

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Revelation, Session 30, Revelation 22: Bride New Jerusalem; How to read Revelation

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All right, so we are diving deep into Revelation 22 today, specifically looking at this whole New Jerusalem thing, and what it's really trying to tell us about the book's message, and well, we've got Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture to help us out, and he throws some real curveballs in there. It's going to make you rethink some things. Oh, yeah.

Like, who are all these nations just casually strolling into the New Jerusalem? It's kind of weird, because, like, didn't God already do all that judgment stuff in the earlier chapters? Yeah, you know, chapters 19 and 20, they paint a pretty clear picture of judgment. So when you get to chapter 21 and see all these nations just kind of waltzing into the New Jerusalem, it's definitely a head-scratcher for sure. Yeah.

So Mathewson's kind of saying that maybe it's less about, like, an exact head count and more about God kind of showing off, you know, like those big epic finale scenes in movies where they're not counting every single soldier. They just want to show you the sheer scale of the victory, you know? Right. It's not about counting heads.

It's about showcasing the power and the magnitude of what's happening. It's like he said, like a big movie finale, not a census. And he actually connects this to the transfer of rulership from the beast to God and Jesus.

He even quotes: "The kingdom of this world must become the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. Oh, wow. So you're saying it's not like everyone is getting saved in the way we usually think about it, but more like a changing of the guard on a global scale, like a cosmic regime change.

Exactly. It's not necessarily about every single individual getting a ticket to paradise. It's more about the nations shifting their allegiance, recognizing where true authority lies.

Whoa. Okay. I'm picturing like world leaders lining up to hand over their crowns.

So are we talking like mass conversions right before the curtain falls, like everybody suddenly sees the light? Well, that's where things get even more interesting because this idea of the Gentiles joining God's people, it's not just a New Testament thing. Matthew's then ties this whole nations thing back to Isaiah's prophecies, like Isaiah two and 60. He sees it as not just past conversions, but like a future event, a gathering in the end times.

Oh, wow. So he's talking about a global homecoming party. That's pretty wild.

But he doesn't say exactly how or when this all goes down, does he? He leaves that part a bit open-ended, which I think is kind of the point. It's an invitation for you, the listener, to ponder it, to dig a little deeper into the mystery. Challenge accepted.

I like it. But even though this New Jerusalem is supposed to be this super inclusive place, it's not like anything goes right. No, definitely not.

Revelation 22.27 makes it clear that while it's inclusive, it's not a free-for-all; nothing impure or deceitful gets in- only those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life. So even in this city of ultimate inclusion, there are still boundaries. This raises a fascinating question.

How does God balance mercy and holiness? How can a God who's perfectly just also be perfectly merciful? It's a question that's been debated for centuries, and I think Revelation suggests that both of these attributes are fully present and active in God's plan. Okay, so let's shift gears a bit and talk about this whole Garden of Eden 2.0 situation. John paints this vivid picture in Revelation 22.125 of the New Jerusalem with the Tree of Life right in the center.

It's like Eden, but with a heavenly upgrade. It's beautiful imagery, and Matthew Singh connects it to Ezekiel 47, where you have this river flowing from the temple, bringing life wherever it goes. But John adapts this.

He has the river flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. Ah, because in John's vision, God and the Lamb are in the temple, right? No need for a separate building anymore. Exactly.

They are the source of life and light. It's like Ezekiel's vision gets this incredible upgrade, reflecting a deeper understanding of God's presence as the true dwelling place. I love those aha moments.

Okay, so tell me about this Tree of Life. It's not just any old tree, is it? No, not at all. John describes a single Tree of Life with 12 different kinds of fruit, yielding a new crop every month.

And get this, the leaves are for the healing of the nations. It ties back to those nations we were just talking about. Whoa, full circle moment.

So this healing, is it just about, like, souls getting saved, or is there more to it than that? Well, Matthew Singh suggests it's multilayered. He talks about spiritual salvation, but also liberation from the beast's rule. It's like restoration on a personal and global scale.

What do you think this could signify for us today? Do you think it could represent physical healing, emotional restoration, or even societal reconciliation? That's a really good question. It makes you wonder if this healing is something we can experience even now in this life and not just in the hereafter. And this whole blending of garden and temple imagery.

It's fascinating. Matthew Singh sees the Old Testament temple as a kind of mini Garden of Eden. He argues that it was designed to be that sacred space where God dwelled, just like the original garden.

So the New Jerusalem, it's like the culmination of this idea, bringing together both garden and temple and showing God's original intention for humanity. Powerful stuff. It really is.

And then there's that line in Revelation 22.3, no longer will there be any curse. So does that mean the curse from the Garden of Eden is finally broken, like game over for all the bad stuff? Well, that's definitely part of it. But Matthew Singh also points to Zechariah 14.11, where this signifies the end to the destruction that was pronounced upon nations for their sins.

