

# Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 38, Excursus on Revelation, Session 3

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson giving his third and final presentation on the book of Revelation.

We've been looking at several major sections of Revelation just to illustrate how we read and in light of the background that Revelation was addressing.

And I want to move on to look at a couple of other sections in this last segment of the class. And that is I want to back up a couple of chapters and look at chapter 11. Chapter 11 is another story of two witnesses.

And it's a story of how these two witnesses prophesy for a period of time. For a time their witness appears to be successful, but ultimately the same dragon or beast, the same beast that we read about in Revelation 12 and 13 emerges in chapter 11 from a bottomless pit. Again, the bottomless pit is not a reference to some geographical location.

It was symbolic of evil, the origin of demonic evil beings. So, it's an appropriate place for the beast to come out of, which as we said, the beast probably represents the Roman Empire. If you are a first-century Christian reading Revelation 12 and 13 and now chapter 11, and you read of this seven-headed beast, you will probably identify it as the Roman Empire.

We saw that chapters 12 and 13 are meant to explain the true nature of the conflict with Rome. The beast represents Rome and the Roman Emperor, and those who promote the whole system of Rome and Emperor worship. And chapters 12 and 13 explain then the true nature, what lies behind that.

Now chapter 11, the same beast emerges from the abyss. Again, the beast probably represents Rome and its attempt to oppress and suppress God's people and oppose his kingdom. Now that beast comes up and puts these two witnesses, these two individuals, to death.

But later on, after a period of time, these two witnesses are raised and vindicated to show that their witness was in fact genuine and true. Now again, the question is, what do we make of the story? First of all, the background. There have been a number of suggestions as to who these two witnesses are.

It's hard not to read them and realize that both of them are modeled on Moses and Elijah from the Old Testament. The plagues that they call down, the fact that they

can shut the skies up so it does not rain. Clearly, these two individuals recall those two Old Testament figures.

Why two of them? Most likely because the fact that there are two witnesses most likely recalls the Old Testament stipulation that for a testimony to stick in court in the Old Testament required two or three witnesses. So probably that's why you have two witnesses in Revelation chapter 11, modeled on the Old Testament principle of two or three witnesses being needed for the validity of a testimony. Now the question then is, who are these two individuals and what are they doing? Are these referring to two actual individuals? Is this actually Moses and Elijah brought back to life sometime in the future, in the end? Some have suggested and identified these as Paul or John or some other persons, or Peter who preached in the first century.

But once again, when we recognize that these individuals are important for their symbolic value, it's most likely these two individuals are not referring to two actual or literal individuals in the first century or in the future at all. Probably these two individuals are symbolic of the entire church. So, once again, chapter 11 is primarily a story or an account of what is the church to be doing even in the midst of this conflict.

In the midst of the conflict and even the persecution that we read about in chapters 12 and 13, what is the church supposed to be doing? What is its primary role? Well, chapter 11 says its primary role is to witness even in the face of suffering. The church is to be a witness and a testimony for Jesus Christ, even though it means that, especially in the context of first-century Rome, even though it means God's people and the church may suffer. But chapter 11 also clearly reminds us, that even in the midst of that, the church will not completely be exterminated.

God will not allow his church to be dealt a death blow. It will not be completely wiped out. Although it may suffer persecution, God will still preserve it.

Notice at the beginning of chapter 11, that John describes the church as a temple that actually gets measured in the first couple verses of chapter 11. And I'm convinced that the temple, again, is not referring to a literal temple, but symbolizes the church as God's people. Much like Paul used temple imagery to describe the church, the people themselves.

So, John says, I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there. That whole picture of the temple and altar and the people that worship all symbolize God's people, the church. But do not measure the outer court, the court outside the temple.

Leave that, for it is given over to the nations. Both of those, the fact that the temple is measured, suggests security. That is, God will preserve his people, even though in the midst of their witness, even though the church must suffer and will even be persecuted, at the same time, God will keep it and preserve it.

And so, in the end, these two witnesses would symbolize that the church is raised to signify that they are vindicated. Ultimately, they are shown that their witness is valid and true. So again, what's chapter 11 doing? For Christians suffering at the hands of Rome, or even wondering if they should compromise, for Christians in conflict with the Roman Empire, this reminds them that as God's people, they are to be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ, even if it means they will suffer.

But in the end, they will be vindicated. Rome will not have the last word. The empires of this world will not have the final say.

