

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Storyline of the Bible, Session 6 – General Epistles and Revelation Podcast Audio Overview

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All right, buckle up, everybody. We're diving deep into Revelation today. I know, I know, it's a book that can feel kind of like a puzzle box, right? All that symbolism, all those prophecies.

Definitely. It can seem pretty overwhelming. But what if I told you Revelation is actually the key to understanding it, like the whole Bible? That's a bold statement.

It's true, though. We're going to break it down and see how it all ties together. Because really, Revelation brings the entire story of the Bible to this amazing, dramatic climax.

Absolutely. It's like the grand finale, you know? Exactly. And to understand it, we need to understand these five big themes that run through the whole Bible.

Right. The big ideas, the threads that connect it all. Yeah.

We're talking about the people of God, covenant, kingship, temple, and then land or creation. Those are the big ones. And they're all woven together, aren't they? It's like a tapestry, each thread telling part of the story.

Right. And Revelation brings them all together in this stunning picture of God's plan, His ultimate purpose. It's powerful stuff.

So let's start with the people of God, okay? Revelation 21.2 and 9 introduce this image of the bride, all decked out, ready for her husband. It's romantic for sure, but there's a lot more going on there than just a wedding. Oh yeah, for sure.

So what's the significance of this bride imagery then? Well, it takes us back to the Old Testament. God's relationship with Israel was often described as a marriage. I see.

The prophets, they call out Israel for being unfaithful, like a bride who's gone astray. Makes sense. So this isn't just about a wedding celebration.

It's about God's, what, His enduring love for His people. Precisely. God's love for His people, it never ends.

And John, the author of Revelation, he's showing that God's people, they haven't been forgotten or replaced. Yeah. The story continues.

Yes, the story goes on. And it gets even more interesting when we look at the description of the city in Revelation 21.12 and 14. What's special about these verses? Okay.

So the city has 12 gates, and each gate is inscribed with the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Okay. The 12 tribes represent the people of God in the Old Testament.

Got it. Right. But then it also has 12 foundations, and those foundations have the names of the 12 apostles.

Whoa, hold on. So you have the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles; that's both the old and the new. Right.

What's John trying to say by putting those together? He's showing us, I think, the continuity, you know, and the fulfillment of God's people. It's not like the church replaces Israel. It's more like a continuation, you know, of God's plan.

It brings together people from every nation, every tribe. It's like this beautiful tapestry. Woven together by God's faithfulness.

I like that. Okay. So we have this amazing image of God's people, right? Old and New Testaments, they're all united as this radiant city.

But how does covenant fit into all of this? Great question. So remember Revelation 21.3, it says God's dwelling is among his people. Okay.

Yeah. This goes all the way back to, like, the basic covenant formula you see throughout the Bible. You know, I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Right. Right. It's God's promise.

A promise of this close, intimate relationship and this unwavering love. And this promise, it goes all the way back, back to the covenant God made with Abraham. Yeah.

And it continues through the new covenant that Jesus established. Right. Right.

But Revelation, it feels like it takes this idea of covenant to a whole new level, doesn't it? It's like the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise. You're absolutely right. It's the culmination, you know, the peak of God's plan.

So the new covenant, it started with Christ, but Revelation shows its ultimate fulfillment in the new creation. So we're living in this in-between time then, right? We're experiencing the blessings of the new covenant now, but the full picture, well, that's still to come. Exactly.

That's the already but not yet aspect of God's kingdom. Makes sense. Okay.

So we've talked about people of God and covenant. Let's move on to land or creation. Revelation 21.1, it starts with this like dramatic unveiling of a new heaven and a new earth.

Talk about a scene straight out of a movie. It's more like a scene straight out of Isaiah 65. Oh yeah.

Good point. Revelation's echoing those prophecies about God making everything new, like hitting the reset button on creation, but even better than the original. And there's that line about the sea being no more.

That one always gets me. What's the deal with that? It's a powerful image, that's for sure. And to understand it, we need to remember what the sea often represents in the Bible.

Chaos, you know, evil, the forces that oppose God. Okay. So when it says the sea was no more, it's saying, like, no more chaos, no more evil.

Exactly. In the new creation, God's peace and order reign supreme. I like that.

