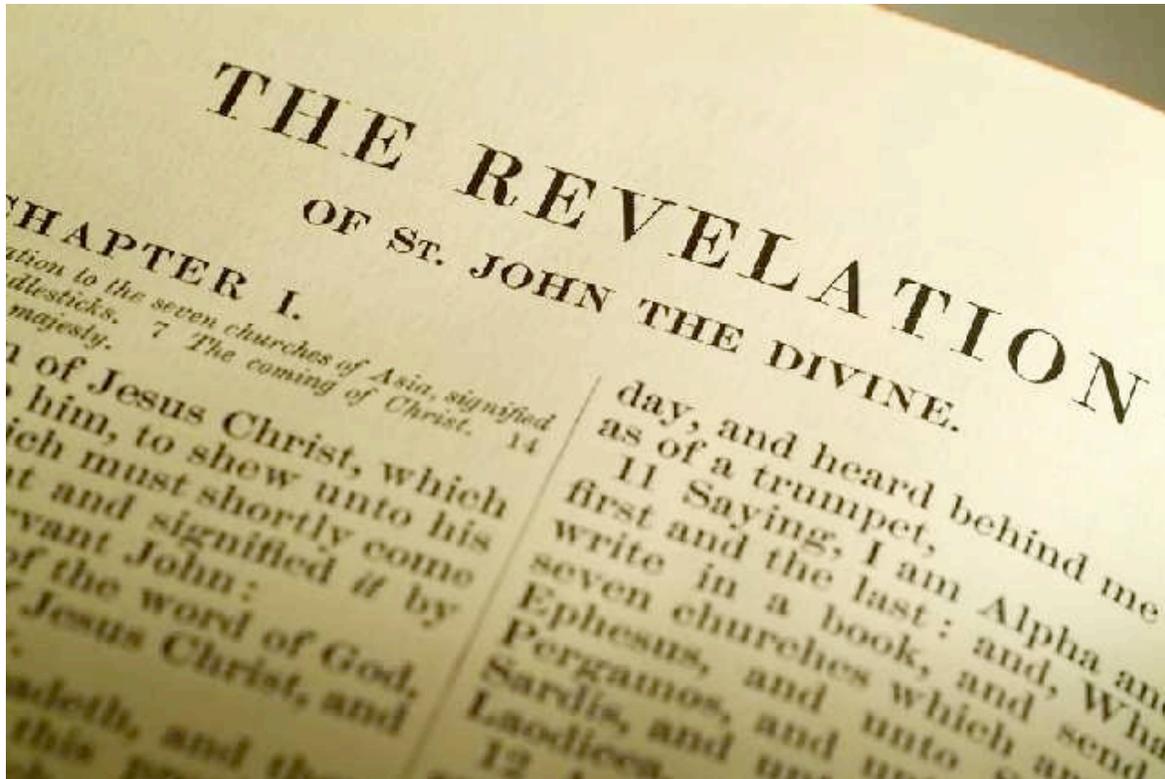


THEMES IN REVELATION: KINGDOM OF GOD



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T. M. MOORE

The Fellowship of Ailbe

*Themes in Revelation:
Kingdom of God*

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Themes in Revelation: Kingdom of God

The remainder of our study of the book of Revelation will be devoted to study three primary themes of the book as these appear in each of the seven facets of the book. These themes are outlined in Revelation 1:9: the Kingdom, tribulation, and patient endurance which are in Jesus.

We begin with a look at the teaching of Revelation on the Kingdom of God, because in a world of tribulation we need the Good News of the Kingdom to seek, cling to, and anticipate at all times. The Kingdom is the spiritual realm where Christ rules, and He is advancing it on earth as it is in heaven, in spite of the opposition of His foes.

Believers are called to live as citizens and ambassadors in the Kingdom of God. We must not allow the trials that beset us in this world to deprive us of our privileges or derail us from our mission in seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God as our highest priority in all things.

We are happy to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

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We hope you find this study of Revelation a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 King Forever

Week 11, Monday: The Lamb Who Rules

It remains for us to go back through all seven facets of Christ's engagement ring for His Church, the book of Revelation, in order to see how the primary themes of Revelation are developed throughout. John outlined those themes in Revelation 1.9: "the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Our lives as followers of Jesus Christ amount to nothing more or less than these, so it's important we have these fixed in our minds with respect to how they relate to one another, and how we may know hope and power to serve and enjoy the Lord.