So it's not just about our personal burdens being lifted, but like a global shift from judgment to healing. It's like hitting the reset button on the whole world. Exactly.

A clean slate for humanity and all of creation. Mind blown. Okay, so we've got nations being healed, the curse being broken.

And then in verses four to five, we see God's people serving as priests, seeing his face and reigning forever. Talk about an epic reward program. And this echoes back to Exodus 19.6, where God calls Israel to be a kingdom of priests.

But Matthew Singh is saying we're not supposed to just sit around waiting for this future glory. It's a call to action to embody that priestly and kingly identity now in the present. Right.

And that actually connects to another point he makes. He draws this parallel with Genesis 1.26-28, where God gives Adam and Eve that mandate to rule over creation. Yes.

The whole be fruitful and multiply thing. And he suggests that in this new creation, God's people are finally fulfilling that original mandate, reflecting the restoration of God's design for humanity. It's interesting to think about what responsible rulership looks like for us right now. What does it mean to rule over creation in a way that honors God? It's a question worth pondering for sure.

And it leads us to this other image that Matthew Singh contrasts with the New Jerusalem. Oh, yeah. He reminds us to reject those values and practices.

So it's not just about physically leaving a place. It's about rejecting idolatry and compromise, choosing to align ourselves with God's kingdom and resist anything that pulls us away from it. You got it.

And that actually leads us to the next section of Revelation 22, verses 6-21. It's like a set of instructions on how to live out this message, not just waiting for the future, but actively engaging with God's call in the present. Matthew Singh's pretty clear about that.

He even says that Revelation is not a script of the end times. It's a script of the church. So what are some of those key instructions? What does this script look like in our everyday lives? Well, right away, we see that call to worship God alone and the warning against idolatry.

And it's interesting because we actually see that play out in John's encounter with the angel in 22.8 to 9, where he's tempted to worship the messenger instead of the one who sent him. Wow. Yeah.

That's a powerful reminder that our worship belongs to God alone. No exceptions, no detours, no distractions. Right.

And the book keeps emphasizing holiness and righteousness as the appropriate response to God's revelation. Living in a way that reflects the character of God, right? But then there's that line in 22.11 that always trips people up: "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong. Yeah.

It sounds like it's giving people permission to just keep sinning. Yeah. That one's always a bit of a head-scratcher.

But Matthew Singh suggests that it's not about giving a free pass to sin. It's more about recognizing the reality of how people respond to God's message. Some people, even after seeing the truth, will choose to harden their hearts and keep going down that path.

So it's about free will and consequences. Some will harden their hearts; others will be drawn towards repentance. Just like those parables Jesus told that seem to have opposite effects on different people.

Exactly. It's not about God forcing anyone's hand, but about allowing people to choose their own destiny. And then there's that other phrase that keeps coming up, behold, I am coming soon.

Like a divine countdown clock. Yeah. It appears in verses 7, 12, and 20.

Matthew Singh explains that it reflects the church's constant expectation of Christ's return, even though we don't know the exact timing. It's like living with a sense of urgency, knowing that everything could change in an instant, so no hitting the snooze button on our spiritual lives. Right.

We need to be ready, alert, and engaged. And that readiness isn't just about preparing for the apocalypse. It's about cultivating a heart posture of faithfulness and obedience, making choices that reflect God's will, even when it's hard.

Doing the right thing, even when it's inconvenient or when no one's looking. It's about integrity, letting our actions match our beliefs. You got it.

Living in alignment with God's will, which leads us to that final warning against adding to or taking away from the prophecy in 22.18-19. I used to think that was just about protecting the text itself. But Matthews has a different take. Oh, really? Yeah.

He sees it as an ethical call to obedience, drawing a parallel with Deuteronomy's commands about the law. He says that adding to the prophecy represents trying to earn God's favor through works or legalism, while subtracting from it means compromising with the world and watering down the message. So it's not just about preserving words on a page, but about embodying the message in our lives, making sure our actions match up with our beliefs.

Exactly. We're not just called to passively receive God's word. We're called to actively live it out.

And that actually brings us to another really intriguing point that Mathewson makes that challenges the way we think about Revelation. OK, I'm intrigued. Tell me more.

He says it's not just about decoding symbols and hidden meanings, but about understanding the heart of the message, the core principles that drive it. OK, so you're saying it's less about deciphering cryptic prophecies and more about grasping the big picture, the underlying truths John is trying to communicate. You got it.

So what is that big picture then? Because Revelation can be kind of a head spinner sometimes, you know. I totally get it. It can be overwhelming.

But Mathewson actually breaks it down into five key takeaways that can really help to ground the book in practical application. OK, I'm all ears. Lay those takeaways on me.

