We've been looking at several major sections of Revelation just to illustrate how we read and interpret Revelation in light of the what kind of literature it is and in the light of the background that Revelation is addressing. I want to move on to look at the couple of other sections in the last segment of the class, and that is, I want to back up a couple of chapters and look at chapter 11.

Chapter 11 is a story of two witnesses and it's a story of how these two witnesses prophesy for a period of time. For some, time their witness appears to be successful but ultimately, the Dragon or beasts, the same beast that we read about in Revelation 12 and 13, emerges in chapter 11 from bottomless pit. Again, the bottomless pit is not a reference to some geographical location. It was symbolic of evil, the origin of demonic evil beings. So it's an appropriate place for the beast to come out of, which as we said, the beast probably represents the Roman Empire. If you are a first century Christian reading Revelation 12 and 13, and now chapter 11, and you read of this seven headed beast, you will probably would identify it as the Roman Empire. We saw that chapters 12 and 13 are meant to explain the true nature of the conflict with Rome, the beast represents Rome and the Roman Emperor, and those who promote the whole system of Rome and emperor worship. Chapter 12 and 13 explain then the true nature: “What lies behind that?” Now Chapter 11 the same beast emerges from the abyss. Again the beast probably represents Rome, and its attempt to oppress and suppress God's people and oppose his kingdom. Now the beast comes up and puts these two witnesses to death and later on after a period of time, these two witnesses are raised and vindicated, to show that their witness was in fact genuine and true.

Now again, the question is “What do we make of the story?” First of all, the background: there've been a number of suggestions as to who these two witnesses are. It's hard not to read about them and realize that both of them are modeled on Moses and
Elijah from the Old Testament. The plagues they call down, the fact that they can shut the skies up so it does not rain. Clearly, these two individuals recall those two Old Testament figures. Why two of them? Most likely because the fact that there are two witnesses recalls the Old Testament stipulation that for a testimony to stick in court it required two or three witnesses. So probably, that's why you have two witnesses in Revelation chapter 11, modeled on the Old Testament principle of two or three witnesses be needed for the validity of the testimony.

Now the question then is, who are these two individuals and what are they doing? Are these referring to two actual individuals or it this actually Moses and Elijah brought back to life? Is this sometime in the future near the end? Some have suggested identifying these as Paul or John or some other persons or Peter who preached in the first century. But once again, when we recognize that these individuals are important for their symbolic value, it is most likely these two individuals are not referring to two actual or literal individuals in the first century or in the future at all. Probably, these two individuals are symbolic of the entire church. So that once again, chapter 11 is primarily a story or an account of what the church is to be doing even in the midst of this conflict, and even the persecution that we read about in chapter 12 and 13. What is the church supposed to be doing? What is its primary role? Well, chapter 11 says its primary role is to witness even in the face of suffering. The church is to be a witness and the testimony for Jesus Christ, even though it means that, especially in the context of first century Rome, even though it means God's people in the church may suffer.

But chapter 11 also clearly reminds us, even in the midst of that, the church will not completely be exterminated. God will not allow his church to be dealt to death blow. It will not be completely wiped out. Although it may suffer persecution, God will still preserve it.

Notice at the beginning of chapter 11, John describes the church as a Temple that actually gets measured in the first couple of chapters, or first couple verses of chapter 11. I'm convinced that the Temple, is not referring to a literal Temple but symbolizes the
church as God's people, much like Paul used Temple imagery to describe the church, i.e., the people themselves. So John says “I was given a measuring rod like a staff and I was told, ‘Come and measure the Temple of God and the altar and those who worship there.’” That whole picture of the Temple and altar and the people that worship all symbolize God's people, the church. “But do not measure the outer court, the court outside the Temple. Leave that for it is given over to the nations.” Both of those, the fact that the Temple is measured, suggest security, that is, God will preserve his people in the midst of their witness, even though the church must suffer, and will even be persecuted. At the same time God will keep it and preserve it. So at the end these two witnesses symbolize the church which is raised to signify that they are vindicated. Ultimately, they are shown that their witness is valid and was true

So again what's chapter 11 doing? For Christians suffering at the hands of Rome or even wondering if they should compromise, for Christians in conflict of the Roman Empire, this reminds them that as God's people, they are to be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ even if it means they will suffer, but in the end they will be vindicated. Rome will not have the last word. The empires of this world will not have the final say – God will one day vindicate his people to show that the conflict and the suffering was worth it. In their suffering they were indeed right and true.