We begin with the second of John's stated themes, the Kingdom of God, because this is the overarching and dominant theme of Revelation.

Read Revelation 1

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Revelation 1.4, 5: At the outset of his book, John declares the Kingship of Jesus, "the ruler over the kings of the earth." What does the King send to us by way of John's book (v. 4)? Why is it important that Christians at all times bear in mind the Kingship of Jesus?
2. Revelation 5.1-10: The Ruler over the kings of the earth is portrayed as a Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes. What do these represent? What does this image of a Lamb indicate concerning *how* Jesus came to be enthroned as King (Phil. 2.5-11)? Meditate on Genesis 49.8-11 and 2 Samuel 7.12-16, each of which is alluded to in verse 5. What seem to be the primary foci of these two passages concerning the "Lion" and "Root" Who is the Lamb/King? How does mentioning these two passages here affect the reader's confidence in the Lamb?
3. Revelation 7.9-17: According to verse 10, what is a principal outcome of the rule of the Lamb (cf. also v. 14)? How do the two images in verse 17 lead us to think about this salvation? To what Old Testament ideas do these passages refer, and how do they help us to think about the way Jesus rules His people? This verse also nods toward the eternal rule of King Jesus. How can you see that (cf. Rev. 21.4)?
4. Revelation 14.14-20: Two acts of reaping are described in these verses. What does each represent? Each suggests a present and future aspect. Explain.
5. Revelation 22.1-7: What is the defining characteristic of the rule of the Lamb (vv. 1, 2)? According to verses 3-5, what is the nature of our relationship to the Lamb/King? Is this a "then and there" aspect only, or does it also have "here and now" implications? Explain.

My Reflection

What does it mean for you to be a servant of the Lamb/King? How should this affect your daily life? Your attitude toward the future?

The Glory of God

The glory of the Lamb/King derives from the love He bears for His flock. Jesus laid down His life for His sheep. Now He shepherds them in their midst. How does He shepherd us, and to where?

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Glory to Glory

Summarize your vision of Jesus as King, as He is revealed in the book of Revelation. Is it important for you to keep this in mind? Why or why not? Share your vision of King Jesus with a Christian friend today.

Memorize

Our memory verses for this week are Revelation 15.3, 4. Write these verses on an index card, using your preferred translation of the Bible. Carry this with you throughout the week, and spend some time each day working to memorize this passage. How should these verses encourage you in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Closing Prayer

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.
Your throne *is* established from of old;
You *are* from everlasting.

Psalm 93.1, 2

2 The King and His Kings

Week 11, Tuesday: Reigning with the Lamb

The Kingdom which Christ has obtained with His blood is not limited to heaven in its power or reach. The rule of Christ is over the kings of the world and all creation. He has given His Kingdom to His saints, and calls us to rule with Him unto righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17-19).

Read Revelation 2 and 3

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Revelation 1.20, Daniel 7.13-27: How can you see in the passage from Daniel a kind of outline of the book of Revelation? Given what we see there, especially in verses 23-25, why is it important that Jesus should present Himself to John and his readers as He does in Revelation 1.20? How do we experience the implications of this vision?
2. Revelation 5.8-10; 20.6: Jesus has given His Kingdom to His followers and has made them kings and priests to “reign on earth.” You and I are called to “reign.” What are the implications of this calling for how you organize and prosecute your daily life?
3. Revelation 11.17: Jesus reigns by His “great power.” What is the “great power” of Jesus? Since we are called to “reign” with Jesus, should we expect to know this “great power” (cf. Eph. 3.20; Phil. 2.13)? How may we, as kings and priests, access this great power for our daily lives?
4. Revelation 12.10, 11; 2.26: What seems to be the primary focus for wielding the power of Jesus as His kings and priests? Under what circumstances do we need to be ready to wield this power?
5. Revelation 12.17; Revelation 6.1, 2: Can you see that the white horse represents the people of God, the Church? It is through the Church that Jesus wields His rule for righteousness, peace, and joy in the world (Rom. 14.17-19). Every day Jesus rides forth in His Church to advance His Kingdom on earth (cf. Ps. 45.3-5). Do you think many churches see themselves in this way? Why or why not?

