

“The Thousand Year Question” //

Revelation 19–20 // *Revelation #11* (Thr)¹

[Campus Pastor’s Setup CATD Prayer Time]

Pray / Announcement

Just so we’re all clear, it’s 2 weeks away: The week after next (not next weekend, but the weekend after: Sunday, Sept 21), we will be meeting altogether in one location, the Dean Smith Center in Chapel Hill. We’ll have 2 services that day, one at 10 am and the other at 3pm. **Just to be clear (I’m saying this because I’ve been your pastor long enough that I know the questions you’re about to ask):** There are no other services that week. If you show up at your campus that Thursday or Sunday, it will be like Jesus’ tomb: empty. We are meeting together that day in 1 location.

We try to do this every few years—Church at the Ballpark or Church at Walnut Creek. This year the only place for us was the Dean Dome.

I know there might be a couple of you out there saying, “Going all the way out to the Dean Dome? That just feels like a hassle. And the parking... my goodness the parking. I think maybe I’ll just stay at home and watch this online.”

Let me tell you why that would be a terrible decision. First, what is happening here is historic; this has literally never happened before:

¹ Sources consulted: Tim Chester, *Revelation for You: Seeing History from Heaven’s Perspective* (London: The Good Book Company, 2019); Tim Keller, “[The Wedding Feast of the Lamb](#)”, April 5, 2009, Redeemer Presbyterian; Louie Giglio, “[Our God Reigns](#)”, October 6, 2024, Passion Church; Louie Giglio, “[Confident in Christ’s Return](#)”, October 13, 2024, Passion Church; Jen Wilkin, “Seven Last Sights”, Session 9 of Revelation: Eternal King, Everlasting Kingdom Bible Study, July 1, 2024;

UNC is allowing us to meet in their biggest auditorium *on campus*. And, listen, the power of the church together, about 15,000 of us at one time, being in the same room together praising and proclaiming Jesus is something you’ll never forget, I promise.

- I was talking to one of our campus pastors this week and he told me how he’d just started to come to the church when we did one of these at the Durham Bulls Ballpark back in 2013. He said, “I’d never seen anything like this. It felt like the closest I’d ever come to experiencing one of those old time revivals I’d heard about, like in Acts 2. 500 people got baptized in a single day... And I suddenly had a sense that I was part of something historic Jesus was doing in the Triangle.” This campus pastor, btw, Gus Pacheco, our North Durham Campus pastor, now has young children of his own and he said, “I want my son now to see this and feel it.”
- Another one of our other campus pastors said that in one of these one-church moments, his daughter, who had really been struggling with her faith, leaned over and said, “*With all of these people worshiping like this, it has to be true, right, Dad?*”
- Listen: You cannot replicate the experience of being together in a room with 15,000 people worshiping Jesus when you’re sitting at home on your couch, I promise.
- A couple of our older members got kind of emotional telling me they weren’t sure that they’d be able to do this one--because they’ve been to all the others, but were wondering, with their health and mobility, if they’d be able to do this one--but they just didn’t want to miss out. I told him we’ll be running golf-carts from parking lots all day. We’ll make it work.

Jada Edwards, “[There’s Only One Winning Side](#)”, December 9, 2023, One Community Church; Matt Chandler, “Your New Home”, Session 8 of The Overcomers Bible Study of the Book of Revelation, rightnow Media and Harper Christian Resources, May 7, 2024; Gavin Ortlund, “[The Antichrist, Great Tribulation and Millenium: End Times Triage](#)”, Aug 23, 2022, Truth Unites; David Platt, “[What Will Matter on That Day](#)”, September 15, 2019, McLean Bible Church. And others as noted throughout.