So it's like no more storms, no more rough waters, just smooth sailing from here on out. I like how you put that, but there's another connection here too. Do you remember the Exodus story when God parted the Red Sea? Oh yeah.

To deliver his people from slavery. Right. So in the Exodus, it was the promised land, right? Well, in Revelation, it's the new creation.

I see. I see. It's God making a way for his people to enter their inheritance.

You got it. Both events show God overcoming obstacles, making a way where there seems to be no way. Amazing.

Layers upon layers of meaning. And speaking of layers, there's the image of the tree of life in Revelation 22.1-3. Oh yeah. That takes us straight back to the Garden of Eden.

Doesn't it? It symbolizes that everlasting life we'll experience in the new creation. It's like the garden gets an upgrade. No more forbidden fruit, just an abundance of goodness.

Absolutely. It's paradise regained. Okay.

So we've talked about people of God, covenant, and land creation. What about the temple? It seems like the temple gets a pretty big makeover in Revelation. Yeah, it definitely does.

In Revelation 21.3, we see that God's dwelling is among his people. Right. Which seems like it's fulfilling that whole prophetic hope of a restored temple, right? But then there's a twist.

There is. In Revelation 21.22, John says there's no temple in the city. Yeah.

What's up with that? No temple. And that's where things get really mind-blowing. Because John doesn't see a temple.

Because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, they are the temple. Wait, what? Hold on. The Lord God and the Lamb are the temple.

So instead of a building, God's presence just fills the entire city, which represents his people. Precisely. God's presence is not limited to a specific location anymore.

It fills the entire new creation. And the city itself, it takes on these temple-like dimensions, right? It echoes that description of the holy of holies in 1 Kings. You got it.

And John, he uses all this imagery- gold, precious stones, the cube shape- all to emphasize that temple connection. He's showing us that the whole city, which represents the people of God, it is the holy of holies. Whoa.

That's a huge shift from the Old Testament understanding of the temple. Yeah. It's not just that God dwells among us.

It's that we are enveloped by his presence. We become the place where he chooses to reside. It's a radical transformation, isn't it? It is.

So we're not separated from God by sin or by a physical temple anymore. We're united with him in this incredible way. Okay, I need a minute to process this.

This is big. But if we, God's people, become the temple, the dwelling place of his presence, what does that mean for kingship? Who's ruling in this new creation? That's where we see all these themes come full circle. In Revelation 22.3, John sees the throne of God and the Lamb.

The throne, right? The symbol of ultimate authority. Exactly. And it's from that throne that God's reign extends over everything.

But, and here's the amazing part, in Revelation 22.5, we see that God's people, they're reigning too. Wait, we're ruling with God? In a sense, yes. It's the fulfillment of that mandate given to humanity in Genesis 1.26. To rule as God's image bearers.

But it's not about power tripping or lording it over others. No, no, of course not. It's about reflecting God's character, his authority in the new creation.

So partnering with him to bring about his perfect will. That's the idea. We're participating in his reign, working alongside him to establish his justice and his peace throughout the new creation.

Wow. So we have God dwelling in his people who have become this glorious temple city, reigning together in a restored Eden. It's like the ultimate happily ever after, you know.

But I have to ask: in Revelation 21.3, it says God will be God with them. Is his presence in this new creation just symbolic? Or is it something more? That's a fantastic question. And it's important to remember that God's presence in the new creation is not just a symbol or a metaphor.

It's real. It's tangible. He's not just with us in spirit.

He's truly present physically. There's not just some abstract theological concept, right? It's a real experience. Absolutely.

It's the fulfillment of his promise to always be with his people. And it's a reminder that this new creation, this glorious future John's describing, it's not just some distant dream. So how does that reality then, how does it play out in our lives today? That's the question, isn't it? And it's one we'll explore further in our next segment.

We'll delve into the practical implications of all this and see how these profound truths can actually shape our lives right now. Okay, Deep Divers, stay tuned. We'll be right back to unpack even more of these mind-blowing insights from the book of Revelation.

Welcome back, Deep Divers. We are knee-deep in the book of Revelation, folks. And man, it's pretty incredible how much hope and beauty we're finding amidst all that fire and brimstone.

