

11 The Revelation

This is the eleventh talk outline in The God Story Sermon Series. The related chapters in The God Story book are Chapter 11, *The Revelation*. The book in the Bible this chapter corresponds with is Hebrews, Revelation and other supplementary passages from the Letters.

Teaching Outline

Key aims

To explore John's Revelation of Jesus, how this confirms all of history has been on a throne-ward trajectory towards the feet of the humble resurrected King Jesus, the return of Jesus as rightful Judge and the call to the patient endurance of the saints.

The God Story storytelling method

The God Story Storyteller understands that to teach The God Story effectively a dual teaching method is required. This is the art of teaching in a way that both **unfolds the eternal purposes of God through history and also releases them into personal encounter**. Practically this will mean prayerfully considering in each talk outline what parts you want to 'go deeper' in and what parts you want to mention at a headline level. We trust the Spirit will inspire and guide you to find the right cadence as you aim to give a passionate sweep of the unfolding narrative while also narrowing the focus in certain places to emphasise personal application and encounter.

Key Bible passages

You may want to read a short passage of scripture before you begin your talk. The passages below are the ones we believe are most relevant to this particular talk.

We recommend you choose one of these:

Revelation 1

Revelation 4

Revelation 21:1-8

1 Thess 4:13-18

1 Cor 15:12-58

Romans 8:18-39

Teaching notes

The notes provided will equip you to understand more of the context and more of the story as you prepare your talk. Generally speaking the talk outline follows the structure of the corresponding chapter in The God Story book. We feel the key sections in the Talk Outline below relate to the main flow of the unfolding scriptural narrative and so we have included key Biblical passages and quotes from The God Story to assist you in this. We recommend using these sections to shape your talk but please choose the parts which you feel are most helpful for your context.

[Continue to the sermon](#) ✓

Introduction

Recap of previous session(s)

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commissioned His disciples to go into the world proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom. Filled with the Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples were thrust out onto the streets preaching the unfailing love of God and the incredible news that the Spirit was now being poured out on all flesh. On that day the church was birthed, and this kingdom family was God's way of revealing to the world his kaleidoscopic beauty and wisdom as Jew and Gentile, male and female, master and slave became one in Jesus. Along the way the church and her leaders would experience much persecution, but nothing could stop the movement of the Spirit as the inbreaking of the kingdom of God moved beyond Jerusalem into Judea, Samaria, Europe and eventually into Rome - the epicentre of worldly power, the place where 'all nations' were represented.

Talk overview

The staggering growth and multiplication of The Early Church did not come without challenges. The believers faced the powerful seduction of the intimidating idolatrous culture they lived within (the world); the age-old temptations of the self-centred nature (the flesh); and the deceptive tactics of Satan and his pagan empires wielding cruel persecution (the devil). Some compromised but many stayed faithful, patiently enduring persecution and hardship for the gospel even if it cost them their lives. The words of Jesus in Revelation encouraged the churches not to give up or give in and provided the believers with a vivid reminder of the fact that all of history was on a throne-ward trajectory towards the resurrected Jesus. Therefore we should live in light of Christ's return, empowered by the hope that a great resurrection awaits us, the redemption of our bodies and the day when Christ makes all things new. In the meantime we pray, enabled by the Spirit, Come Lord Jesus.

1 A vision of Jesus (Rev 1)

Explain approximately 60 years after the church was birthed, John was exiled to the Greek island Patmos under the reign of Roman Emperor Domitian.

- + Describe John's vision of Jesus (Rev 1:9-19) and emphasise after all these years John was once again moved from familiar to fascinated.
 - *"The one who had laid his head on Jesus' chest now lay before his exalted Lord like a dead man. John's fear dissipated with Jesus' first words, 'Do not be afraid.'"*¹
- + Highlight Rev 1:19 and Jesus' instruction to John to write down what he was going about to show John. Explain how 'revelation' means 'an unveiling', 'a showing', 'a revealing'.
- + Take a moment to acknowledge Revelation is a complex book, explaining how it is a mixture of apocalyptic, prophetic and pastoral genres.

≡ Key quote

*"Revelation is not a secret predictive code we have to crack to work out when the world will end. It is first and foremost a letter to encourage the early churches in their cultural context. Despite all the speculative end-time controversies connected with Revelation it is a book written in real time, to real Christians who were part of actual churches in the first century. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea. In each of these cities real flesh-and-blood people like us gathered together as the kingdom family."*²

- + Describe how John wrote Jesus' words as real-time letters to encourage actual churches who were surrounded by a pagan, empire-dominated culture.

