

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 52
Revelation 19-22

*This week's reflections were written
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Monday

Revelation 19

Here, like chapter 5, we see a picture of heavenly worship – all creation delighting in who God is and what God does: In God's presence, evil fades.

While this is a chapter of judgment – evil being named and condemned – it contains key pictures of Jesus seen from the heavenly perspective: Jesus is: the lamb who is slain; the groom coming to the wedding feast. But, he is also the faithful and true judge: the living "word of God". The one who once and for all conquers the beast and all those who align themselves with evil.

It is helpful to remember a) the militant world in which this was written b) the attempt to describe heavenly things in earthly terms - this is spiritual conflict, not physical.

How do we compromise in our lifestyle and spiritual lives?

How do we become lost in wonder and praise like the saints?

Tuesday

Revelation 20

These visions try to describe in human words what is heavenly: from beasts to fiery lakes – each can predict the future or a present reality. And, because 1000 years pass, we're seeing a meta-story covered in few words. So, trying to pin down specific future predictions ("THIS DAY IN BIBLE PROPHECY") is tricky at best.

Chapters 12-20 frame the whole of the dragon's career - thrown to earth (12:9) thrown into the abyss, released for a time then finally destroyed. The timeline is confusing: for 1000 years, Satan is bound. When does the resurrection of the dead, judgment day and heaven breaking in fit?

For a good discussion of this see:
<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Rev/Millennium>

The Key here is that God is in control to bring us from the tree of life to the book of life: not when we'll be drawn to Christ, but if we are allowing heaven to break in. Heaven binds, controls and defeats evil: there is great hope.

Wednesday

Revelation 21

Fitting for a new year, John sees Christ, at the end of all, making everything new. From the garden to a gathering of peoples: a city of gardens. What we glimpse at Christmas now is fulfilled: God dwells amongst us (see Ezek 37:26-27; 1 Cor 6:19)

No more sea, a source of death with John, means no more death. Instead, Jesus promise to the woman at the well is fulfilled – the water of life satisfies our thirsts eternally.

In the new Jerusalem, the jewels represent all of creation pure and redeemed. And in this city, nothing impure can dwell.

We are Bethlehem, where Christ is born. And we, his bride, are the new Jerusalem, where Christ comes to dwell.

This passage again asks us to choose: do we trust and turn to God to satisfy our thirst? Or do we pursue other things? In the end, our choices have eternal consequence.

Thursday

Revelation 22

With the choice of life or death played out before us, we're called to come for healing, restoration and to satisfy our thirst. And we're called to keep coming until he comes.

The vision of the river of life is very similar to Ezekiel's (47) but it flows from the lamb and the tree of life is restored to its purpose: healing. No present or future harm will come to God's people. God literally becomes the source of all life and light.

Ironically, John immediately returns to worshipping an angel (the created instead of the creator) and is rebuked. Quickly, his eyes return to Jesus – a good lesson for us when we mess up.

As our year of reading finishes, how will we keep coming to the one who gives us life? Study groups? Reading plans? To the one who 'makes all things new' – is there something new we can do keep listening and coming to God?

“the grace of the Lord Jesus be with us, God's people.”

Rev 22:21

From the Editor:

Well, this is the end. For those of you who started with this with week #1, you've now read through the entire New Testament! Something to Celebrate!

Now might be a good time to reflect on this experience. How has God used it to teach you? To touch you? To change you? Do you feel like you know Jesus better? What is next for you?

Great thanks to the group of people who put these together each week. You are the ones that made this work.

And all praise and thanks to the Holy Spirit, who continues to use the ancient texts in very powerful ways, always to point us to Jesus.
Greg Smith-Young