

ONE STORY | ONE SAVIOR - UNIT 7 | LESSON 25a




Letters – The Promise Explained Through the KING’S Church

God is a PROMISE Completing God

JESUS as the 1) **PROMISED KING** has 2) **RESCUED** His people through His Perfect Law Keeping Life and Sacrificial, Substitutionary Death on the Cross, whereby 3) **DEFEATING** the enemy of sin and death, and is 4) **RESTORING** them to the PLACE OF REST where Heaven and Earth are rejoined and God reigns and abides 5) so that His people shall be with Him forever for their **JOY**.

“Surely I Am Coming Soon.” Revelation 22:20

Rev. 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

	<p>THE HEAD - To Know God is control right now and is reclaiming what is rightfully His. Q – How is God reclaiming what is rightfully His right now?</p>
	<p>THE HEART - To Choose to trust Jesus even when the “signs and wonders” are frightening. Q – What are some “signs and wonders” right now?</p>
	<p>THE HAND - To Pray we will trust Jesus even when we enter dark periods in our life. Q – What are some of the dark periods in your life and in the life of the world?</p>

EMPHASIS

1. The Book of Revelation is a **LETTER** written to the churches in Asia Minor during the 1st Century AD.
2. It is written to **ENCOURAGE** a **SUFFERING CHURCH**.
3. The **LETTER** reminds Christ’s Church that their story is part of His larger **Story**.
4. The whole of the biblical **Story expands on, explains, and explores** God’s pursuit of His people for their joy and His glory.
5. As we think of the Revelation, we need to put it inside this larger single **Story** that begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation.
6. Perhaps the following illustration will prove helpful.
 - a. Concentric circles are simple circles that all have the same center. They fit inside each other and are the same distance apart all the way around.
 - b. The idea of the Garden where God meets His people for their joy and His glory is the center of every circle.

The EMPHASIS of this lesson is . . .

1. God is right now reclaiming what is rightfully His as Creator and Redeemer through signs and wonders.
2. In the **REVELATION**, God comforts His people by reclaiming all things rightfully His (Rev. 2-19) as Creator (Rev. 4) and Redeemer (Rev. 5). As He pushes His agenda forward, He is reconstituting the Garden for the joy of His people (Rev. 21, 22).
3. Everything happening in our [God's] world is accomplishing His purpose.
4. This looks [and feels] like TRIBULATION.
5. Yet, God controls the TRIBULATION. [Chaps. 6-20].
6. God is throwing the squatters out and destroying the invasive species.

LITERARY CONTEXT

Many consider the Book of Revelation to be the last book of the NT Canon and the last book of Special Revelation. From Revelation there has not been any more canonical books or special revelation from God.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“[The book of Revelation] is not a kind of theological Rubik's Cube. It was not written as an intellectual puzzle for a group of people who enjoy solving mathematical problems. Not for a moment. Its first readers were in too much of a life-and-death situation to enjoy that kind of relaxation.”¹

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

There are five prominent notes shaping this climatic conclusion.

THEMES / NOTES – this section could probably be the content of the lesson. The following five points come out of the structure of the Book.

1. A primary note in Revelation is, “The Sovereignty of God.”

Biblical Evidence: “Almighty” [**pantokrator** – “the all-ruling”] Revelation 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6, 15; 21:22.

The idea of sovereignty is foreign to our thinking. We think of control and perhaps of power. However, seldom do we think in terms of absolute sovereignty or control. This text and the entire Letter of Revelation speaks of a sovereign who is the first and the last, the one who was, is, and will be. It is not simply speaking of one who knows or oversees, but intervenes and acts. This sovereign is fully engaged with events.

The idea of God's sovereignty is also placed in the context of Roman sovereignty. The question is, “Who

is in charge, who has the power, and to whom do you [the citizen] owe allegiance, who will you obey?" There is an intentional contrast between all earthly powers and authority and that of God's power and authority.

This is why the descriptions are so powerful and Revelation 5 speaks to the scroll as a title deed over all of God's creation. However, we will wait until chapter 5 to unpack that idea more thoroughly.

This talk of sovereignty is two-fold. First, this sovereignty speaks of control. Second, this sovereignty speaks of command. Not only does God have control of this world, but He commands loyalty from its subjects.

Three thoughts are notable. The logic is as follows.

- First, He creates all things
 - Second, He controls all He creates
 - Finally, He commands all He creates

Revelation and the Acts passage work well together. Peter and the apostles had been ordered to stop teaching in the name of Jesus, but they have refused (Acts 4:15-22; 5:26-42). When hauled before the high priest, they answer, "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29). Once again, the question is--who is God? Who is the God who is to be worshipped and obeyed? But--alas?--that returns us to the Doubting Thomas story, where Thomas calls Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" That exclamation raises, in turn, the question: **Who is the Lord of this world?** And that returns us to the Revelation text.²

2. **On equal footing is, "The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ."** We will note how His "blood" permeates the entire *Story*. Without the substitutionary and securing blood sacrifice of Jesus, nothing would have been gained and all would be lost.

Biblical Evidence: Revelation 5:6, 9, 12; 13:8.

3. **It would be thoughtless to exclude from these primary notes, "The Sealing of the Holy Spirit."** Two ideas become prominent. First, those who have ears let them hear what the SPIRIT says. Secondly, the people of God are "sealed" and thus secured to the end.