- Another **OG Summit member**, Mrs. Corinna Greene, who is 80--back then called herself the chocolate swirl in our vanilla church, because she was the only black member of our church at the time--She said about Church at the Dome, 'Oh, ain't nothing gonna stop me from being there. I'm gonna be bringing my bullhorn so J.D. can hear me shouting Amen from the top deck.' (I didn't have the heart..., but I ain't telling an 80 y/o woman 'no')
- Some of you've said, *"Well, when we did this a couple of years ago at Walnut Creek it took us a long time to park, traffic was backed up..."* I do understand that, and I want you to know we learned a lot through that experience, and we've brought all those lessons into our conversations with UNC--they are working with us to make this as easy and painless as possible. We'll be ready.
- Now, to be fair: Whenever you have 15,000 people coming into a single place at once, parking is not **nothing**. But have you ever been to a UNC or NC State or a Hurricanes game? Anybody ever said: "You know, I really enjoyed that parking experience." No, no one in the history of sports has ever said that. But you did it because the game was worth it. This will be so worth it, I promise you.
- Amen? So be there, and bring people. Be like those guys in Mark 2 who had to fight their way through the crowd and tear open the roof to get their friend in the presence of Jesus. Do whatever it takes to get your friends there. Let's fill that place up and make Jesus famous in the Triangle together, Amen? And, everyone who comes gets a Summit free T-shirt. So, there's that, OK?
- OK, grab your Bible and let's get to work.

Bumper Video: Revelation

Well, if you have your Bible, and I hope you do, open **them to the very end**, because that's basically where we are... If you're in a section with a bunch of maps in it, you've gone too far, but otherwise, we're in the final pages of our Bibles: **Revelation 19–20**.

These chapters **are all about the return of Jesus to earth, the 2nd coming of Christ**. John tells us 4 main things happen in the return of Christ: there's a gigantic wedding feast, a gruesome battle, an earthly kingdom, and a final judgment.

First, let's look at the

1. A Gigantic Wedding Feast (19:1–10)

Look with me at **verses 6 and 7. Six-SEV-en**.

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.

7 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;

8 it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure"—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are
invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The first thing John focuses on in these chapters about the return of Christ to earth is the reunion of Christ with his people. This chapter is laced with Jewish wedding imagery. Weddings have always been a big part of my adult life:

- When Veronica and I were in our early 20's, it seemed like every weekend we were getting invited to some college friend's wedding. It was kind of exhausting, to be honest.
- And then I became a pastor of a young and growing church, which I loved, but I got asked to perform 2-3 weddings a month. (I used to work SO HARD on my "marriage homily"--and on the way home

I'd always ask Veronica how I did until finally one day she told me I was fine but that literally no one paid attention to what I said one way or the other. At a wedding everyone is so distracted by so many other things and they're just hoping I won't go on too long. For any younger pastors out there, wedding sermons are basically a pass/fail. If it's less than 15 minutes, pass. Period.

- Over the years I've learned a lot about different wedding traditions, because couples want these traditions mixed into their ceremony. Some German weddings, for example, incorporate the [tradition of "Baumstamm Sägen"](#)² (Anybody ever seen this? It means 'log sawing'). (PIC). At the end of the ceremony, the newly married couple saw through an actual log together. It's supposed to represent the first obstacle they face together, emphasizing the need for communication and teamwork. I'm not sure Veronica and I would have made it through this phase; our marriage might have ended right there.
- In Southeast Asia there's a growing fad to use [fast food](#) restaurants in your wedding (PIC). This is not a joke. McDonald's franchises in Indonesia and Hong Kong, for example, now offer wedding packages, which includes (and I quote) "50 invitations, rental of the restaurant dining area for two hours, a pair of McDonald's wedding rings made out of balloons, character gifts for 50 guests, a party emcee, and (best of all) a wedding cake display made entirely out of a McDonald's Apple Pies." It's gotten so popular that other fast-food restaurants have followed suit, including Taco Bell. Can we all just stop here for a minute and get our minds around **"A Taco Bell Wedding"**? Some of you dads in here might be like, "You know, after getting the bill for my daughter's wedding, a Taco Bell wedding doesn't sound that bad. Every guest gets 5 tacos for a dollar. Or whatever." As a dad with 3 daughters, I hear you.

Well, the imagery of chapter 19 doesn't have **baumstamm sagen** or a Taco Bell buffet, but it is laced Jewish wedding imagery. Jewish weddings went in 3 phases that stretched out over several months:

- **Phase 1:** was called **Kiddushin (betrothal/contract/bride price)**, and it's when the boy asked the girl to marry him. If she said yes, a marriage contract was signed by the two families. This is what today we would call "the engagement." Except, back then, if the girl said yes, the groom and his father had to pay the bride's father a "bride price" called a "mohar," and that price could be quite substantial. (Again, as a dad with 3 daughters, that's a tradition I wish we'd kept alive.) They would then have a small party, where they would drink a ceremonial **cup of wine** in a fine chalice. In Jewish tradition, this engagement commitment was legally binding. You were basically considered married from that point.
- **Phase 2: (the time of preparation and waiting)** began when the groom left to go home and prepare a new place for he and his bride to live together, usually a room built onto his father's house. And in a day without cellphones or FaceTime, she (the bride to be) didn't know when he'd come back and she was supposed to just stay ready. When he showed up it would be a surprise, and he'd show with a lot of fanfare: a big entourage and trumpets and torches and a shout for her to come out and come home with him.
- **Phase 3** was called: **Nissuin (wedding feast/consummation)**, and it was this big party waiting for the bride and groom and all their friends when they all arrived back at his home. This wasn't just a meal and some awkward dancing (old white people doing the

² BAUM-shtam ZAY-ggin

electric slide), but a *days*-long festival with music, dancing, wine... and gobs and gobs of Taco Bell tacos. When I lived in Indonesia their wedding ceremonies were a little bit like this. Traveling over there wasn't as easy as it is here, so if they made a journey somewhere, they're staying for a while. I'd go to a wedding and after an hour or so, when I just couldn't handle any more karaoke, I'd be like, "OK, I think I'm done..." and they'd be like, "*Done? Everyone else is staying until next Thursday.*" But, they had a good time.

Revelation 19 is the Jewish **Nissuin**.

- We entered the **Kiddushin** when we accepted Christ. 2000 years ago Jesus asked us to be his bride when he died on the cross, and when we accept Christ personally, that's like us saying "I do" back to him.
 - The bride price was paid when Jesus went to a cross to purchase us back from slavery to sin and death.
 - This contract is considered binding; Jesus promises never to leave or forsake us, and we celebrate our engagement with a ceremonial cup of wine. Every time we take communion, we're celebrating our engagement to Jesus.
- **We then enter phase 2, the time of preparation**, which is what we're in now, which is when Jesus is away preparing a place for us.
 - So much of New Testament teaching is built on this imagery. Like John 14, when Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you, and when I'm finished, I will come again, and take you to myself." In saying that, he is conjuring up images of this marriage phase.

- In 1 Thessalonians Paul tells us Jesus will return for us in the clouds with the sound of the trumpet and shout, and he is drawing on this imagery of the groom showing up unannounced with an entourage and trumpets and shouting to pick up his bride.
- Jesus story about the bridesmaids, some of whom were ready when the groom came back and others who weren't, is all about this wedding tradition.
- Phase 3, the **Nissuin**, the marriage feast, is what we see in Revelation 19; the feast of all feasts which celebrates our forever life with Jesus.

Before we take a turn and go into the other things that happen at the return of Christ, can I just ask you a couple of questions?

- **Does all that make sense with how you see your relationship with Jesus?** You see, I ask this because a lot of people seem to think that becoming a Christian means getting involved a lot in church or starting to do religious stuff or reforming yourself morally. And the Christian life contains those things, of course, but the essence of being a Christian--start to finish--is falling in love with Jesus. God didn't create us primarily as servants to get tasks done for him or robots he could program to obey him. He made us as people in his image to love him, and my fear is that some of you know little about this part of Christianity. Your Christian life is little more than a series of boxes you check, and you check them quite well, and it feels like drudgery. Listen, the Christian life is hard; it involves a lot of self-denial and self-sacrifice, the only thing that makes it worth it is being in love with Jesus.

- **It's only love for Jesus that will actually drive you to do the hard things in the Christian life.** In 1 John, The Apostle John (who wrote Revelation), said that those who are in love with Jesus and anxiously await his return keep themselves pure as he is pure. He's drawing on wedding imagery: If you've got a girl totally in love with the boy she's engaged to, she's not susceptible to the advances of other boys. When Veronica and I were engaged, she was finishing up her time at UVA while I was finishing up my seminary years in Wake Forest. And UVA has a bunch of good-looking overachieving guys up there, but I wasn't worried about them, because I knew she was head over heels in love with me. I mean, when you own the Lamborghini, you're not tempted by the Volvos, am I right? Just kidding. She at least convinced me she was in love with me. And see, her love for me kept her immune to the advances of other guys.
- If you're in love with Jesus, you work hard to keep your heart pure, as he is pure, because you can't wait to see him. And you live ready for his return. You live with your bags packed and ready, and you don't get too attached to the world here--because your real home is somewhere else, **with him**. And you can't wait for your Divine Groom to come and take you to your new home, because your heart is already there.
- **What an incredible time of joy awaits the followers of Jesus.** BTW, interesting textual thing here: The word "Hallelujah" only shows up 4 times in the NT, and ALL of them are in this chapter. It's fitting that this ultimate expression of praise has been on hold for the whole of the NT until the marriage of the Lamb because this is the ultimate moment of consummation.

