

**Revelation: The Triumph of the Lamb**  
*Your Final Destination*  
Revelation 1:7-11

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**Text:**

Revelation 1:7-11 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

<sup>8</sup> **“I am the Alpha and the Omega,”** says the Lord God, **“who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”**<sup>9</sup>

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup> saying, **“Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”**

**Introduction:**

Tina and I sat on our bed Wednesday morning having a conversation that we have had now on a number of occasions. In the conversation we discussed our children, our mistake-riddled parenting, our sinfulness and our frustrations. The conversation was filled with fears and tears. It was one of those mornings that looked so bleak and hopeless. The salvation of our children looked hopeless and the progression of our own sanctification looked bleak. Somewhere in the middle of the conversation, Tina made a comment that changed the entire outlook of the moment as it threw back the sash and opened the window. Light came pouring into the room and a breeze dried our tears and enabled us to lift our gaze toward God in prayer. Her comment was, “I feel as though I have lost control.”

When the Bible wants to motivate a person toward a persevering lifestyle; when the Bible wants to convince you that you should go on with your faith and not stop to count the cost, or not fall beneath life’s pressures, or not give into this world’s attractions; when the Bible wants to get you to lift your gaze, it speaks of one thing and only one thing. What you and I need more than anything for finding the strength to carry on is nothing more and nothing less than a rock-solid hope.

Hope! Do you have hope? What is your hope in?

What is it that you are living for? What is your goal in life? Every time you raise your voice at your child or give your spouse the silent treatment, you hope to accomplish something. What is that hope? What is that goal? If you devote yourself to work and spend 65 hours a week at work, you have a purpose in mind. Certain hopes and promises are directing your life. What are they?

When you sense that you are losing the grip on those goals, promises and purposes, what happens? How do you respond? When life seems to be slipping out of your control, what emotion rises to the top? What actions come springing up? What spews forth out of your heart?

As I continue to introduce you to the book of Revelation, I want you to understand that above all, the book of Revelation is written so that it might produce in you and me a rock-solid hope. How will it accomplish this purpose? It is very simple. John was given a series of visions that continually aim at lifting the gaze off of that “which is” in order to set it upon that “which is to come.” That is, the book of Revelation is extremely forward looking – there is a common orientation toward the end. The NT

model for viewing life is to fix our minds on future realities, heavenly realities and then live our lives here and now in light of the then and there. In other words, to live our lives based on hope.

My concern, this morning is that we do not do a very good job of this. We do not live our lives with a view toward the end. The problem is that the NT perception is that unless Christians live their lives in light of the end, they do not have faith.

Jesus says,

Matthew 16:26 (ESV)

<sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?

Matthew 10:28 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

I am afraid we live in a day where we do not think about the end at all. How many of us have awakened in the last month and thought, “Jesus could come today?” “Will this be the day I see my Father?” How many of us have thought about our whole life’s calling, our vocation, relationships and family in terms of the end? Area all your values being shaped by the end?

Living the Christian life with this kind of end-times outlook is so essential to our faith that to not have it is to seriously compromise. Those who are going through real suffering, real persecution, real hardships need this kind of eschatological view of life or they will never be able to persevere through the pain. One of the old “Negro spirituals” that came out of the slavery days said, “This world is not my home; I’m just a passin’ through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.” This kind of mindset was not a cop-out for them; it was elementary gospel.

Paul says, “We are waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...” (Tit. 2:13). All throughout the NT our hope is tied to the promise of Christ’s return. That is our most blessed hope.

So too, here, in Revelation 1, right out of the box, John says, “Behold! [Look!], He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.” Jesus then pronounces his name to be “Alpha and Omega,” the One who was, who is and who is to come.”

Jesus Christ is coming again! Do we really grasp the significance of that? How does living your life in light of the promise of His return produce hope? John is certain that it must or we will not be equipped for perseverance in pain.

Let’s examine this question, “How does living life in light of Jesus’ return produce hope?”

The announcement of Christ’s return is a blending of two OT passages, Daniel 7:13 with Zechariah 12:10, 12. Daniel was shown one like a son of man coming with clouds to the Ancient of Days amid a heavenly court, to receive endless dominion over all peoples and languages. Thus, in Daniel’s vision the direction of the Son of man’s coming with clouds was into heaven, toward God’s throne, where authority was given to him. In fact, Jesus himself uses Daniel’s words in the same way throughout the gospels when referring to his resurrection and ascension. He came with clouds before His Father’s right hand to be vested with all regal authority. That kind of coming with a cloud into the glory of the Father was literally fulfilled in Acts 1:9 when they saw him go up in a cloud to heaven.

The book of Revelation affirms that Jesus has come to the Ancient of Days and been given all authority. His right to open the scroll in ch.5 confirms this authority. He is worthy. But the statement

in 1:7 is about a future coming with the clouds. Notice the future tense of John's writing, "...every eye *will see* him...all the tribe of earth *will wail*..." John is introducing us to themes that will come later in his book.

Look at Revelation 22:

Revelation 22:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Revelation 22:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done."

Revelation 22:20 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The real hope for John comes in the fact that because Jesus has already come with the clouds before the Ancient of Days and has already been given authority and rules now, he is able to foreshadow his return by intervening in the life of his church.