All right. So number one, history is not just random chaos. It has a goal, a destination, and God's the one steering it all towards that ultimate fulfillment.

That's actually really reassuring, especially when things feel so unpredictable. It's a reminder that there's a bigger plan at work, even if we can't see it. Exactly.

And takeaway number two builds on that. It's a call to undivided worship and allegiance to God alone. No idols allowed.

Yeah, we've definitely seen that message loud and clear throughout Revelation. Absolutely. No divided loyalties.

It's about putting God first in every area of our lives. And number three, it's a call to witness and mission, reflecting the new creation now, not just waiting for heaven, but bringing a little bit of heaven down to earth. So we shouldn't be sitting around twiddling our thumbs, waiting for the rapture.

We should be out there making the world a better place, showing God's love and justice and action right now. Precisely. Our lives should be a testament to God's kingdom, a preview of what's to come.

I love that. We're like ambassadors of heaven, representing God's heart to a world that desperately needs it. All right.

Hit me with number four. Number four is all about discernment and resistance, standing against Babylon in all its forms, recognizing those systems and ideologies that oppose God's kingdom, and having the courage to say no to them. So it's not just about being nice and loving all the time.

There's a place for righteous anger, for standing up for what's right, even when it's unpopular. Absolutely. There are times when silence is complicity.

Revelation calls us to be discerning, to recognize the subtle ways the world tries to pull us away from God's truth. I see. And finally, takeaway number five.

It's a call to obedience and discipleship. Following Jesus wholeheartedly wherever he leads. Putting our faith into action, living out our beliefs, not just talking the talk, but walking the walk.

Exactly. Those are the five pillars, the core of Revelation's message, according to Mathewson. It's not just about surviving the apocalypse.

It's about thriving as God's people, even in the middle of a broken world. It's about living with purpose, knowing we're part of something bigger than ourselves. Beautifully said.

And it all circles back to that final question Mathewson poses to the listener. What does it mean for you to have ears to hear the message of Revelation today? That's a question we all need to be asking ourselves, no matter where we are on our spiritual journey. Absolutely.

Revelation isn't just an ancient text. It's a living word relevant for every generation. It's a challenge, an invitation, and ultimately a source of hope in a world that often feels hopeless.

That, I think, is the most important takeaway of all. It's about recognizing that Revelation isn't just about surviving the fire. It's about being refined by it, becoming more like Christ in the process.

Allowing those trials and struggles to shape us into the people God created us to be. Wow, what a journey. We've only scratched the surface of Revelation, but even these glimpses have been so insightful and thought-provoking.

It's a book that rewards deep study and contemplation. I encourage you to keep digging, keep wrestling with these ideas, keep asking those tough questions. Because the more we understand Revelation, the more we understand ourselves, our world, and ultimately the heart of God.

And that understanding, that deeper connection with the divine, is what empowers us to live lives of courage, purpose, and hope, no matter what the future holds. So to all our listeners out there, keep those ears open, keep those hearts tuned in, and keep seeking the truth that sets us free. Because the story isn't over yet.

We all have a part to play in the unfolding drama of God's redemption. And on that note, we'll leave you to ponder these mysteries a little longer. Until next time, keep diving deep.

Keep diving. It feels like when he says that, he's saying that Revelation is not just about decoding all these symbols and hidden meanings. It's about getting the heart of the message.

Yeah, the core principles that drive it. Right. So what is that big picture? Because honestly, Revelation can feel like a bit of a head spinner sometimes.

Oh, I totally get that. It can be overwhelming. But Mathewson breaks it down into five key takeaways that I think really help to ground the book in practical application.

All right. I like it. Give me those takeaways.

I'm ready. Okay. So takeaway number one is that history is not just random chaos.

It is purposeful. It has a destination. And God's the one who's steering everything toward that ultimate fulfillment.

That's actually pretty reassuring, you know, especially when things feel so unpredictable. It reminds us that there's a bigger plan at work, even if we can't see it. Exactly.

And takeaway number two kind of builds on that. It's a call to complete worship and allegiance to God alone. No idols allowed.

We've gotten that message loud and clear throughout Revelation for sure. Right. No divided loyalties.

God comes first in everything. And number three is that it's a call to witness and mission, reflecting the new creation right now, not just waiting for heaven, but bringing a little bit of heaven down to Earth. Oh, we shouldn't just be sitting around waiting for the rapture.

We should be out there making the world a better place, showing God's love and justice in action now. Exactly. Our lives should be a testament to God's kingdom, a preview of what's to come.

I love that. It's like we're ambassadors of heaven, you know, representing God's heart to a world that desperately needs it. OK, what's number four? OK, number four.

