imaginations and capacity for joy were made by the God whom some imagine is boring. Are we so arrogant as to imagine that human beings came up with the idea of having fun?

“Won’t it be boring to be good all the time?” This assumes sin is exciting and righteousness is boring, which is one of the Devil’s most strategic lies. Sin doesn’t bring fulfillment, it robs us of it. When there’s beauty, when we see God as he truly is—an endless reservoir of fascination—boredom becomes impossible.

God delegates rule of his creation to us, and we’ll reign with him over his new creation. We’ll have things to do, places to go, people to see. Heaven is guaranteed to be a thrilling adventure because Jesus is a thrilling person—the source of all great adventures, including those awaiting us in the new universe.

Will we eat and drink in heaven?

Words describing eating, meals, and food appear more than a thousand times in Scripture, with the English translation “feast” occurring 187 times. Feasting involves celebration and fun; it’s profoundly relational. Great conversation, storytelling, relationship-building, and laughter happen during mealtimes. Feasts, including Passover, were spiritual gatherings that drew attention to God, his greatness, and his redemption.

People who love each other love eating together. Jesus said to his disciples, “I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom” ([Luke 22:29-30](#)). He promised, “Many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 8:11). The finest foods and drinks, according to [Isaiah 25:6](#), will be prepared for us by God himself.

Jesus knew his words would be attractive to all who heard them. How can it be trivial or unspiritual to anticipate such things? Don’t you think he wants us to look forward to eating at his table?

In my book *Heaven* I coined the term *Christoplatonism*. It’s reflected by a Christian man in our church, who told me after I preached on the resurrected life, “This idea of having bodies and eating food and being in an earthly place . . . it just sounds so *unspiritual*.” If we believe that bodies and the earth and material things are unspiritual, then we’ll inevitably reject biblical revelation about our bodily resurrection or the physical characteristics of the new earth. But the idea that physicality is inherently unspiritual is not biblical. As C. S. Lewis said of God, “He likes matter. He invented it.”

WHAT WILL RELATIONSHIPS IN HEAVEN BE LIKE?

Scripture tells us we will all be living with the same person (Jesus), in the same place (heaven), with God’s people (the church). Paul says in [1 Thessalonians 4:18](#) that we are to “comfort one another with these words,” in reference to our being together with the Lord forever. So clearly we will be spending eternity with our loved ones in Jesus.

Christ said that there won't be human marriage in heaven ([Matt. 22:30](#)). Yet there will be marriage in heaven, one marriage, between Christ and his bride—and his people will all be part of it ([Eph. 5:31-32](#)). Nanci and I won't be married to each other but will be part of the same marriage to Jesus.

I have every reason to believe that in heaven, I will be closer to my wife and kids and grandkids than ever. It won't be the end of our relationships, but they'll be taken to a new level. Our source of comfort isn't only that we'll be with the Lord in heaven but also that we'll be with each other.

WILL WE BE CAPABLE OF SINNING IN HEAVEN?

Christ promises on the new earth, "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4). Since "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), the promise of no more death is a promise of no more sin. Those who will never die can never sin, since sinners always die. Sin causes mourning, crying, and pain. If those will never occur again, then sin can't.

We'll have true freedom in heaven, a righteous freedom that never sins. Since Adam and Eve sinned, despite living in a perfect place, as did Satan, many people wonder if we'll sin someday in heaven. The Bible says that God cannot sin. It would be against his nature. Once we're with him, it'll be against our nature too. We won't want to sin any more than Jesus does.

Jesus said, "The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil... Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt 13:41-43). What will be weeded out? Everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

Sin will have absolutely no appeal to us. It will be literally unthinkable. The memory of evil and suffering in this life will serve as an eternal reminder of sin's horrors and emptiness. *Sin? Been there, done that; seen how ugly and disastrous it was!*

[Paul Helm writes](#), "The freedom of heaven, then, is the freedom from sin; not that the believer just happens to be free from sin, but that he is so constituted or reconstituted that he cannot sin. He doesn't want to sin, and he does not want to want to sin."

HOW MIGHT YOU USE THE DOCTRINE OF HEAVEN WHEN SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH SOMEONE?

Heaven is a terrific evangelistic subject when we portray it as the Bible does. Satan has vested interests in our misconceptions regarding heaven. When he depicts it as a dull, drab, tedious, boring place where nobody would want to go, all motivation for evangelism is removed.

Why would we want our friends to spend eternity in an eternally dull place? And why would they want to go there? Nobody wants to be a ghost when he dies—people will no sooner develop a taste for a disembodied life than for broken glass.

On the other hand, when Christians understand heaven is an exciting physical place on a redeemed world with redeemed people in redeemed relationships without sin and

death, where there is music, art, science, sports, literature, and culture, it's a great source of encouragement and motivation. "They all lived happily ever after" is not merely a fairy tale. It's the blood-bought promise of God for all who trust in the gospel.

The new earth is where there'll be no more pain and sorrow and God will wipe away the tears from every eye ([Rev. 21:4](#)). That's the perfect promise to share with unbelievers. We should unapologetically tell them that the happiness they long for, the reconciliation to the God from whom happiness flows, is found in Jesus alone—this is what makes the gospel "good news of great joy"!