So again chapter 11 is to be understood symbolically. The two individuals symbolized refer not to individuals two specific persons, but symbolize the church itself. The entire chapter says something about the church's role as they try to live out their lives in the context of first century Rome. What is the church to be doing? Is it worth compromising of faith in Jesus Christ for allegiance to Rome or is it worth resisting? Chapter 11 answers those kinds of questions with this symbolic vision of two individuals who prophesy and witness, yet also suffer for what they do, but in the end are shown to be right.

Two more passages to look at. One of them is perhaps the passage that or Revelation gets identified with most of the time and that is Revelation 20 and the
reference to the millennium or the thousand year reign. Again, there are actually a number of different ways to understand the reference of the millennium in chapter 20. I want to basically look at those and then focus mainly on: what is the function of the section? Is John just interested in predicting a sequence of events in the future or is this is saying something else to readers attempting to live out their lives in the context of a hostile pagan environment? Historically, Revelation chapter 20 has been understood in three separate or different ways. Within these different ways there is a variety of approaches, much like when we look at the different ways of interpreting Revelation preterists, futurists and idealists. We said there are some variety within that. The same is true with these approaches to the millennium, the reference to the thousand years, the millennium in Revelation 20.

Before we talk about it, let me read the text. It's very short in chapter 19 Jesus Christ returns as a warrior on the horse where he judges all the earth, and then in chapter 20 we read this “Following those events then I saw an angel coming down from heaven holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit,” there's that bottomless pit or abyss, not a physical place or location but symbolic of evil and chaos and all the demonic that which is opposed to God. “The angel then seizes the Dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and he bound them for 1000 years [there is a reference of thousand years]. He threw it into the pit and locked and sealed it over him so he would deceive the nations no more until the thousand years were ended. After that he would be let out for little while. Then I saw thrones and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I saw also the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus Christ for the word of God. They did not worship the beast [from chapter 12 and 13 and chapter 11] or its image and had not received its mark in their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years had ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in this first resurrection over them the second death has no power. They will be priests of God and Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”
Now, notice the repetition of that temporal phrase “thousand years.” The debate is, when does this occur? When does this occur in relationship to the coming of Christ? Does this thousand years describe the coming of Christ being the ‘not yet’? Remember back in Thessalonians, we talked about the second coming of Christ when he will come to bring history to a climax to judge and to save. The question is when is this thousand year period to take place in relationship to the coming of Christ--the second coming? Does it take place before it, after it, sometime other than that? Where do locate it? That's where the different positions that we call, in your notes, pre-millennial post-millennial, and amillennial take place. I'm not really interested in going into a lot of detail on those positions but the let me just say something briefly about them just because throughout the history of the church, this has been of interest and an issue among certain persons. Then let me make a proposal about how I understand the section.

First of all, the pre-millennial position. Basically the pre-millennial position says, ‘Jesus Christ comes back,’ the second coming occurs, ‘before the millennium,’ hence pre-millennialism. That is, Jesus Christ returns before the millennium. He returns and he himself then inaugurates and sets up this millennium, this period of 1000 years. Now there's two different ways understand it. Some understand it rather literally and they see it as a rather specific literal period of 1000 exact years. During this time they often construct elaborate scenarios of when God will keep all his promises to Israel and restore them to the land, and this is where Jesus will descend to earth and, as the son of David, rule over Israel in creation and all the promises made to the nation of Israel will be fulfilled now. That's one possible view under pre-millennialism.

The other is not quite so elaborate. All they say is basically the thousand years is kind of a transition period between the time were evil dominates and the new heavens and new earth. The millennium is kind of an in between time, a time of transition between the present age and the age to come, where you have in chapter 21 and 22 the new heavens and new earth. But the point is, with both of those views, they're both labeled pre-millennial because the millennium does not occur until Christ returns. Christ
returns at the end of history and then he establishes his millennial kingdom on earth, 
where he rules over all the earth in fulfillment of the Old Testament. Some say that’s a 
literal thousand years, other say it's more symbolic. It still refers to a period of time but 
it's mainly symbolic.