But God will one day vindicate his people to show that the conflict and the suffering were worth it, and that their suffering was indeed right and true. So again, chapter 11 is to be understood symbolically. Symbolically, the two individuals symbolize, refer not to two specific persons, but symbolize the church itself.

And the entire chapter says something about the church's role as they try, attempt to live out their lives in the context of first-century Rome. What is the church to be doing? Is it worth compromising faith in Jesus Christ for allegiance to Rome? Or is it worth resisting? Chapter 11 answers those kinds of questions with this symbolic vision of two individuals who prophesy and witness, yet also suffer for what they do, but in the end, are shown to be right. Two more passages to look at.

One of them is perhaps the passage that often gets identified, or Revelation gets identified with most of the time. And that is Revelation 20 and the reference to the millennium or the thousand-year reign. Again, there are actually a number of different ways to understand the reference to the millennium in chapter 20.

I want to basically look at those and then focus mainly on what is the function of the section. Again, is John just interested in predicting a sequence of events in the future? Or is this saying something else to readers attempting to live out their lives in the context of a hostile pagan environment? But historically, Revelation chapter 20 has been understood in three separate different ways. And again, within these different ways there is a variety of approaches, much like when we looked at the different ways of interpreting Revelation, Preterist, Futurist, Idealist, we said there's some variety within that.

The same is true with these approaches to the book of Revelation. I'm sorry, the approaches to the millennium, or the reference to the thousand years, the millennium, in Revelation 20. And before we talk about it, let me read the text.

It's very short. In chapter 19, Jesus Christ returns as a warrior on a horse where he judges all the earth. And then in chapter 20, we read this.

Following those events, then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit. There's that bottomless pit or abyss, not a physical place or location, but symbolic of evil and chaos and the demonic, that which is opposed to God. The angel then sees the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and he bound him for a thousand years.

There's the reference to a thousand years. He threw him into the pit and locked and sealed it over him so that he would deceive the nations no more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he would be let out for a little while.

Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I saw also the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus Christ, for the word of God. They did not worship the beast, from chapters 12 and 13 and chapter 11, they did not worship 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. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years had ended. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy are those who share in this first resurrection. Over them, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Now, notice the repetition of that temporal phrase, a thousand years.

The debate is, when does this occur? When does this occur in relationship to the coming of Christ? Does this thousand years describe, again, the coming of Christ being the not yet? Remember back in Thessalonians, we talked about the second coming of Christ, when He will come to bring history to a climax, to judge and to save. The question is, when does this thousand-year period take place in relationship to the coming of Christ, the second coming? Does it take place before it, after it, sometime other than that? Where do we locate it? And that's where the different positions that we call, in your notes, pre-millennial, post-millennial, all-millennial take place. I'm not really interested in going into a lot of detail on those positions, but let me just say something briefly about them.

And just because throughout the history of the church, this has been of interest and an issue among certain persons. And then let me just make a proposal about how I understand this section. First of all, the pre-millennial position.

Basically, the pre-millennial position says, Jesus Christ comes back, the second coming occurs, and before the millennium, hence pre-millennialism. That is, Jesus Christ returns before the millennium. He returns, and he himself then inaugurates and sets up this millennium, this period of 1,000 years.

Now, there are two different ways to understand it. Some understand it rather literally, and they see it as a rather specific literal period of 1,000 exact years. During this time, they often construct elaborate scenarios of, this when God will keep all his promises to Israel and restore them to the land, and this is where Jesus will descend to earth, and as a son of David, rule over Israel and creation, and all the promises made to the nation of Israel will be fulfilled now.

That's one possible view under pre-millennialism. The other is not quite so elaborate. All they say is, basically, the 1,000 years is kind of a transition period between the time where evil dominates and then the new heavens and new earth.

The millennium is kind of an in-between time, a time of transition between the present age and the age to come, where you have, in chapters 21 and 22, where you have the new heavens and new earth. But the point is, with both of those views, they're both labeled pre-millennial because the millennium does not occur until Christ returns. Christ returns at the end of history, and then he establishes his millennial kingdom on earth, where he rules over all of the earth in fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Some say that's a literal 1,000 years, others say it's more symbolic. It still refers to a period of time, but it's mainly symbolic. A second view is known as post-millennialism, and as the prefix post- suggests, the coming of Christ comes post or after the millennium.