- An unjoyfully Christian is a terrible testimony to Jesus. I think a joy-less Christian is every bit as harmful to the reputation of Jesus as a hypocritical one. **William Gurnall**, a Puritan (and Puritans are not typically known for their giddiness!), said: "Christian, do not give unbelievers reason to imagine, as they see you moping through life, that they must forfeit happiness if they become Christians and spend the rest of their lives... with a team of losers."³

OK, that's the Gigantic Wedding Feast. Next we have:

2. A Gruesome Battle (19:11–21)

Chapter 19 ends with a great battle called the Battle of Armageddon. In addition to Christ reuniting with his people, he faces off with the armies of the Antichrist, and utterly destroys them. It's not much of a battle, either; Jesus simply speaks and they all are destroyed. Just like creation was spoken into being, so the final act of de-creation is spoken into being as well.

19:17, "Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead: 'Come, gather for the great supper of God, 18 to eat.. the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.'" 21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh."

I know that's a disturbing image, but Scripture puts it in there for a reason--the fate of those who oppose Jesus is a disturbing reality. In contrast with this incredible feast of healing and reunion and joy, are

³ *The Christian in Complete Armour*

those who die eternally. Don't get mad at me for this, I'm just telling you what it says.

3. An Earthly Kingdom (20:1–10)

Chapter 20 then tells us about "The Millennium." "Millennium" means 1000, and it refers to a 1000-year earthly reign of Christ. Now, throughout our Revelation series, I've told you there's a couple of main ways to read Revelation. There's actually a few, but I've zeroed in on the 2 main ones: **premillennialism** and **amillennialism**.

Revelation 20 is probably where these two ways of reading

Revelation come into the sharpest relief. And their main disagreement is on how to understand this "thousand year" referred to here in chapter 20.

- **Premillennialists** believe that the millennium is something coming in the future, after Jesus returns (thus right now we are in a "**pre-millennial** era) (BTW, "premillennialists" is hard to say. I'm gonna just shorten it to "premys." I was going to do premies but thought you might be confused?)
- **Amillennialists** believe that the 1000 years are symbolic (10x10x10), describing the age we are living in now--everything between Jesus' ascension and his return is included in this number, so technically, they say, there is no coming "millennium" coming. Thus "**a-millennial**" (since "a" in Greek means "no." "**No (actual) millennium** coming.") I'll just call them a-mills.

You tracking? Now, as I've told you, both premills and amills agree on the essentials, and people I respect are on both sides of this question: We all agree that in the end **Christ will return, evil will be defeated,** and **God's people will reign forever with him.** And we all agree that the Millennium Falcon is imaginary and bears no relevance to the events of chapter 20.

But let me (briefly) walk you through how each group reads this chapter, and then I'll tell you why my perspective is right :), and then I'll draw some conclusions we can all agree on. ***You in for this? (I need to take you deep to theological submarine hull crush depth for about 7 minutes, and then I'll bring you back up for air, ok?*** Just hang with me... for some of you, it's gonna feel like you're running out of air and just when you can't think you can't stand it any longer, I'll bring you back up for air, I promise.

Premills read Revelation 19–20 in a straightforward, chronological way.

- After Christ returns in **Revelation 19** and defeats the Antichrist and all his followers, he inaugurates the Millennium. He brings the Great Tribulation to an end and establishes his reign on earth.
- **20:2** says that Jesus starts this millennium by: **"He seized the dragon... and bound him for a thousand years and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended."** (20:2–3). During the 1000 year millennium, the power of Satan is totally restrained on earth. That's why there's such peace during that time.
- **Now look at v 4:** **"And I saw the souls of those who... had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** (Us, along with other believers who died during the Tribulation, are bodily resurrected and we reign with Jesus for 1000 years.)
- **Vs. 5** tells us, **"This is the first resurrection... The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended."** This

resurrection involves only believers. Unbelievers aren't resurrected yet.