A second view is known as post-millennialism, and as the prefix ‘post’ suggests 
the coming of Christ comes post or after the millennium. That is, the millennium is a 
period of time that will take place before Christ comes back at the end of history before 
his second coming. Basically according to post-millennialism, the millennium will be 
established as the result of the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit in 
which this Golden age where righteousness prevails and dominates. This Golden age will 
be inaugurated at the end of history. As a result of the preaching of the gospel and the 
work of the Holy Spirit, this Golden age called the “millennium” will be inaugurated. 
Once it's over then Jesus will return “post,” after this period, this millennium. Then he 
will set up his new heavens and new earth. That’s known as post-millennialism. So the 
millennium work occurs before Christ comes back. The church, through the preaching of 
the gospel and the working of the Spirit, is responsible for, in a sense, inaugurating this 
Golden age that will eventually come about. Then after that Christ will return, hence 
post-millennialism. That view is not as common as the first one, nor as common as the 
next one, the amillennial view.

The amillennial view suggests that, in a sense amillennial is a misnomer. The 
prefix ‘a’ means ‘no’, no millennium. But in a sense it’s a misnomer because those that 
hold an amillennial view do not think there's no millennium, they just interpret it very 
differently. They do say there is no physical earthly millennium that will transpire at 
some period of time on earth. But instead a millennialism says the thousand year period 
we read about in Revelation 20 is symbolic of the entire period of church history where 
Jesus Christ rules from heaven. According to Paul, remember we've seen verses in Paul 
that suggest we have been seated in the heavenlies with Christ. They would say, “This is 
just John's way of saying that.” He uses this thousand year period as a symbolic way of
describing the fact that Christ already rules from heaven and by virtue, being seated and raised with Christ as Paul said, we rule with him. So, the 1000 years does not refer, according to amillennialism, to a physical period on earth but symbolically it portrays the spiritual reign of Christ right now from heaven. Between his first coming and his second coming, that whole period is the millennium, because Christ is now ruling from heaven and we rule with him by virtue of belonging to Christ, as Paul said.

So those throughout church history have been the dominant views of the millennium that is, pre-millennialism, Christ returns and then sets up his millennial rule on earth, post-millennialism the church sets up the millennium or inaugurates the millennium through its preaching but also the work of the Spirit. This Golden age of the millennium takes place on earth. At the end of that time Christ comes back. Or amillennialism: is that the millennium does not refer to a specific time before or after the return of Christ. It refers to the entire age of the church from the first century to whenever Christ returns again, that entire period is the millennium, symbolically portrayed as the thousand years where Christ is already ruling from heaven and we reign with him by virtue belonging to Christ. So those are the three primary views.

I find it interesting that the millennium has gotten so much attention because again the verses I just read are the only place in the New Testament you find reference to the a thousand year period. That doesn't mean it's not important but it does mean that this is the only place you find a reference to a 1000 year period. But it's referred to rather cryptically. I mean, notice that there's nothing said about what happens during that thousand-year period. It doesn't even specifically say where it takes place. We kind of assume that it takes place on earth, but Revelation 20 doesn't say so. It just says, “They came to life and reigned with Christ a 1000 years,” it doesn't say where. So it could be from heaven, it could be heavenly reign, it could be in earthly reign, the text doesn't tell. So I'm really struck by the laconic nature of Revelation 20. That is, there's a lot of gaps, it is very brief. It doesn't tell us everything about the millennium. Again, it doesn't tell us where it takes place specifically: What happens? What goes on? Who’s there? Is there
going to be pre-procreation? etc. Is this a time for Israel's promises to be fulfilled? Revelation doesn't tell us any of that. The reference to the millennium is very very brief. In comparison, chapter 21 and 22 is very very detailed about what happens when Christ returns.

In my opinion, if I can make a proposal, in my opinion, the millennium, the reference of the thousand years, probably does not refer to a period of time at all. It's a symbolic way of describing what takes place at the second coming of Christ. It's simply a symbolic way of describing the complete vindication of the people of God and the word of God's people. It’s simply a way of showing the complete judgment and vindication of God. It is not meant to describe a specific period of time. To ask questions as is this on earth or heaven? or will there be people being born or be married? or is this where Israel gets all their promises fulfilled? All those questions we might want to ask, I think, are unnecessary because I don't think John is trying to describe a specific period of time that happened somewhere, but again it is just another way of describing what happens when Christ returns. He will reward and vindicate his people and he will judge the earth. This will be evident. Finally, God's people will be vindicated and God's justice and judgment will be shown to be true. That’s what the millennium is about. So I think some of the questions we ask about it probably go beyond the text. Again, read Revelation 20 and you’re struck by how little is said. You just have that short reference to the thousand years where evil is wiped out, evil is curved, and God's people are vindicated or rewarded and shown to be right as God's justice and judgment prevail. That's basically the meaning of the millennium.