That is, the millennium is a period of time that will take place before Christ comes back at the end of history, before his second coming. Basically, according to post-millennialism, the millennium will be established as the result of the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, in which this golden age where righteousness prevails and dominates, this golden age will be inaugurated at the end of history as a result of the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. This golden age called the millennium will be inaugurated.

Once it's over, then Jesus will return and post, after this period, this millennium, and then he will set up his new heavens and his new earth. That's known as post-millennialism. So, the millennium occurs before Christ comes back.

The church, through the preaching of the gospel and the working of the Spirit, the church is responsible for, in a sense, inaugurating this kind of golden age that will eventually come about in history, and then, after that, Christ will return, hence post-

millennialism. That view is not as common as the first one, nor as common as the next one, the amillennial view. The amillennial view suggests that, in a sense, amillennial is a misnomer.

The prefix am- means no, no millennium. But, in a sense, that's a misnomer because those who hold an amillennial view do not think there's no millennium. They just interpret it very differently.

But they do say there is no physical earthly millennium that will transpire at some period of time on Earth. But, instead, amillennialism says the thousand-year period that we read about in Revelation 20 is symbolic of the entire period of church history where Jesus Christ rules from heaven. And, according to Paul, remember, we've seen verses in Paul that suggest we have been seated in the heavenlies with Christ.

They would say, this is just John's way of saying that. He uses this thousand years as a symbolic way of describing the fact that Christ already rules from heaven and, by virtue of being seated and raised with Christ, as Paul said, we rule with Him. So, the thousand years does not refer, according to amillennialism, the thousand years is not a physical period of time on earth, but, symbolically, it portrays the reign, spiritual reign of Christ right now from heaven.

Between His first coming and His second coming, that whole period is the millennium because Christ is now ruling from heaven, and we rule with Him by virtue of belonging to Christ, as Paul said. So, throughout church history, those have kind of been the dominant views of the millennium. That is, premillennialism, Christ returns and then sets up His millennial rule on earth.

Postmillennium, the church sets up the millennium, or inaugurates the millennium, through its preaching, but also the work of the Spirit. This golden age, this millennium, takes place on earth. At the end of that time, then Christ comes back.

Or amillennialism, the millennium does not refer to a specific time before or after the return of Christ. It refers to the entire age of the church, from the first century to whenever Christ returns again, that entire period is the millennium, symbolically portrayed as a thousand years, where Christ is already ruling from heaven, and we reign with Him by virtue of belonging to Christ. So, those are the three primary views.

I find it interesting that the millennium has gotten so much attention because, again, the verses I just read, first of all, this is the only place in the New Testament you find reference to a thousand years. That doesn't mean it's not important, but it does mean that this is the only place you find a reference to a thousand year period. But it's referred to rather cryptically.

I mean, notice there's nothing said about what happened during that thousand-year period. It doesn't even specifically say where it takes place. We kind of assume that it takes place on earth, but Revelation 20 doesn't say so.

It just says, they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. It doesn't say where. So, it could be from heaven, it could be a heavenly reign, it could be an earthly reign.

The text doesn't tell us. So, I'm really struck by kind of the laconic nature of Revelation 20. That is, there are a lot of gaps.

It's very brief. It doesn't tell us everything about the millennium. Again, it doesn't tell us where it takes place specifically, what happens, what goes on, who's there, is there going to be procreation, etc., etc.

Is this a time for Israel's promises to be fulfilled? Revelation doesn't tell us any of that. The reference to the millennium is very, very brief in comparison to chapters 21 and 22 that is very, very detailed about what happens when Christ returns. In my opinion, if I can make a proposal, in my opinion, the millennium, the reference of a thousand years, probably does not refer to a period of time at all.

It's a symbolic way of describing what takes place at the second coming of Christ. It's simply a symbolic way of describing the complete vindication of the people of God and the reward of God's people. It's simply a way of showing the complete judgment and vindication of God and is not meant to describe a specific period of time.

To ask questions such as, is this on earth or heaven, or will there be people being born or being married, or is this where Israel gets all their promises fulfilled? All those questions we might want to ask, I think, are unnecessary because John, I don't think John is trying to describe a specific period of time that happens somewhere, but again, it's just another way of describing what happens when Christ returns. He will reward and vindicate his people, and he will judge the earth. This will be evident.

Finally, God's people will be vindicated, and God's justice and judgment will be shown to be true. That's what the millennium is about. So I think some of the questions we ask about it probably go beyond the text.