My Reflection

In what ways can you regularly see the power of King Jesus at work in and through your life? Are there any places in your life where that power needs to be more present?

The Glory of God

Jesus is glorified on earth as He shines within and rides forth in His Church. What does it mean for a local church to glorify Jesus in its community?

Glory to Glory

Jesus came to earth to glorify God, and to create a people who would glorify Him and make known the knowledge of His glory as the waters cover the sea (Jn. 17.4; 1 Cor. 10.31; Hab. 2.14). What are the primary obstacles to this happening in your church?

Memorize

Let’s look more closely at our memory verse, Revelation 15.3, 4. Recite your memory verse aloud. What do these verses contribute to your understanding of the Gospel?

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Closing Prayer

You are fairer than the sons of men;

Grace is poured upon Your lips;

Therefore God has blessed You forever.

Gird Your sword upon *Your* thigh, O Mighty One,

With Your glory and Your majesty.

And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, *and* righteousness;

And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.

Your arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the King's enemies;

The peoples fall under You.

Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever;

A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.

Psalm 45.2-6

3 Kingdom Calling

Week 11, Wednesday: The Requirements of Our Citizenship

As those who possess the Kingdom of God we have a responsibility to practice our citizenship there, according to the requirements of the Lord and His Word. We can only fulfill our Kingdom calling as kings and priests by living according to the order and rule of the Kingdom. In this lesson we'll look more specifically at what it means to be called to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12).

Read Revelation 6

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Revelation 6.9: What does it mean to lay down your life for Jesus Christ? What are the primary obstacles to your consistently taking up your cross and following Jesus, dying to your old self and being clothed with the new self in Jesus (Eph. 4.17-24)?
2. Revelation 8.3-5: Prayer is obviously an important part of our participation in the Kingdom of God. How can you see that in this passage? Do our prayers participate in Jesus' rule over the kings of the earth and the whole cosmos? Explain.
3. Revelation 11.3-6: These two olive trees represent the whole Church – both Gentile and Jew. John says they are “witnesses.” What does a church look like which is bearing witness to Christ in its community? How does our being witnesses contribute to the progress of the Kingdom?
4. Revelation 14.1-5: What is involved in following the Lamb “wherever He goes” (cf. 1 Jn. 2.1-6)? How would you describe the role of the Law of God in your walk with and work for the Lord at this time?
5. Revelation 19.1-15: Who can look forward to rejoicing at the marriage supper of the Lamb/King? Why? Should we be preparing right now for what we see in verses 11-15? How?

My Reflection

What does it mean for you to be called to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12)? How should others expect to know that this is your overarching calling in life?

The Glory of God

Is God glorified in the witness of His Church? How? Is God glorified in the witness of your church?

Glory to Glory

Can you see any areas where you need to be more attentive to fulfilling your Kingdom calling in life? Where? What can you do to begin improving here?

Memorize

Recite your memory verse aloud: Revelation 15.3, 4. Share it with a Christian friend. Explain what you're coming to understand about how we must “fear” and “glorify” the Name of the Lord.

Closing Prayer

I will praise *You*, O LORD, with my whole heart;
I will tell of all Your marvelous works.

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I will be glad and rejoice in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.
When my enemies turn back,
They shall fall and perish at Your presence.
For You have maintained my right and my cause;
You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.
You have rebuked the nations,
You have destroyed the wicked;
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

Psalm 9.1-5

4 Kingdom and Church

Week 11, Thursday: The Church is the Sign and Outpost of the Kingdom

The Church is not the Kingdom of God; rather, it is a sign and outpost of the Kingdom, the primary “conduit” through which the rule of Christ makes progress on earth as it is in heaven. It’s no wonder, therefore, that Christ calls His Church to overcome every obstacle that keeps them from fulfilling their calling in the Kingdom and glory of God.