- Vs. 7, "...and when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations... to gather them for battle" After the 1000 years is over, Satan will be released from his bondage in the bottomless pit, and he comes out with a vengeance to stir up one final rebellion. You say, "Well, who exactly does he stir up for rebellion? Weren't all the unbelievers destroyed at the end of the Great Tribulation before, so that only believers entered into the Millennium? Yes, but see, lots and lots of people will be born on the earth during the 1000 years, and not all of them will come to know and trust Jesus personally, and when Satan is released with full power on earth, he'll deceive a lot of these people and convince them to rebel against Jesus. Jesus then puts this final rebellion down (vs 9) by sending down fire from heaven, and that brings us to the Great White Throne Judgment, vs 11, "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it... 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne." This, John tells us, is the second resurrection and is when unbelievers are resurrected to face judgment.

No good series in Revelation by a premillennialist is complete without a GRAPH! So, here is mine:

Amills read Revelation 20 a little differently. They see the millennium not as a coming, future thousand-year earthly reign of Christ, but as a metaphor for the age we are living in now.

- For them, the "thousand years" (vs 2) refers to the entire time between Jesus' 1st and second coming. We're in the millennium now, so they believe it's already a couple thousand years long.
- They say Satan is "bound" (vs 2) during this time in a limited sense, meaning he can't deceive the world like he used to.
- **OK, this next thing is the confusing part:** They believe that when John talks about the "first resurrection" vs 4, (Remember: "And I saw the souls of those who... had not worshiped the beast... They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years... this is the first resurrection." 20:4-5). They believe this refers not to an actual bodily resurrection of believers to reign with Christ, but a *spiritual* resurrection in which we're united to Christ. They believe we already reign with Christ right now.

And here's our **GRAPH** again. (Advantage of amill--don't need graphs, everything is symbolic).

Now, real quick, let me explain why I take the premillennialist approach:

- First, so much of Revelation is written in sequential language. Chapter 20 opens up by saying, "Then I saw..." and then this happened, and then this happened. The whole thing reads like something that happens sequentially in the future, not as a bunch of overlapping symbols all happening at once. And John told us at the beginning of this book that Revelation was about things that "must soon take place," future things, not symbols of what was already happening.
- Second, I have a really hard time with the Amill explanation that Satan is bound and sealed and shut up in a pit right now. That's what vs 2 of chapter 20 said, "Satan is bound and shut up in a pit with the top sealed over him," and Amills believe that's what is happening now. But consider these verses:
 - **James 4:7 — "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."**

- **1 Peter 5:8** — “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”
- **Acts 5:3** — Peter attributes Ananias’ deception directly to Satan.
- In **2 Cor 4:4** Paul calls Satan the ‘god of this age’ and in **Eph 6:11–12** Paul gives us armor so we can resist him *now*.
- Does that sound like a Satan chained up and sealed up in a pit? Not at all!
- **Third, related to that one: Amillenns** believe that the **1,000-year reign of Christ** and the **7-year tribulation** are two depictions of the exact same period. And I always want to say, “Really? These are 2 descriptions of the exact same period?” I mean, the Millennium is Christ ruling in victory; the 7 year period has the Beast ruling in terror. And, you’re saying that the whole time the antichrist and false prophet reign, where they literally deceive the whole world using the power of the dragon, that whole time Satan is “bound and shut up and sealed in a pit so that he can’t deceive the nations?” The very thing the beast and false prophet do is deceive the nations by the power of Satan. And you’re saying that during that time Satan is bound, shut up and sealed in a pit?
- **Finally, I have a hard time buying that the resurrection referred to in vs 4** is just a spiritual resurrection. You see, the word for resurrection used in vs 4 is **ἀνάστασις**. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years... this is the first **ἀνάστασις**.⁴ This word **ἀνάστασις** occurs 42x in the NT, and literally in every other place it refers to a bodily resurrection, so, to suddenly treat it here as a purely spiritual metaphor feels like a too-convenient stretch to me. You’re saying every other time the word means bodily resurrection but here and here and here alone it means spiritual.⁴

So, that’s why I take a premillennialist approach to this book. And if you take the opposite approach, that’s ok... you’ll probably have to spend the first 100 years or so of the Millennium in remedial theology classes taught by me and Kirk Cameron as we reign with Jesus, but it won’t be too bad. At least you’ll be there, and we’ll have plenty of years to set you straight.