But the main point of 1:7 is crystal clear: The One who was pierced in rejection has been vested with supreme authority, and his appearance will strike deep sorrow to the hearts of his tormentors from all tribes and nations of the earth. The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus is judgment on the earth. Look at Jesus' words in Matthew.

Matthew 19:28 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Matthew 25:31-33 (ESV)

<sup>31</sup> "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left."

Christ's return will be sobering to most, absolutely terrifying. Every eye will see him and the tribes of the earth will wail because of him, including those who pierced him. It is a fundamental part of the Christian outlook to see that at the end of it all, **Jesus is the judge of everybody!** This whole world is rushing to final judgment and everyone will give an account to him of everything that has been said and done and thought, not least, those who pierced him!

But for those who are his brothers, who wear his mark upon their body, they will be sealed, spared from his wrath. They will look on as the final vindication occurs. There is real hope. Evil will falter; God will prevail. Endure to the end! That is the theme of the book: "Evil will falter; God will prevail; Endure to the end!"

Now then, there is a beautiful connection between the promise of his coming and his declared name.

Revelation 1:8 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

As you know, alpha and omega are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet, so this name signifies that the speaker stands sovereign over both ends of history and everything in between. In 21:6 Jesus adds, “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.” Then these two phrases are expanded in the final verses of the book to include “the first and the last.” These are clear statements of our Lord God’s absolute sovereignty over all things.

In fact, turn to Isaiah 41:4 so that you can see something there. Isaiah wrote to decry the idolatry of Judah before her destruction. Isaiah finds it unthinkable and absurd that anyone would worship an idol over the one true God. In Isaiah’s prophecy, god calls himself the “first and the last” in order to sum up his supremacy over all idols.

Isaiah 41:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup>Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

Isaiah says that the idols that tempted and seduced Judah were recent novelties and not the ancient Creator:

Isaiah 48:12-13 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup>“Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last. <sup>13</sup> My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together.

Nor can the idols compete with the Lord by contesting his control of the future:

Isaiah 44:6-7 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup>Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. <sup>7</sup>Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.

So when God uses all three pairs – Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, first and last – he is proclaiming his invincible and eternal rule of history. The idols were not there at the beginning, nor will they last to the end. They did not give the universe its beginning, nor can they manipulate its destiny. They cannot be trusted and need not be feared. The Lord is God from start to finish.

And if that was true of idols in Isaiah’s day, the issue in the book of Revelation is not idolatry, per se, but the kings of the earth. Do tyrannical rulers like Nero and Domitian need to be feared? John’s answer will be the same.

Notice v.8. The Lord God is the “One who was and who is and who is to come.” There are three components here – was, is and is to come. But there is a strikingly obvious twist to John’s writing. The first two components (was and is) are forms of the verb “to be” which speak of existence. They are both past and present tense. God is the One who was. That is, He existed in the past. God is also the One who is. That is, he exists in the present. But the third component stands out because it is not the future tense of a “to be” verb. If it were, we would translate is as the “One who shall be” – “I am the One who was and who is and who shall be.” That is not what Jesus says. He says, “I am the One who was and who is and who is to come.” He uses a verb for coming.

Why do I bother to point this out? Because it is rich! Jesus' self-proclaimed name to the churches is designed to demonstrate that he is coming locally not temporally. What I mean is, Jesus is not assuring us that he will exist in future time (temporal) but that he is coming to earth for his people (local).

Let me confirm this for you. Jesus says three times in 1:4, 1:8 and 4:8 that he is the one who is who was and who is to come. But later in the book, he leaves off the third component and only gives the first two. Look...

Revelation 11:17 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.

Revelation 16:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments.

So why the change? Why does he leave off the "one to come" in these last two? It is simply owing to the fact that in 11:15, the last trumpet has sounded heralding the coming of God.

The point in chapter 1 is that Jesus is going to come in the clouds; and in the mean time, he has already entered into his glory. He has already received his authority. He already rules history. He is the Almighty. The God who hung the stars in space holds the stars of the seven churches in his right hand (1:16).

He is ruling now even when it seems bleak. He is orchestrating his plan now even though it includes the death of his saints. He is moving forward toward the end though it seems futile. Hold on! There is reason to hope! Look at the plan as it unfolds in the book of Revelation. There is rhyme and reason. But ultimately, it is not the rhyme and reason that gives hope. It is the return of Christ.

### **Conclusion:**

So how does the hope of Christ's return produce hope?

Faith produces hope which produces love – Faith, hope, love, these three...

When we see Christ as true and trustworthy, an overwhelming sense of peace and assurance floods over us – this is hope. And the actions that flow from a hope-filled heart are the actions of self-sacrificing love – the kind of love that could lay down a life for an enemy because it knows that all the enemy can do is destroy the body. You can go as a missionary to hostile territories because you love the lost and do not fear them.

You see, fear is the opposite of hope. When life looks hopeless and bleak, out of our control, we start to get gripped by fear. We fear that what we are really living for is slowly slipping away. So we respond not with self-sacrificing actions of love but in selfish works of manipulation. We will do whatever it takes to keep control. We resort to yelling at our kids or giving a spouse the silent treatment. We'll show them!