Again, read Revelation 20, and you're struck by how little is said. You just have that short reference to a thousand years, where evil is wiped out, evil is curbed, and God's people are vindicated and rewarded and shown to be right, and God's justice and judgment prevail. That's basically, the meaning of the millennium.

Now, as I said, the millennium is simply almost a brief stopping point, almost just kind of a breather to the grand finale in Revelation, which occurs in Revelation

chapters 21 and 22. In some respects, Revelation, to use the title of a Dickens novel, Revelation could be described as a tale of two cities. Chapters 17 and 18 describe this, again, in highly symbolic language.

John describes a woman whom he depicts as a prostitute sitting upon a beast, and this woman is able to seduce the world and is quite attractive, but nonetheless rides a hideous beast, which we already have identified as demonic in nature, satanic, and evil in nature. Again, what John is describing, any first-century reader would have read and identified this woman riding a beast as nothing less than the Roman Empire. It's described as sitting on seven hills.

That was a common depiction of the city of Rome in the first century. So, I can't imagine any first-century reader reading Revelation 17, this woman riding on a beast, and not thinking of the Roman Empire and the Roman Emperor. But in chapter 18, she gets destroyed.

Rome gets destroyed because of her arrogance, her pretension, and the fact that she set herself up over God because her wealth has come at the expense of others, and at the expense of the lives of Christians. Because of that, as God has judged wicked, evil nations and empires in the past, so he will once again judge Rome, and indeed he did. Rome was destroyed not long after the book of Revelation was written.

So, its prophecy in that respect did come true. But, Rome is seen as being depicted as being destroyed and reduced to nothing. And in the midst of that section though, in chapter 18, verse 4, John's readers, Christians, are called to come out of her, so that they do not share in her judgment, so that they separate.

Rome is going to be destroyed. Don't compromise with her. Don't give in to Roman rule and ideology.

Don't participate in emperor worship. But come out of her. Separate from her.

But, if God's people are to come out of Rome and separate, they must have somewhere to go. And the answer to that is found in chapters 21 and 22. If they will separate from Roman rule and not give in to it, to this arrogant, pretentious, corrupt ideology and system, and demonic system, if they will refuse that and resist that, then John says, you do have a place to go.

And that is the New Jerusalem in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. Again, there are three things I want to say about this vision of the New Jerusalem. First of all, the background is, that virtually every verse of Revelation 21 and 22, at least of the first five verses, are rooted in the Old Testament.



In fact, one commentary in the book of Revelation said, that if you took away all the Old Testament references in Revelation 21 and 22, you'd have about two or three verses left. And that's not too far from the truth. Revelation 21 and 22 are steeped with Old Testament language.

Virtually everything goes back to the Old Testament. The reference to new creation, the reference to New Jerusalem, the new covenant, the measuring of the city. John is drawing on all the great prophetic literature from Isaiah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah, and other prophetic texts, and some narrative texts too.

It's as if he gathers all the promises made to Israel into one grand finale, one grand vision to show this New Jerusalem, this vision, is the ultimate fulfillment of all the hopes and expectations of God's people, as articulated in the Old Testament prophets. Now he takes all the strands from all the prophetic texts and Old Testament texts and weaves them together into one grand vision of this New Jerusalem that he presents as the alternative to Roman rule. As far as the identification of the New Jerusalem is concerned, again, we need to read this symbolically.

We need to realize John is probably not describing some literal physical city, even despite the measurements that he gives it. Instead, John, again, John is seeing a city in his vision, but what is important is what it symbolizes its symbolic value. In my opinion, the city in Revelation 21 and 22 symbolizes once again the people of God.

John is primarily seeing the perfected people of God now dwelling on a new earth. So, again, some of us have perhaps seen modern-day depictions of what the New Jerusalem is going to look like, but again, while those are interesting and fascinating, they're probably a little bit off the mark, because John is not giving us an architectural blueprint of what the New Jerusalem is going to look like. Instead, John is interested in describing the people themselves.

In the same way that Paul could describe the church as a temple and as a building, for example in Ephesians chapter 2, now John describes the perfected church, the perfected people of God, as a New Jerusalem, as a city. Again, even the measurements, the measurements 144 cubits, or all the measurements of the New Jerusalem in chapter 21 are based on multiples of 12. And we've already seen 12 is the number that is symbolic of the people of God.