The 4th and final thing John says happens after Jesus gets back is...

4. The Final Judgment (20:11–15)

Here premills and amills mostly agree again:

Vs 12, “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the (great white) throne, and books were opened... And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.”

Apparently, there are “books” in heaven that record every action, every word, every deed, and every thought by every person, and one day, all people will be judged out of those books. It’s a judgment that every person surely will fail. It’s not hard to imagine why, right? Imagine if all your secret thoughts, deeds, desires and every word you’ve spoken are one day put on full display and measured against the holiness of God.

Paul says in Romans, “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” **(3:23)** When all the hidden things in our hearts are finally seen-

⁴ One more: So much of Revelation reads like stuff about the future. John said it in his opening, (1:4) “I am writing to tell you about things that must soon take place...” He didn’t say I’m writing to give you descriptions of things that are already happening.

--all the stuff we thought and said--and it's all held up to the glory of God, we'll see how woefully insufficient it was. We'll all say, with the prophet Isaiah, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."⁵

- I remember **one of my science teachers** explaining to me that when you look at a needle with the naked eye, (PIC) the steel looks flawless. But if you zoom in on it, (PIC) with a microscope, you see that this perfect steel is full of all kinds of imperfections. This is how even the best of us, on the best of days, look to God. William Gurnall used to say, **"Even our tears of repentance must be washed in the blood of Christ."**⁶ Think about it! Is there anything more pure than your tears of repentance? Yet, even they are mixed with wrong motives and impurities, and even they must be cleansed by the blood of Christ.
- So, no one will pass this judgment.

You say, "Well, what about believers?" Surely they will pass it. No, believers would fail this judgment, too, but praise God we don't have to sit through it. There was a little phrase I skipped in vs 12. Look at it again: **"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the (great white) throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done."**

- There's a book with all of our deeds, and there's "another" book, the "book of life," where your name gets written when you accept Christ as your savior, because he was judged in your place. There is no book in heaven with my name on it. If there is, it's locked

and sealed with a stamp on it that says, "Paid in full by the blood of Jesus."

- You will either stand and give an account for all your deeds, or you surrender to Jesus and receive his offer to be judged in your place—at which point your book gets thrown away and your name gets put in the lamb's book of life.

Vs 15 says, **"And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."** Consider this, friend:

Right now in heaven there is an actual book called the Book of Life and your name is either in it or it isn't. If you've repented of your sins and trusted Christ as savior, your name is there. If you haven't, then it's not. Right now, that book exists. The simple question is, *"Is your name there or not?"*

So, let me give you **3 solid things** you should take away from these chapters:

1. It's insane to stand against Jesus

This is **WHERE** and **HOW** it all **ends**! Consider the description of Jesus we saw in Revelation 19 that we read at the very beginning. In my Christian high school, which I've told you was a little obsessed with Revelation, we had to memorize this. We didn't do a senior thesis, but we came out of our senior year knowing these verses, and for that I am grateful:

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

⁵ Isa 6:5

⁶ *The Christian in Complete Armour*

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13 And he was clothed with a garment dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, King Of Kings, And Lord Of Lords.⁷

(I know the way I said it is slightly different than the translation I put on the screen, but I memorized it, of course, in the King James Version.) And BTW: I noticed this in high school: **apparently the Jesus coming back for us** has a leg tattoo. So, you tattoo haters out there... something to ponder.)

- The first time Jesus came, he didn't come like this! He came as a servant washing feet, not a King holding court; as the friend of sinners, not their Judge; to bear judgment, not to dispense it. But make no mistake, what we in Revelation 19 is who he's always been and always will be.
- Behind the humble servant-carpenter of Nazareth was the mighty God of eternity, and the biblical message is simple: if you don't respond to him as Savior, you meet him as Judge. He doesn't want to judge you, he wants to save you, but if you won't receive his

offer to save you, then you face him as the Mighty Judge. There's no other option.