≡ Key quote

*"In truth, the seven churches were characterised by a mixture of faithfulness and compromise, by apathy and courage, by sacrifice and selfishness."*³

- + Explain how the recurring theme and emphasis of Revelation is Jesus' desire to tell the churches, *"Don't give in and don't give up, I am with you."*

Pressure

- + Explain the staggering nature of The Early Church's impact and growth in the world despite the severe levels of pressure they had to endure. Highlight in particular the reign of Domitian as Roman Emperor and the fierce attacks he launched upon the Christians.
 - *"Domitian had demanded universal worship. Once a year, before his own sculpture, incense was thrown on an altar fire while his subjects exclaimed, 'Caesar is Lord.' To refuse this form of empire allegiance had consequences. But to counter this with the bold pronouncement 'Jesus is Lord' was a matter of life and death."* ⁴
- + Emphasise how The Early Church expected pressure though. Building on the words of Jesus, 'in this world you will have trouble,' (John 16:33) the first Christians developed a robust theology for suffering. Focus on three ways the apostles disciplined their churches in this theology:
 - An understanding of the 'now and not-yet' nature of the kingdom of God and how Jesus taught His followers to live in this tension, longing for His return but remembering we are not alone.
 - A realisation that the Holy Spirit specialises in helping us live in this tension. The deep longing for full redemption which our souls ache for is a sign of the inward work of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Spirit takes these inward groanings and offers them up to the Father. (Rom 8:26-27)
 - An awareness that even in the midst of such intense pressure God was working his divine purposes. (c/f James 1:2-4, Romans 8:28)

2 A Throne-ward Vision (Revelation 4-5)

- + Explain how John (in his vision of Jesus) was invited to come up higher through an open door. *"Come up here, and I will show you what must take place."* (Rev 4:1)
- + Read *The God Story*: p.201 (from 'John walked through the door. Let's enter in with him') to the end of p.203.
- + Emphasise how what John sees is the ultimate destination of *The God Story* plot. *"All of history has been on a throne-ward trajectory heading towards the feet of the humble resurrected King Jesus."*⁵

3 Patient Endurance

- + Emphasise how John's throne-ward vision of Jesus majestically ruling over the nations would have been an encouragement to the fledgling churches.
- + Emphasise how the essence of this encouragement throughout the Book of Revelation and the other Epistles was summed up in the phrase 'patient endurance' - referenced multiple times in the NT.

≡ Key quote

*"Patiently enduring the pressures surrounding them was the way the early Church made sense of the 'now and not-yet' reality of the kingdom of God. It was the way the first Jesus-followers kept the fire in their hearts burning despite the resistance they were experiencing. Counterintuitively it was the way, even through suffering, their joyful anticipation deepened."*⁶

» Application opportunity

Encourage listeners to take inspiration from the words of scripture and the witness of The Early Church in regards to patient endurance. Focus on how patience is a fruit of the Spirit, something God forms in us through suffering and hardship.(c/f Romans 5:3-5)

4 Running the race (Hebrews 11-12)

Explain how the writer of Hebrews also focuses on the theme of patient endurance reminding us that it was the standout characteristic of all the great characters of The God Story. i.e. Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab and Gideon

- + Read Heb 12:1-3: Emphasise the metaphor of running a race to describe the faithfulness of these saints.
 - Focus on **Jesus as the ultimate example of endurance**. Yet how it was the joy of having us as his own (*'for the joy set before him'*) which enabled him to endure such painstaking agony.
- + Emphasise Jesus' disciples followed his example, enduring great persecution and martyrdom for the sake of the gospel.
 - Take time to list what church tradition tells us about the lives and endurance of each of the disciples - (see The God Story p.207)
 - Explain that in John's revelation he could see those who had suffered martyrdom for the sake of the gospel standing in white robes crying out *'How long, Sovereign Lord . . . until you judge the inhabitants of the earth?'* (Rev 6:10)
- + Emphasise how these and many we know from 'the great cloud of witnesses' are cheering us on towards the return of Jesus and the consummation of His victory. This is the great 'C'mon!'

5 Jesus returns

Emphasise The Return of Jesus Christ was the great hope of The Early Church.