So what John is describing is not some physical city. I doubt the city he describes could actually even house the entirety of God's people, past, present, and future. But instead, what John is describing is the perfect, consummated people of God in the new creation.

Again, notice that the New Jerusalem consists of 12 gates identified with the 12 tribes of Israel, and it's built on 12 foundations, which are identified with the 12 apostles. Again, even the building stones and the architectural features of the city symbolize the people of God, of both Old Testament Israel and the church, now brought together into one perfected, consummated people of God. So, again, John draws on all this Old Testament imagery and brings it together in this climactic vision, where he primarily refers to the people themselves, not some physical city.

Not that there won't be a city or physical cities in the new creation, but that's not John's point here. He's primarily describing people, not a physical city. The city that he sees symbolizes the perfected and consummated people of God made up of Old Testament Israel and the church built on the foundation of the apostles themselves.

Again, all of these texts draw on, or all of John's visions draw on texts from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other prophetic literature. Again, John is writing at the end of the prophetic tradition, and he brings all the promises together to show how they are fulfilled in Christ and how they ultimately will reach their climax. The other thing to say about the New Jerusalem vision concerns, then, its function.

I want to say two things about this. We've already said that the New Jerusalem vision functions as the counterpart to the vision of Babylon, which, again, would have been identified with Rome. In fact, Rome is often called, in the first century at this time, would have often been called Babylon.

Remember our discussion of 1 Peter, where he refers to Babylon, which is kind of a code name for Rome. So, now that Rome is going to be destroyed in judgment because of their arrogance and wickedness, God's people must have somewhere to go. So, John now provides them with an alternative.

If they will leave Rome, if they will... not physically, obviously you couldn't go anywhere in the first century Roman Empire to escape the effects of Rome, but if they refuse to associate with Rome, if they will maintain their faithful witness, Revelation chapter 11, if they will refuse to give into and associate with the corrupt ideology and wealth of Rome, if they will refuse to participate in emperor worship and maintain sole, exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ, then they have somewhere to go. And that is a city that far outstrips and far surpasses anything that Rome could have offered. And that is belonging to the consummated community of God's people in the new creation.

But there's something else about this text to highlight, and that is the ultimate destiny of God's people in Revelation is intriguingly not heaven but a new earth. And some of you heard me say before, I'm not going to heaven, but my ultimate destiny is a new earth. And that's exactly where God's people end up in Revelation.

The idea of somehow some ephemeral spiritual existence floating around in the clouds is not a biblical vision. That sounds more like Gnosticism to me. If you remember, we discussed Gnosticism back at the beginning of the semester, the distinction between the physical and the spiritual, the spiritual being the true reality.

In Gnosticism, salvation was escaping from the earth, escaping from the physical prison of the earth and the body to a spiritual existence. But that's not the biblical vision. The biblical vision of our future destiny ends us in the same place where we began, that is on earth.

Notice the parallels between Revelation 21 and 22 and Genesis 1 and 2. In the beginning, God creates the heavens and the earth. Now, John sees a new heavens and a new earth. And all the connections between Eden in Revelation 1 through 3 and the New Jerusalem.

So, what's going on is from the very first, God's intention for humanity is for God to dwell in their midst in a creation where He is their God and they will be His people. That now is fully realized in Revelation 21 and 22, where God now dwells with His perfected, consummated people in a new creation. So however much the first creation is different from the new creation, however much there is discontinuity between the new creation of Revelation 21 and 22 and the first creation, there's still continuity.

It's still a physical earth. So the final destiny of God's people is not to escape from the body to float around in the clouds. I can't think of a more boring existence.

But the ultimate destiny of God's people is a very physical one, albeit one stripped of all the effects of sin and death, but a physical one nevertheless. So that's where the book of Revelation ends. If God's people will forsake what Rome has to offer or what the nations and empires of this world have to offer, they have a world, an alternative, that lies in store for them.

And so that's where the book of Revelation ends. Now you'll notice in your notes that there's a brief excursus on creation and new creation in the Bible. Like many of the themes that we've had several excursuses in our lectures and in the notes, and like many of the themes, this one also goes back to the Old Testament.

We've already talked about the fact that new creation has its background in the Old Testament. It goes all the way back to the first creation and to the Garden of Eden, where humanity was placed in the garden as God's representatives to rule it. The land was given to them as a gift.