Now as I said that the millennium is simply almost a brief stopping point, almost just a kind of breather to the grand finale in Revelation which occurs in Revelation chapter 21 and 22. In some respects, Revelation, to use the title of a Dickens novel, Revelation could be described as a Tale of Two Cities. Chapter 17 and 18 describe this again, in highly symbolic language. John describes a woman whom he depicts as a prostitute sitting upon a beast and this woman is able to seduce the world and is quite
attractive. But nonetheless rides a hideous beast, which we already have identified as
demonic in nature, satanically evil in nature. Again what John is describing, any first
century reader would've read that and identify this woman writing a beast is nothing less
than the Roman Empire. It’s described as sitting on seven hills. That was a common
depiction of the city of Rome, in the first century. So I can imagine any first century
reader reading Revelation 17, this woman riding on a beast, would think of the Roman
Empire and the Roman Emperor.

But in chapter 18 she gets destroyed - Rome gets destroyed. Because of her
arrogance or pretension, because of the fact that she set herself up over God because her
wealth has come at the expense of others and at the expense of the lives of Christians,
because of that, as God has judged wicked evil nations and empires in the past, so he will
once again judge Rome and indeed he did. Rome, was destroyed not long after the book
of Revelation was written. So it's prophecy, in that respect did come true. But Rome is
seen as being depicted as being destroyed and reduced to nothing. In the midst of that
section though, in chapter 18 verse four, John's readers, Christians are called to come out
of her so that they do not share her judgment, so that they may separate. Rome is going to
be destroyed. Don’t compromise with her. Don't give in to Roman rule and ideology.
Don't participate in Emperor worship but come out of her, separate from her. But if God’s
people are to come out of Rome and separate they must have somewhere to go, and the
answer to that is found in chapter 21 and 22. If they will separate from Roman rule and
not give in to it to this arrogant, pretentious, corrupt ideology and a demonic system, if
they will refuse and resist that, then John says, you do have a place to go and that is the
New Jerusalem in Revelation chapter 21 and 22.

Again there's three things I want to say about this the vision of the New Jerusalem.
First of all, the background of it virtually every verse of Revelation 21 and 22, at least for
the first five verses, are rooted in the Old Testament. In fact one commentary on the book
of Revelation said, “if you took away all the Old Testament references in Revelation 21
and 22 you'd have about two or three verses left.” That's not too far from the truth.
Revelation 21 and 22 is steeped with Old Testament language. Virtually everything goes back to the Old Testament. In the reference to new creation, the reference to New Jerusalem, the new covenant, the measuring of the city; John is drawing on all the great prophetic literature from Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah and other prophetic texts and some narrative texts too. It’s as if he gathers all the promises made to Israel into one grand finale, one grand vision to show this New Jerusalem, this vision, is the ultimate fulfillment of all the hopes and expectations of God’s people as articulated in the Old Testament prophets. Now he takes all the strands from all the prophetic texts and Old Testament text and weaves them together into one grand vision of this New Jerusalem that he presents as the alternative to Roman rule.

As far as the identification of the New Jerusalem, we need to read this symbolically. We need to realize John is probably not describing some literal, physical city even despite the measurements that he gives it. Instead, John is saying a city in his vision but what is important is what it symbolizes the symbolic value. In my opinion this city in Revelation 21 and 22 symbolizes, once again, the people of God. John has primarily seen the perfected people of God now dwelling on the new earth.

So again, some of us have perhaps seen modern-day depictions of what the new Jerusalem is going to look like. But again, while those are interesting and fascinating they're probably a little bit off the mark because John is not giving us an architectural blueprint of what the new Jerusalem is going to look at like. Instead, John is interested in describing the people themselves in the same way that Paul described the church as a Temple and as a building, for example, in Ephesians chapter 2. Now John describes the perfected church, the perfected people of God as a new Jerusalem, as a city. Again, even measurements, 144 cubits or of all the measurements of the new Jerusalem in chapter 21 are based on multiples of 12. We've already seen 12 is symbolic, it is the number that is symbolic of the people of God. So what John is describing is not some physical city. I doubt the city described could actually even house the entirety of God's people – past, present, and future. But instead, what John is describing is the perfected consummated
people of God in the new creation.