Read Revelation 11, 12

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Revelation 12.13-17: In this life the Church must primarily contend with spiritual forces of wickedness in high places. What are some ways churches should expect to experience this warfare? How should church members prepare to deal with it?
2. Revelation 14.6-11; 20.4: What does it mean to “worship the beast”? Why is it important that churches understand this? It seems pretty clear that believers, while *in* the world, must keep themselves unstained *by* the world. How does this relate to the local church being a Kingdom sign and outpost?
3. Revelation 19.1-8: The Church fulfills its calling by looking forward to, proclaiming, and preparing for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Explain.
4. Revelation 21.9-21: In Psalm 48.1-3 the people of God are described as the joy and beauty of the whole earth. Of what does this joy and beauty consist? Should John’s depiction of the beauty of the City to Come affect the way churches carry out their missions as signs and outposts of the Kingdom? In what ways?
5. Revelation 21.22-27: We suggested that this passage has both “then and there” and “here and now” implications. What does bringing “glory and honor” to the Lamb/King have to do with worship? What does it have to do with laying down our lives for the Lamb/King?

My Reflection

Summarize what it means for you to help your church become a sign and outpost of the Kingdom of God.

The Glory of God

What is it specifically about the worship conducted in your church that brings honor and glory to God? Is there anything in that worship that you would say *detracts* from the honor and glory of God?

Glory to Glory

Complete the following: “For me to live more consistently for the honor and glory of God...”

Memorize

Recite Revelation 15.3, 4. How do you understand the “great and marvelous works” of the Lord? Ask a Christian friend to help you think about this.

Closing Prayer

One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.

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I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
And on Your wondrous works.
Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts,
And I will declare Your greatness.
They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness,
And shall sing of Your righteousness.

Psalm 145.4-7

5 King and Judge

Week 11, Friday: With a Rod of Iron

The Lord Who is saving His redeemed ones and advancing His Kingdom on earth also rules the nations and the entire cosmos by His powerful Word (Heb. 1.3). He determines the nature and limits of the authority of kings and spirits, and deals with them in judgment even now, as a forewarning of greater judgment to come. God's Kingdom ambassadors must make His judgment known to the world.

Read Revelation 14

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Revelation 6.1-8: If the Church is represented by the white horse, what other human institutions are suggested by the other horses? What are the implications for those other institutions that only the Rider on the white horse goes out to conquer?
2. Revelation 8.7-13: Meditate on Hebrews 1.3. Why would He Who upholds the world want to see it come to what we see in Revelation 8.7-13? How does this square with His going forth "conquering and to conquer"?
3. Revelation 9.1-5: Jesus claims to have "bound" the devil (Matt. 12.22-29). How can you see in Revelation 9.1-5 that spiritual powers of wickedness are "on a leash" to the Lamb/King? How should this affect us as we seek to carry out our Kingdom-and-glory calling in the world?
4. Revelation 17.17: God is sovereign over the nations, even using them to bring judgment against one another at times. Is this right? Should we see, in all the wars and scheming of nations, the overarching hand of the Lamb/King? How does He use wicked earthly kings and kingdoms for His honor and glory?
5. Revelation 20.7-21.2: Meditate on Philippians 2.5-11. How can you see in Revelation 20.7-15 and 21.1, 2 all the powers of the Lamb/King coming into play? Do you see this power as available to you each day? How is God's power for judgment at work in the world today (Rom. 1.18-32)?

My Reflection

God is judging the world now, and He will judge it finally in a coming day. How should knowing this affect the way we take up our Kingdom-and-glory calling each day?

The Glory of God

How is it that the glory of God is not compromised by the way He rules wicked nations? Or the way He allows His creation to fall under the adverse effects of sin?

Glory to Glory

Do you feel uncomfortable talking about the judgment of God with others? Why or why not?

Memorize

Review Revelation 15.3, 4. How do God's acts of judgment demonstrate that He is "just and true"? Talk with a believing friend about this question.

Closing Prayer

Pray the prayer you wrote from your memory verse. Write it on a card and carry it with you to pray it over and over today. Let your prayer help you to keep the sovereignty of the Lamb/King in mind as you listen to

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the news of the day or consider any trials presently facing you.

6 All Things New

Week 11, Saturday: The End of Christ's Rule

Christ is making all things new. All things. Period.