So, God's people were created to enjoy God's presence on the earth, in an environment suitable for human existence, but one where God can dwell with His

people. Now obviously as the storyline goes, because of sin that is thwarted and humanity is expelled from the earth, but the theme of land or creation is continued with the promise of the land that is given to Abraham. Remember Genesis chapter 12, the covenant God made to Abraham, I will make you a blessing, I will bless you, I will make you a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

But part of the blessing was, or part of the covenant, was God would bring him to a land that He would show him. In fact, the reason God gives him land is not just because he needs a place to live, because that's part of the fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2, that God would give the land to the people. The land was a place of blessing.

The land, the earth was a place, was intended to be a place where God would bless His people and dwell with them. So, by giving the land to Abraham, by bringing Israel to the land, that was the initial stages of the fulfillment of God's intention to dwell with His people on His creation, in the land, in the Garden of Eden, which was disrupted and thwarted because of sin. But even Israel failed, because Israel failed and disobeyed, Israel, much like Adam and Eve, was expelled from the land, and Israel didn't fare any better.

They also sinned and were expelled from the land, the place of blessing, the place where God would dwell with His people. So, you find in the prophets an expectation that one day God would return Israel back to the land, because again, that's part of the promise to Abraham, that's part of His intention for humanity in Genesis 1 and 2, to give them the land, the place of blessing, where God will dwell with them. So, we find that when Israel is expelled from the land and taken into exile, remember your Old Testament history, the prophets then demonstrate an expectation that God will bring Israel back to the land.

But in some prophetic texts, the expectation seems to start to move a little bit beyond just getting Israel back to the physical land of Palestine. In fact, in Isaiah chapter 65, in one of these prophetic texts, in fact, a prophetic text that John himself alludes to, we begin to see that the return of Israel to the land begins to get kind of expanded and take on more prophetic or kind of apocalyptic or even cosmic proportions. So, here's what the prophet Isaiah says.

Again, he's addressing a time when Israel returns to the land, but he still expects a greater transformation to take place. He says, this is God speaking through Isaiah, "For I, God, am about to create a new heavens and a new earth. The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating, for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people." Notice that Revelation 21 begins with a new heavens, a new earth and a

new Jerusalem. So, John is basically, anticipating in Revelation 21, depicting the fulfillment of what is anticipated in Isaiah chapter 65.

So, the prophets end with an anticipation that God still must restore His intention for humanity by giving them a land, the place of blessing, where God will live and dwell with His people. In the New Testament, the promise of a new creation is fulfilled in two stages. And here we're back to the already, but not yet again.

The new creation, the promise of the land, is already present. It gets inaugurated already in Christ. Interestingly, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul actually alludes to Isaiah 65, where he says, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, behold, all things become new. That language comes right out of Isaiah chapter 65. So, what's going on in the New Testament suggests that God's intention for humanity to live on a new creation, a land of blessing where God will dwell with them, is already fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

But of course, there's a not-yet dimension to it. So, the not yet dimension occurs in Revelation 21 and 22, where John says, I saw a new heavens and a new earth with a new Jerusalem, with God's people in its midst. So, Revelation then constitutes the goal of redemptive history.

That is, from Genesis 1 and 2, God's intention to create an environment, a land, as a gift to the people, for them to live in, a place of blessing where God will dwell in His midst, eventually gets fulfilled in John's vision of Revelation 21 and 22, where all of God's people now find themselves on a new earth, with God dwelling in their midst, in a covenant relationship with them. So finally, what is the message of Revelation? Revelation, as we've already seen, is far more than a book about eschatology. Although eschatology, , when we think of eschatology, we think of things pertaining to the end of history, how God is going to bring history to its climax and fulfill His grand purposes and intention.

But Revelation is far more than just about eschatology. We've seen Revelation is a book that unmask the pretensions, the arrogance, and the anti-godliness of the world system and institutions, no matter where that is found. Revelation is a call for us to resist that.

It's a call to live holy lives. It's a call to render exclusive obedience and worship to Jesus Christ, no matter what the cost. Revelation unveils all the pretensions and false claims of our society and any institution or person or empire that sets itself up over God.

And it calls on us to resist that. It calls on us to maintain our prophetic witness in the face of that, no matter what it might cost us. And ultimately, Revelation is a reminder that only Jesus Christ and God are worthy of our worship.

No other human being, no other institution is worthy of our worship and allegiance. That's idolatry. Only Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship.

And so, ends the book of Revelation and our journey through the New Testament.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson giving his third and final presentation on the book of Revelation.