- + Jesus' return as the rightful Judge formed a core part of the gospel message
 - Jesus would vindicate his people, dealing with evil once and for all and establishing his eternal kingdom of righteousness and justice. There was also a sense of a challenge with this hope however. Explain how the apostles encouraged the believers to live in light of Jesus' return, to be ready!!
 - *"The letters to the early churches were therefore punctuated with encouragement to be ready; to live in light of Jesus' soon return; to shine like stars in a twisted and corrupted world; to be faithful in the tension of this in-between age."*⁷

- + Point out how Paul had taught the believers, the reward for their patient endurance would be a great resurrection of their bodies. (1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:53-55)
- *"In the end a divine upgrade of their bodies was coming. Because Jesus' victory had swallowed up death, mortality would be swapped for immortality! A resurrected body like Jesus' would be a reward for those who stayed faithful to the end."*⁸

6 Making all things new (Revelation 21:1-5)

Reemphasise John brought together many rich themes from The God Story narrative in the unique style of Revelation. In this way Revelation is the perfect conclusion of The God Story. Point out how in his final chapters he painted a wondrous vision of the future.

+ Read Rev 21:1-5

≡ Key quote

*"The old order is passing away. God is making EVERYTHING new. Bodies. Minds. Hearts. Relationships. Families. Cities. Creation. This exquisite picture of everlasting renewal draws together all the threads of The God Story in a perfect climax. The story which started in a garden would end in a beautiful city. We will reign and rule with God in the new heaven and new earth. God's dream for the borders of Eden to be extended throughout the world would come to pass. The glory of God would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. I am making all things new. There will be no more pain or suffering. Death will find its own grave. The pressure would end. Tears would be dried up. Sorrow would be no more. Sickness would be eliminated. Injustice would be ended. Satan would be completely vanquished. The seed of promised blessing for all nations given to Abraham will flower into full bloom. A bride of all ethnic peoples, joined in glorious worship, will be prepared for their Bridegroom King. The Father will delight over his family. Heaven will be married to earth. There will only be Shalom. I am making all things new. The Lamb at the centre of the throne will receive the reward of his suffering. Every knee will bow and every tongue will shout, Jesus is King, to the glory of God the Father. Face to face we will look into the eyes of Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our story. Now we know in part but then we will know as we are fully known. Love's greatest longing will be satisfied. The Eternal Family's dream will be realized. People from every tribe and tongue will join the dance. God will be with them. They will be with God. Home. Forever."*⁹

7 Come Lord Jesus come (Rev 22:12–21)

Focus on the final words of Revelation emphasising the unfailing love of God and Love's eternal longing. Emphasise how a Great Wedding is about to take place as the Bridegroom prepares to come back for his bride

- + **Key verse:** *The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' (Rev 22:17).* Explain how the Spirit joins with the people of God, to call for Jesus to come.
- + Focus on how the church has prayed these words ('*Maranatha*' in Aramaic) for almost 2000 years. "*The Spirit knits us together with the prayers of the saints across the ages as we wait; walking in faith, anchored in hope and overflowing in love.*"¹⁰
- + Encourage people to join in with the last words of the Bible as a prayer of overflowing love to Jesus:
 - "*He [Jesus] who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon,' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.*"
Rev 22:20-21

Questions for Reflection or Further Application

Are there any areas of your life where Jesus is encouraging you to 'come up higher' to receive fresh throne-ward vision? How does a vision of God's future kingdom inspire and empower you to live faithfully for Jesus in the present?

Three Sacred Themes

The closing page of each chapter in The God Story book includes a summary shaped around three sacred themes which we believe helps knit the overarching storyline together. Feel free to use this as an extra resource to The God Story Sermon Series if you feel this would be helpful to summarise each talk. You will find this for *The Revelation* on p.212

End of sermon

- 1 Alain Emerson and Adam Cox, The God Story; Encountering unfailing love in the unfolding narrative of scripture; (London, Form SPCK Group 2024), p.196
- 2 Ibid, p.197
- 3 Ibid, p.197
- 4 Ibid, p.198
- 5 Ibid, p.203
- 6 Ibid, p.204
- 7 Ibid, p.208
- 8 Ibid, p.208-209
- 9 Ibid, p.210-211
- 10 Ibid, p.211

***All Bible passages quoted are taken from NIV unless stated.**