That's the thing about Revelation. It's not all doom and gloom. It's about God making all things new, restoration, renewal.

And that's where it gets really fascinating. John doesn't just give us a vague picture of this new creation. He packs it with details, specific details that connect back to earlier parts of the Bible.

Oh yeah, I love that. Give me some examples. Unpack those details for us.

Okay, so remember that river, the river of the water of life, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb in Revelation 22.1? Yes. It flows right through the middle of the city, right? That image always stuck with me. Well, that image, it's straight out of Ezekiel 47.

Oh, is it? The prophet Ezekiel, he sees a river flowing from the temple, bringing life and healing to the land. Okay, yeah, I remember that. So John's like, remember that river Ezekiel saw? Well, guess what? It's flowing in the new creation too.

Exactly. And it's not just any river. It's a river of life.

It symbolizes the abundance and vitality of God's presence. It's like God's never-ending supply of goodness just flowing through everything. Okay, so we have the river, and then there's the tree of life, right? That takes us right back to the Garden of Eden.

Oh, yeah, absolutely. A direct callback to Genesis 2. And it's not just any tree either. It's got 12 kinds of fruit, producing fruit every month.

A never-ending harvest. Talk about abundance. It's like God's saying, "This new creation is going to be even better than the original: no more forbidden fruit, just pure goodness.

That's a beautiful way to put it. It's like paradise regained, where sin and death have no power anymore. And speaking of no more, I got to ask you again about that line in Revelation 21.1, and the sea was no more.

We touched on this earlier, but I'm still a little puzzled by it. Why would John include that detail? It's a good question, and it definitely makes you think. But as we talked about, the sea and the Bible often represent chaos and evil.

So when it says the sea was no more, it means that everything that opposes God, everything that stands against His purpose, is all gone. So it's like a clean slate, a fresh start. Right.

But there's more to it than just the symbolism. Remember how we talked about that connection to the Exodus story? Oh, yeah, yeah. Where else in the Bible does water pose a threat to God's people, and then it's miraculously removed so they can enter their inheritance? The Red Sea.

God parted the waters so the Israelites could escape slavery. Exactly. And Isaiah, when he talks about the future new Exodus of God's people, he uses similar imagery.

Water drying up, making a way for the redeemed to cross over. Wow. I never made that connection before.

So John's linking the Red Sea crossing to the ultimate new Exodus that happens in Revelation. It's like he's saying, look, just as God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt, He'll deliver them from sin and death in the new creation. That's it.

It's this beautiful picture of God's faithfulness throughout history. His redemptive work just keeps going, leading us from slavery to freedom, from death to life. This is making so much sense now.

Okay, so we've got God's people inheriting this restored Eden, a place without chaos and evil. God's presence flows through it like a river, providing life in abundance. It's just incredible.

But what about the temple? We said that in Revelation, the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple, right? But I'm honestly still trying to wrap my head around what that means for us, like for us as God's people, you know? It's a mind-blowing concept, isn't it? The temple in the Old Testament symbolized God's presence dwelling among His people. Well, in Revelation, that symbolism takes on a whole new meaning. The temple isn't a building anymore.

It's God's people themselves. So we become the dwelling place of God. That's exactly what Revelation is revealing.

And the way John describes the city, all that temple imagery, the gold, the precious stones, the four-square shape, it all points to the city's temple-like nature. And he specifically says four-square, doesn't he? Yes. And that language, that's taken from the description of the Holy of Holies in First Kings, the most sacred part of the temple where God's presence resided.

John's saying the whole city represents God's people is the Holy of Holies. Wow. So it's not just that God dwells among us; it's that we're enveloped by His presence.

We become the place where He chooses to reside. It changes everything about how we see our relationship with God. We're not separated from Him by sin or a physical temple anymore.

We're united with Him in a way that goes beyond anything we can imagine. This is incredible. So if we, as God's people, become the temple, the dwelling place of His presence, then what about kingship? Who's ruling in this new creation? Oh, and here's where it all comes together.

Remember in Revelation 22.3, John sees the throne of God and the Lamb. The throne, yeah, the ultimate symbol of authority. Right.

And it's from that throne that God's reign extends over everything. But, and this is the incredible part, in Revelation 22.5, we see that God's people, they're reigning too. We're ruling alongside God.