- The first time he came as a lamb, the second time he comes as a lion. The first time humble, lying in a manger; the second time mighty, reigning on a throne. The first time a man of sorrows, despised and acquainted with grief; the second time, with a sharp sword by which he strikes down the nations. The first time, born in obscurity and noticed only by shepherds; the second time on a white horse with the armies of heaven following him. The first time a servant, meek and mild; the second time a sovereign, mighty and magnificent. The first time, crucified; the second time, glorified. The first time, to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the second time treading out the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God. The first time with nail prints in his hands and his feet and a crown of thorns on his head; the second time with a tattoo on his thigh and colors on his robe that say "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."
- Which is why I say, "It is insane to stand against Jesus." In a sermon in 1856 Charles Spurgeon said it this way (It's a bit of an extended quote, but totally worth it):

"He who would place himself in front of a fast moving railway car will be crushed and would be no more foolish than you who are opposing the gospel. If the gospel is true, truth is mighty and it will prevail. Who are you to attempt to stand against it? You will be crushed. But let me tell you, when the railway car runs over you the wheel will not be raised even an inch by your size. For what are you?"

⁷ KJV

A tiny gnat, a creeping worm, which that wheel will crush to less than nothing and not leave you even a name as having ever been an opponent of the gospel. Let (everyone) in the world know assuredly that the gospel will win its way, whatever they may do. Poor creatures... their efforts to oppose the gospel are not even worthy of our notice.

And we need not fear that they can stop the truth. They are like a gnat who thinks he can quench the sun. **Go tiny insect and do it if you can!** You will only burn your wings and die. Likewise there may be a fly who thinks it could drink the ocean dry. Drink the ocean if you can, O fly! More likely you will sink in it and it will drink you.”⁸

It is insane for you to oppose this sovereign savior who is coming.

Which leads me...

2. “God threatens terrible things for those who refuse to be insanely happy in him.”

⁸ “The Offense of the Cross,” 1856

⁹ Peter Kreeft summarized Lewis’s thought by saying, “God threatens terrible things if we will not be happy.” Even these were not Lewis’s own words

I have this in quotes because this is a quote from a theologian named Peter Kreeft summarizing C.S. Lewis’ teaching in *The Weight of Glory*.⁹

It’s a troubling quote, I admit, but it’s an accurate description of Rev 19–20. Is it possible to imagine two destinations for people more staggeringly opposite? One group is invited to the feasts of all feasts, the marriage supper of the Lamb, a time of love and peace and reunion with our loved ones and complete healing and seeing Jesus face to face and fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

Some are resurrected to everlasting joy; others are resurrected to everlasting judgment. As I’ve told you in this series, **“This world is the closest believers will ever come to hell, and the closest unbelievers will ever come to heaven.”** And you get to choose which group you are in. Jesus doesn’t want to see you destroyed. If you harden your heart and refuse to come to him, what other choice do you have? The last voice you’ll hear as you step off into eternity will be his saying, ‘You don’t have to do this. I paid the price to save you if you’ll only turn from your sin and receive it.’ But if you won’t receive his offer to be saved, what other option is there? You choose where this road ends. You are in charge of your destiny.

And that brings me to...

3. “Only one life to live, will soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last”

I hope this phrase is familiar to you, I want to embed it into your subconscious the way my mom and dad embedded it into mine.

verbatim, but how Kreeft summarized his thought in *The Weight of Glory*. See Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart’s Deepest Longing*.

This line comes from a missionary named **C. T. Studd**, who was one of England's most celebrated athletes in the early 20th century — think, the *LeBron James* or *Caitlin Clark* of his generation. (And, btw, if you're going to be the greatest athlete of your generation, having the name Studd is a good one). At the very height of his cricket career, when he was as famous as anyone could be, he shocked the world by walking away from it all to serve as a missionary in China, then India, and later Africa.

Imagine one of today's global sports icons — LeBron James or Luka Dončić — holding a press conference to announce: *"I'm leaving the game, I'm giving up all the endorsements, because God has called me to the mission field."* That's the kind of choice C.T. Studd made.

When people asked him why, Studd gave his now-famous answer: *"Only one life to live, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last."*

Or, as Jim Elliot would later say, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

It's a point I've made almost every week in this series--live with the realization that your life is short and eternity is forever. And one day, everything you've ever done will be evaluated for its relevance to Christ's eternal Kingdom.