It's all about discernment and resistance, standing against Babylon in all its forms, recognizing those systems and ideologies that oppose God's kingdom, and having the courage to say no to them. So it's not just about being nice and loving all the time. There's a place for righteous anger, for standing up for what's right, even when it's not popular.

Absolutely. There are times when silence is actually complicity. Revelation calls us to be discerning, to recognize the ways in which the world tries to pull us away from the truth.

I see. And finally, number five. It's a call to obedience and discipleship, following Jesus wholeheartedly wherever he leads, putting our faith into action, living it out, not just talking the talk, but walking the walk.

Exactly. Those are the five pillars, Mathewson says, the core of what Revelation is all about. Wow.

So it's not just about surviving the apocalypse. It's about thriving as God's people, even in a broken world. It's about living with a purpose, knowing that we're part of something much bigger than ourselves.

Beautifully said. And it all comes back to that final question that Mathewson poses. What does it mean for you to have ears to hear the message of revelation today? That's the question we all need to be asking, I think, no matter where we are on our spiritual journey.

For sure, revelation isn't just some old text. It's a living word that speaks to every generation. It's a challenge, an invitation, and ultimately a source of hope in a world that often feels hopeless.

And that, I think, is the most important takeaway. It's about recognizing that revelation isn't just about surviving the fire. It's about being refined by it.

Becoming more like Christ in the process. Allowing those trials and struggles to shape us into the people God created us to be. Wow.

What a journey. We've just barely scratched the surface of revelation, but even these little glimpses have been so insightful and thought-provoking. It's a book that really rewards deep study and contemplation.

And I really encourage you to keep digging, keep wrestling with these ideas, keep asking those tough questions. Because the more we understand revelation, the more we understand ourselves, our world, and ultimately the heart of God. And that understanding, that deeper connection with the divine, it's what gives us the power to live lives of courage, purpose, and hope, no matter what the future holds.

So to all our listeners out there, keep those ears open, keep those hearts tuned in, and keep seeking the truth that sets us free. Because the story's not over yet. We all have a part to play in the unfolding drama of God's redemption.

And on that note, we'll leave you to ponder these mysteries a little longer. Until next time, keep diving deep. You know, it's like revelation's giving us this roadmap, not just for the end times, but for living with purpose right now in the middle of it all.

It is. And Mathewson really emphasizes that sense of urgency throughout the whole book. Yeah, like with those "Behold, I am coming soon, lines that keep popping up.

It's like a wake-up call, you know? Hey, time is of the essence. Exactly. It appears over and over again.

And it's meant to keep us on our toes. Yeah. Reminding us that we don't know the day or the hour when everything changes.

So no hitting the snooze button on our spiritual lives. We've got to be ready, alert, engaged. And that readiness.

It's not just about, like, packing a go bag for the apocalypse. It's about having a heart of faithfulness and obedience, making choices that reflect God's will, even when it's tough. It's about doing the right thing, even when it's hard, even when nobody's watching.

You know, it's about integrity, letting our actions line up with our beliefs. You got it. Living in alignment with God's will.

And that brings us back to that idea of having ears to hear. It's not just about physically hearing the words, right? It's got to be something deeper. It's about really letting the message sink in, letting it shape our thoughts, our actions, our whole way of being.

It's like having our spiritual antennas tuned to the right frequency, picking up on signals we might have missed otherwise. I love that analogy. And when we're tuned in, when we're receptive to God's voice, we start to see the world differently.

We see those spiritual battles that are happening all around us. We see those little pockets of Babylon, those systems and ideologies that go against God's truth. And we also see those opportunities to be a witness, you know, to shine the light of Christ, to bring healing and hope to a world that's hurting.

It's like Revelation gives us this decoder ring for understanding the spiritual dynamics at play in our lives and in the world. And it equips us to fight those battles, not with physical weapons, but with the armor of God. Exactly.

Truth, righteousness, peace, faith- all those things Paul talks about in Ephesians. Those are the weapons that make a real difference. So Revelation's not just about surviving the fire.

It's about being refined by it, becoming more like Christ through the process. It's about letting those trials and tribulations shape us, mold us into the people God wants us to be. Wow, what a journey.

It feels like we've only just scratched the surface of Revelation. But even these little glimpses have been so insightful and thought-provoking. It really is a book that you can spend a lifetime studying and still find new things.

And I encourage you to keep digging, keep wrestling with these ideas, keep asking those tough questions. Because the more we understand Revelation, the more we understand ourselves and our world and God. And that understanding, that connection with God, that's what gives us the strength to live with courage and purpose and hope, no matter what happens in the future.

So to all our listeners out there, keep those ears open, keep those hearts tuned in, and keep searching for that truth that sets us free. Because this story is not over. We all have a role to play in God's plan for redemption.

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