Notice that the New Jerusalem consists of 12 gates identified with the 12 tribes of Israel and it's built on 12 foundations which are identified with the 12 apostles. Even the building stones and the architectural features of the city symbolize the people of God of both Old Testament Israel and the church, now brought together into one perfected consummated people of God. So again, John draws on all this Old Testament imagery, bringing it together in this climactic vision where he primarily refers to the people themselves, not some physical city. Not there won’t be a city or physical cities it in the new creation, but that's not John's point here. He’s primarily describing people not a physical city. The city that he sees symbolizes the perfected consummated people of God made up of Old Testament Israel and the church built on the foundation of the apostles themselves. All of these texts draw on, or all of John's visions, draw on texts from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other prophetic literature. John is writing at the end of the prophetic tradition and he brings all the promises together to show how they are fulfilled in Christ and how they ultimately will reach their climax.

The other thing to say about the New Jerusalem vision concerns it's function. I want to say two things about this. We’ve already said that the New Jerusalem vision functions as the counterpart to the vision of Babylon, which again would have been identified with Rome. In fact, Rome is often called, in the first century at this time, Babylon. Remember our discussion of first Peter where he refers to Babylon which is kind of a codename for Rome. So now Rome is going to be destroyed in judgment because of their arrogance and wickedness, God’s people must have somewhere to go. John now provides them with an alternative. If they will leave Rome, obviously, you couldn’t go anywhere in the first century Roman Empire to escape the effects of Rome. But if they will refuse to associate with Rome, if they will maintain their faithful witness, Revelation chapter 11, if they will refuse to give in to and associate with the corrupt ideology and wealth of Rome, if they will refuse to participate in emperor worship and maintain sole, exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ, then they have somewhere to go, and
that is the city that far outstrips and far surpasses anything that Rome could've offered, and that is belonging to the consummated community of God's people in the new creation.

But there's something else about this text to highlight and that is, the ultimate destiny of God's people in Revelation is intriguingly not heaven but a new earth. Some of you heard me say before, I’m not going to heaven. But my ultimate destiny is a new earth, and that’s exactly where God's people end up in Revelation. The idea of somehow some ephemeral spiritual existence floating around the clouds is not a biblical vision. That sounds more like Gnosticism to me. Remember we discussed Gnosticism back at the beginning of the semester. The distinction between the physical and spiritual, the spiritual being the true reality. In Gnosticism, salvation was escaping from the earth, escaping from the physical prison of the earth and the body to a spiritual existence. But that’s not the biblical vision.

The biblical vision of our future destiny ends with us in the same place where we began, that is, on a new earth. Notice the parallels between Revelation 21 and 22 and Genesis 1 and 2. In the beginning God creates the heavens and the earth. Now John sees a new heavens and a new earth, and all the connections between Eden in Genesis 1-3 and the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22. So what's going on is, from the very first, God's intention for humanity is for God to dwell in their midst in the creation where he is their God and they will be his people. That now is fully realized in Revelation 21 and 22, where God now dwells with his perfected consummated people in a new creation.

So however much the first creation is different from the new creation, however much there is a discontinuity between the new creation of Revelation 21 and 22 and the first creation, there's still continuity. It's still a physical earth so the final destiny of God's people is not escape from the body to float around the clouds. I can't think of a more boring existence. But the ultimate destiny of God's people is a very physical one, albeit one stripped of all the effects of sin and death but a physical one, nevertheless. So that's where the book of Revelation ends. If God's people will forsake what Rome has to offer
or what the nations and empires of this world has to offer, they have a world, an alternative one that lies in store for them. So that's where the book of Revelation ends.

You'll notice in your notes there's a brief excursus on creation and new creation in the Bible. Like many of the themes that we have several excurses in our lectures and in the notes, and like many of the themes, this one also goes back to the Old Testament. We’ve already talked about the fact that the new creation has its background in the Old Testament. It goes all the way back to the creation, the first creation, and to the garden of Eden where humanity was placed in the garden as God's representatives to rule it. That the land was given to them as a gift. So God's people were created to enjoy God's presence on the earth, in an environment suitable for human existence but one where God can dwell with his people.