That's amazing. It's the fulfillment of that mandate from Genesis 1.26 to rule as God's image bearers. But it's not about dominating others or having power over them.

No, of course not. It's about reflecting God's character, reflecting His authority in this new creation. So it's about partnering with Him to bring about His perfect will.

Exactly. We participate in His reign, working with Him to establish His justice and peace throughout the new creation. Man, I'm starting to see how Revelation isn't just about the future.

It's about how we live right now. This idea of reigning with God, reflecting His character, it has implications for how we live today, doesn't it? Absolutely. And that's something we'll talk more about in our next segment.

We'll explore some key takeaways from Revelation and see how they can actually transform our lives today. All right, Deep Divers, stay tuned for part three, where we'll unpack the practical implications of this incredible book. Welcome back to our deep dive on the book of Revelation.

It's been quite a journey, hasn't it? I mean, we've uncovered all this mind-blowing stuff about God's plan, His people, and the new creation. But now I'm wondering, what does it all mean for us today? How is this vision of a new creation, a new temple, this whole idea of reigning with God- how does it change the way we live right now? That's the million-dollar question, isn't it? And Revelation, I think, gives us some pretty powerful answers. First off, it reminds us that our real hope is not found in this world.

Right. It's in the world to come. Yeah, exactly.

It's about gaining a bigger perspective. Yeah, like things might be tough now, but they're not the whole story. There's something bigger going on.

Right. It's about God's ultimate victory over evil, the restoration of everything. And knowing that, it can change how we approach everything, our daily lives, our struggles.

So it's like an anchor in the midst of the storm. But how does that actually play out practically? Okay, well, think about how we view suffering, for example. John tells us in Revelation 21 that there's no more crying or pain in the new creation.

Right. No more suffering. But that doesn't mean we won't go through hard times here.

Are you? Of course, yeah. But it means our suffering has an end date. It's temporary.

So we can endure those tough times knowing they're not the end of the story. Exactly. Revelation also changes how we see relationships.

It shows us this picture of perfect unity between God and his people. Oh, yeah. This is what theologians call a communion of saints.

So we're not meant to go through this life alone, right? We're part of something bigger. This community, the family of faith. That's it.

We need each other. And this vision of the new creation, it can even change how we see our work, our responsibilities. Oh, yeah.

And that's interesting. Remember how Revelation talks about God's people reigning with him? Yeah. Reigning with God.

That's not just some future, you know, heavenly gig. It's about reflecting his character, his authority in everything we do right now. So like right here, right now? Yep.

Our homes, our workplaces, our communities. So whether we're, I don't know, like changing diapers or leading a board meeting, we're called to be what? Ambassadors of God's kingdom? Exactly. Bringing his love, justice, and peace into every part of life.

Man, that's pretty high calling. It is. And at the end of the day, I think Revelation calls us to live with this expectant hope.

It reminds us that God is working even when we can't see it. So instead of getting caught up in, you know, negativity or whatever, we can choose to be people of hope, looking for those signs of God's kingdom breaking through. Yes.

And we can be part of that, that kingdom-building work. Yeah. By loving our neighbors, caring for those who are hurting, and fighting for justice.

Man, Revelation, it's not just some, you know, abstract theological thing. It's a call to action. It's an invitation to live differently, to be agents of hope.

And this world, man, it needs that hope. It does. It's a reminder that the story doesn't end with Revelation.

We're invited to be part of what God's doing, this ongoing work of making all things new. Well, this deep dive, man, it's been like a wake-up call for me. It's reminded me of the hope and purpose we have as followers of Christ.

It's been really incredible. It's been my pleasure to explore these truths with you. I hope it encourages everyone to go back, you know, revisit Revelation, read it with fresh eyes, and be open to what God has in store.

And if you're looking for more, don't forget to check out the show notes. We've got links to some amazing resources that can help you dive even deeper into Revelation. Remember, even though our deep dive is ending here, the journey of faith continues.

Keep exploring, keep asking questions, and keep discovering the wonder and beauty of God's word. And until next time, deep divers, keep your hearts anchored in hope, your

minds focused on truth, and your lives committed to being agents of God's kingdom. Right here, right now.