Look at 19:8, there's a detail in there we skipped earlier. Believers are said to be clothed in **"...in fine linen, bright and pure"** (and then it tells us what these bright, pure clothes are)—**for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.** (19:8). The clothing we wear for eternity, John says, are the righteous deeds we did on earth. Things you did for Jesus' Kingdom and not your own.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul talks about how believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and all our works will be tested, by fire, so to

speak, as to their true motivation, what their value was. Things that were done for the glory of Jesus will come out of the fire like diamonds and precious metals; things that were done for ourselves, even if they looked like good deeds, will burn up like wood, hay and stubble:

- The \$50 you gave to show off that you had it to give--that's gonna burn. Tithing from faith when you barely have money - that's gonna last.
- That 5 bedroom castle you built for yourself, the one where 3 of those bedrooms stay mostly empty now? Yeah, that's gonna burn. But pouring yourself out in hospitality, or giving away your possession so that others can go on mission trips or hear the gospel? That will last.
- That money you gave so you could get your name on some wall; that'll burn. But when you poured yourself out when no one was looking; that Uber driver you shared Christ with--that'll last.
- That social media post you put up to show everyone how "spiritual" or how "woke" you were? Yeah, that's gonna burn. But that quiet text you sent to encourage a weary brother or sister in Christ? That'll last.
- The hours you spent obsessing over your fantasy football lineup or playing golf or those endless weekends you spent watching football or going to your mountain house? (And btw, I'm not talking about getting some necessary R&R--God commands that for all of us--I'm talking about when you pursue a life of leisure.) I hate to tell you this, but all those hours of golf and football and relaxing will burn. But those hours you spent volunteering in our kids and student ministry to teach kids the Word of God? Yeah, that'll last.
- That perfectly curated vacation album you posted on Instagram so people would envy your life? That's gonna burn. The week you took off to serve at student camp or go on a mission trip? My guess is that'll last.

Am I getting the point across? *Only one life to live, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last.* Only 2 things in life last forever: (1) things built on the Word of God for the glory of God; and (2) the souls of people. Everything else will burn.

VAMP

So, that's the question: What are you going to take with you into eternity?

Are you building your life on things that will last eternally? I'm gonna talk more about this in our final Revelation message, but does it really make sense (this is gonna be a radical thought for some of you) for a Christian to have a bucket list? I hear everybody talking about that. Oh, that's on my bucket list, because the idea is that there's all this stuff you need to do before you die because you'll never have a chance to do it again.

But the Bible presents the New Heavens and the New Earth (that we're about to meet in Revelation 21 and 22) as a better, redeemed version of all that we have down here. That means whatever I miss out on down here, I'll get to do a superior version of up there. I don't need a bucket list, and neither do you. In fact, I'd say truly having a bucket list is a sign of unbelief in these promises.

Actually, there is one thing you should have on a bucket list. One thing you can do now that you won't be able to do after death. Bring people to Jesus. Bible teacher Jada Edwards (PIC) pointed this out: **"There's no limitations on your plus one at the wedding feast; bring as many as you can!"**

Invite as many as you can, because you only get to do this one time. How do I use these days, these hours, these treasures, this talent, to bring people to Jesus? Because *only one life to live, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last.* Summit, you can apply that right now by inviting people to Church at the Dome. Invite as many as you can. Let us know if you can't get tickets--we'll find them for you, I promise. Bring all you can.

But let me circle back to the final verse of chapter 20: **"...if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."**

John says there's a literal book up there and your name is either in it or not. Those whose names are written in this Lamb's Book of Life have no judgment ahead for them, because the Lamb was judged in their place.

The only thing that matters is if your name is there. I love how Louie Giglio says: **"There's only one font size in the Book of Life, and every name is written in the same ink, the blood of Jesus."** There's no "super saints" or superiority or merit hierarchy up there because the entry price for all of us is the same: **the blood of Jesus**. Let him who boasts up there boast in the Lord.

Is your name written there? Picture that book right now, with the names alphabetized. And we get to the place where your name should be... Will it be there? Remember how when you were a kid and you were looking to see if you made the team or the honor roll and you're going down to the place where your name should be and then it was either there or not? Is your name in this book?

It can be, if you repent of your sins and trust Jesus as your Savior. Right now you can do that if you never have. If you've never done that, or you're not sure you have, you can do that right now.

***Bow your heads and pray with me...* SALVATION PRAYER**

If that's you, raise your hand. Next step, get baptized. **Text BAPTISM to 33933.** We're doing all-call baptisms at Church at the Dome, you can be one of them.

Stand to worship