Now, obviously as the story line changes because of sin that is thwarted and humanity is expelled from the earth, but the theme of land or creation is continued with the promise of the land that is given to Abraham. Remember Genesis chapter 12, the covenant God made to Abraham, ‘I will make you a blessing, I will bless you, I'll make you a blessing to all the nations of the earth.’ But part of the blessing was, or part of the covenant was, God would bring him to a land that he would show him. In fact, the reason God gives him a land is not just because he needs a place to live because that's part of the fulfillment of Genesis 1 and 2, that God would give the land to the people. The land was a place of blessing. The land, the earth was a place that was intended to be a place where God would bless his people and dwell with them. So by giving the land to Abraham, by bringing Israel to the land that was the initial stages of the fulfillment of God's intention to dwell with his people in the land, in the Garden of Eden, which was disrupted and thwarted because of sin.

But Israel failed and disobeyed, Israel, much like Adam and Eve were expelled from the land. Israel didn't fare any better. They also sinned and were expelled from the land the place of blessing, the place where God dwelt his people. So you find in the prophets the expectation that one day, God would return Israel back to the land because
again that's promised Abraham, but it’s also part of his intention for humanity in Genesis 1 and 2, to give them the land, the place of blessing where God will dwell them. So we find when Israel is expelled from the land and taken into exile, remember your Old Testament history, the prophets then demonstrate an expectation that God will bring Israel back to the land.

But in some prophetic texts, the expectation seems to start to move a little bit beyond, just giving Israel back to the physical land of Palestine. In fact in Isaiah chapter 65, in one of these prophetic texts, in fact, a prophetic text that John himself alludes to, we begin to see the return of Israel to the land begins to get expanded and takes on more prophetic, of apocalyptic or even cosmic proportions. So here is what the prophet Isaiah says. Again, he's addressing a time when Israel returns to the land but he still expects the greater transformation to take place. This is God speaking through Isaiah, “For I, God, am about to create a new heavens and a new earth. The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating, for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy and its delight as its people is a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people.” Notice that Revelation 21 begins with the new heavens and new earth and the New Jerusalem. So what John is reporting, in Revelation 21, is depicting the fulfillment of what is anticipated in Isaiah chapter 65. So the prophets end with an anticipation that God still must restore his intention for humanity by giving them a land, the place of blessing, where God will live and dwell with his people.

In the New Testament, that promise of the new creation gets fulfilled in two stages and here, we’re back to the “already but not yet” again. The new creation, the promise of the land is already present. It gets inaugurated already in Christ. Interestingly in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul actually eludes to Isaiah 65, where it says, “if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold all things become new.” That language comes right out of Isaiah chapter 65.

So what’s going on in the New Testament is suggesting that God's intention for
humanity, to live in a new creation, a land of blessing where God will dwell him, is already fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. But of course there's a “not yet” dimension to it. So the “not yet” dimension occurs in Revelation 21 and 22 where John says, “and I saw a new heavens and a new earth with the new Jerusalem with God's people in its midst.” So Revelation then constitutes the goal of redemptive history. That is, from Genesis 1 into God's intention to create an environment of land as a gift to the people for them to live in, a place of blessing where God will dwell in their midst eventually gets fulfilled in John's vision of Revelation 21 and 22, where all of God's people now find themselves on the new earth with God dwelling in their midst in a covenant relationship with them.

So finally, what is the message of Revelation? Revelation, as we've already seen, is far more than a book about eschatology. When we think of eschatology we think of things pertaining to the end, the end of history, how God is going to bring history to its climax and fulfill his grand purposes and intention. But Revelation is far more than just about eschatology. We’ve seen Revelation is a book that unmasks the pretensions, the arrogance, the anti-godliness of the world system and institutions no matter where that is found. Revelation is a call for us to resist that. It's a call to live holy lives. It's a call to render exclusive obedience and worship to Jesus Christ no matter what the cost. Revelation unveils all the pretensions and the false claims of our society and any institution, person or empire that sets itself up over God, and it calls on us to resist that. It calls on us to maintain our prophetic witness in the face of that, no matter what it might cost us. Ultimately Revelation is a reminder that only Jesus Christ and God are worthy of our worship. No other human being, no other institution is worthy of our worship and allegiance, that's idolatry. Only Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship. So ends the book of Revelation and our journey through the New Testament…

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