Read Revelation 21

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Revelation 1: How many images and colors can you identify as describing the Lamb/King in this chapter? What do these suggest about His power or purpose? How should we expect to be affected in our walk with the Lord by what these images suggest?
2. Revelation 4, 5: Heaven is filled with the worship of God and the Lamb/King. Is it possible to “fill up” our lives with such worship? Suggest some ways your daily life might be more worshipful.
3. Revelation 21.9-21: Can you think of anything that might make your church more “beautiful” to the people in your community? Would you say that your church is working to bring the newness of the Kingdom to your community? Why or why not?
4. Revelation 22.1-5 (cf. Jn. 7.37-39): How would you explain the idea of the “river of life” to someone who was interested in becoming a Christian? What does this mean for here and now? For then and there? Do you think this image should have a more commanding role in your walk with and work for the Lord? Why or why not?
5. Revelation 22.1-5: Meditate on Psalm 1. How does the Law of God bring “life” to those who read and meditate in it? How do such people then become a source of “life” to the people around them? When the Lamb/King declares He is making all things new, what is the role of His Law in this?

My Reflection

Do the Law and Spirit of God have as large a place in your Christian life as they should? Explain.

The Glory of God

How do you experience the Lamb/King making all things new in your life? How does this relate to your calling to glorify God in every area of your life (1 Cor. 10.31)?

Glory to Glory

In each area of your Personal Mission Field, identify one thing new you would like to see King Jesus do in or through you.

Memorize

Recite Revelation 15.3, 4. Share this verse and what you've learned from it with a fellow believer today.

Closing Prayer

Using the things you would like to see new in your life as an outline, write a prayer, interfacing with Revelation 15.3 and 4, that you could use for the foreseeable future as you seek the Lord and His Kingdom in your everyday life.

7 Kingdom Now and to Come

Week 11, Sunday: Overcome until We Overcome

Kingdom life here and now involves going forth with our King each day, conquering and to conquer, overcoming everything that stands in the way of Kingdom progress and the glory of God.

We need to make sure we're ready each day for what this will require of us.

Read Revelation 22

Meditate on the following passages from Revelation

1. Revelation 6.1-3: Meditate on Ephesians 6.10-20. In which of these areas of spiritual weaponry do you need to see improvement?
2. Revelation 2, 3: According to Jesus, what especially do churches need to overcome if they are to realize their callings as Kingdom signs and outposts? And if they neglect or fail in this?
3. Revelation 12.17: Keep the commandments and proclaim the testimony – a witness of works and words. What is the “testimony of Jesus Christ” as you understand it? If someone were to ask why you are a Christian, what would you say?
4. Revelation 12.17: Our spoken testimony must be supported by a life of love for God and neighbor, defined in the first instance, by the holy and righteous and good Law of God (Rom. 7.12). Meditate on Psalm 1. What are some ways Christians might be able to encourage one another to greater consistency in meditating on and obeying the Law of God?
5. Revelation 21.1-8; Revelation 22.1-5: What will the Kingdom be like in its full and complete coming, in the new heavens and new earth? Should this vision guide us in seeking the Kingdom day by day? Explain.

My Reflection

How would you explain the Kingdom of God and its role in the life of faith to a new believer?

The Glory of God

The power that brings glory to God through the rule of the Lamb/King is a spiritual power. How should you expect that power to work in bringing glory to God in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Glory to Glory

How will you be able to tell, one year from now, that God's Kingdom and glory have made progress in you and through your life? How are you preparing for those outcomes even now?

Memorize

Review your memory verses on the Kingdom of God. Pray these verses several times during the day, focusing on a different word or phrase each time.

Closing Prayer

“Great and marvelous *are* Your works,
Lord God Almighty!

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Just and true *are* Your ways,
O King of the saints!
Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For *You* alone *are* holy.
For all nations shall come and worship before You,
For Your judgments have been manifested.”

Revelation 15.3, 4

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Week 11: Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What is the Kingdom of God? Jesus said we should seek the Kingdom as our first priority in all things (Matt. 6.33). How can believers help one another to do this more consistently?
2. What would you say are the keys to keeping focused on the Lamb/King and His Kingdom during the normal course of your daily life? What's the alternative to focusing on this?
3. The Kingdom of God is words and works, witness and walk, testimony and obedience. The book of Revelation suggests that everything in our lives ought to fall into these categories. What are the implications of this for the "secular" parts of our lives – for our lives out in the world among unbelievers?
4. What are the most important lessons for you about the Kingdom of God in the book of Revelation?
5. How are you beginning to implement those lessons in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.