Biblical Evidence: Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 22:17.

4. The next two notes, **"The Assault of the Serpent and his seed"** and

Biblical Evidence: Revelation 12:9, 10, 14, 15; 20:2.

5. **"The Suffering of His People"** work together. The serpent's seed has always sought to destroy God's *Story* and the woman's offspring. The Letter of Revelation unveils for the Christian what the Christ life looks like on the horizontal as they pledge their love and loyalty to King Jesus.

Biblical Evidence: Revelation 1:9; 2:10; 6:9, 10; 12:17; 20:4.

STRUCTURE

This structure provides a lot of the historical background to the Book. I would probably go with the above five points.

I. QUESTION?

One of the BIG questions we ask is this:

- How does God get us from where we were (past), to where we are (present), to where we will be (future)?

II. ANSWER

- Revelation tells us how God accomplishes/completes His *Story* and what this means for us.
- The Letter describes where we currently are through **a series of repeating cycles** and how “life” is moving ever so close to its final correction by God.
- Each set or series is like an expanding and contracting accordion. The “sets” are **simultaneous and not sequential**.
- They all describe the same period, but from a different perspective.

Because of who JESUS is and what JESUS does, His people can persevere. Perseverance is the result of preservation. His People Persevere Because God Preserves.

III. CHAP DIVISION

<u>Prologue</u>	1:1-8 [The 1 st of Seven Beatitudes {1:3}]
1 st Cycle	The Seven Churches of Asia Minor 1:9-3:22
2 nd Cycle	The Book with Seven Seals 4:1-8:1
3 rd Cycle	Seven Angels with Seven Trumpets 8:2-11:19
4 th Cycle	Seven Signs / Seven Symbolic Histories 12:1-14:20
5 th Cycle	Seven Bowls of Wrath from the Temple 15:1-16:21
6 th Cycle	Seven Stages in the Fall of Babylon 17:1-19:8
7 th Cycle	Seven Sights 19:9-22:5
<u>Epilogue</u>	22:6-21 [The 7 th of Seven Beatitudes {22:14}]

In all of the “horrific” pictures seen in the Revelation of Jesus, God is reclaiming what is rightfully His as creator and redeemer. God is in control.

JESUS IN THE TEXT

Revelation assures us that God has, is, and will make good on His promises. Revelation 4 and 5 shows us what is and Revelation 21 and 22 shows us what will be. God’s vision of the earth being covered

with a knowledge of His glory as the waters cover the sea is coming to pass and will be fulfilled in Revelation 21 and 22.

Revelation unveils Jesus as the Seed Promise.

“We shall then see Jesus as the Seed of the Woman who crushed the Serpent’s head, as the Prophet of God whose word directs our lives, as the Great High Priest who intercedes for us, and as the King who subdues all our enemies and reigns over us forever. We will recognize him as the Son of Man seated beside the Ancient of Days, and as the Suffering Servant who is now exalted as the Lamb on the throne.”³

In Christ, as the world is reclaimed, the blessing of His presence shall be “showered” over all people for their joy and His glory.

APPLICATION

ONE MORE TIME, the **BIG** picture

1. The Letter encourages His church by contrasting what they see happening around them and what is actually taking place behind the scenes.
2. **GOD IS IN CONTROL** and He is fulfilling His purpose and design for all things.
3. It might not look like it while we live in a broken world, but everything God does moves His *Story* closer to its final expression.
4. This encouragement happens through a consistent and thorough picture of contrasts.
5. Right now, by means of tribulation, God is reclaiming what is rightfully His, and right now He is in control by guiding “what is” toward “what will be.”
6. Satan has been defeated at the Cross and is currently bound.
7. The Kingdom of God has come and Jesus is currently reigning.
8. It does not look like it, BUT this is what is really going on behind the scenes.
9. There is a fuller and final moment when He returns and His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6; Rev. 19-22).
10. But for now, we ought to see our circumstances as the outworking of His purpose and design in reclaiming what is rightfully His as Creator and Redeemer.
11. ALREADY / NOT YET
12. He is RIGHT NOW making and will SHORTLY . . . make all things NEW!

VISUALS | CRAFTS

1. A pawn shop where you “redeem” an item. Give the children a small candy bar and “fake” monopoly money. Take the candy from them. They now have to buy it back with the monopoly money.
2. A military advancement in reclaiming lost territory. Bring in plastic soldiers, set up to sides and talk about war. God is at war with the serpent’s seed.

3. Each **player** turns up a **card** at the same time and the **player** with the higher **card** takes both **cards** and puts them, face down, on the bottom of his stack. If the **cards** are the same rank, it is **War**. Each **player** turns up one **card** face down and one **card** face up. The **player** with the higher **cards** takes both piles (six **cards**). War – Card Game Rules | Bicycle Playing Cards Revelation shows us that God is at War with the Serpent’s seed (Gen. 3:15). He always has the highest card, but it sometimes looks like He is losing.

MEMORY VERSE

Rev. 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, **“Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

RESOURCES

ENDNOTES

¹ Alistair Begg & Sinclair Ferguson, Name above All Names, (Wheaton:Crossway, 2013), 163.

² https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=561

³ Alistair Begg & Sinclair Ferguson, Name above All Names, (Wheaton:Crossway, 2013), 181.