The World is Not The Way It’s Supposed to Be

Introduction to Revelation

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| **Central Idea** | God is building His Kingdom |

If you’ve been keeping up with recent world events, then you may find yourself concerned about the rampant violence reported this summer in several different nations. You may be worried about economic instability in Europe. You may be worried about the state of our economy and the future of our nation. You may be uneasy about your personal situation—your family’s finances, your husband’s employment, your children’s college fund. There are distressing events happening in our world today.

And it’s not a matter merely of unforeseen consequences; it’s not merely a matter of random, accidental events—no. The root cause of the chaos in our world is sin. The root cause of the world-wide instability is evil. And we wonder—why does God allow these terrible events to occur? If God is sovereign, then why is there evil on the earth? If God created man in His image, then why do men do such evil things? If God loves righteousness, then why don’t we see more of it in the world He created?

**The world is not the way it’s supposed to be.**

A quick read through the front page of the daily newspaper is enough to convince us of this fact. In every major city there are murders, tragic accidents, domestic violence, and vandalism. Just in the past six months, we’ve seen civil war in Libya, bloody revolution in Egypt and Tunisia, civil disorder in Yemen and Syria, and even violent protests in England. And we remember the horror of the genocide that took place in Rwanda, and famine in the Sudan. **Our world is not the way it’s supposed to be.**

We’ve never known anything better than the sad situation we see today. Death is a part of our lives. Evil is a part of our lives. Sin corrupts even our *own* deeds; sin corrupts even our *own* motives. We’ve adapted to this world. We’ve become accustomed to the reality of sin. Sometimes we can forget that this is not what God intended. **Our world is not the way it was originally intended to be.** We are not the people that God intended us to be.

But the Bible teaches that *this* is not the end of the story. There’s a new world coming. **Our world is not the way it’s supposed to be**, but there’s a new world coming, and the book of Revelation is going to teach us about the certainty of that glorious day. The book of Revelation teaches us about the events that will occur at the end of this age—the events surrounding the return of Jesus—the events surrounding the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to understand the revelation we’ve been given about future events, we need to understand what God has been doing in our world from the dawn of history until this day. We need to get a feel for the flow of Biblical history. So before we look at the book of Revelation, we need to look first at the beginning of the Bible in order to understand why the world is as it is today. Before we begin to study the book of Revelation, we need to have a clear picture of what God has revealed in the Bible about His plan and His purposes.

Let’s begin at the beginning.

In the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, we learn that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The first man, Adam, was created sinless, with no inherent inclination to sin, and in that state of sinless perfection, man enjoyed fellowship with God, living under God’s authority. God’s original design was that man would be immortal—man would enjoy eternal fellowship with God. There was to be no death in man’s future. God placed the first man in a beautiful environment for man—the Garden of Eden, and God gave the man responsibility to care for the Garden.

God gave man responsibility and God also gave one restriction. Man’s only was not permitted to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But you all know the story. Adam listened to the voice of the Tempter, and Adam chose to disobey God. Man’s original disobedience is called *the fall of man*. Adam ate of the forbidden tree, and the consequences of that disobedience were catastrophic.

As a result of Adam’s sin, death entered the world. Now man’s destiny is deterioration, decay, and physical death. We all will die, unless the Lord returns in our lifetime.

As a result of Adam’s sin, mankind was changed spiritually, and now sin is an inherent part of our nature. We are said to be *depraved* creatures; we have been *defiled* by depravity. Sin permeates our souls, and our innermost being is now contaminated. We have been infected with sin and selfishness.

As a result of Adam’s sin, man’s relationship with God was broken, and we no longer have the fellowship with God we were designed to enjoy. We no longer live in obedience to God. We seek to live by our own rules, according to our own conclusions about what is right and what is wrong. We have rejected the kingship of God in our lives.

As a result of Adam’s sin, even our harmony with nature was damaged, and we now live in an environment that is harsh and difficult to control.

But from the beginning, God had a plan to reverse the effects of the fall. God has a plan to re-create our world and to re-create mankind. God has a plan to establish a new world, a new kingdom—a kingdom that is called The Kingdom of God. And this is the central theme of the Bible—**God is building His Kingdom**.

God is shaping the course of history to bring about His glorious conclusion—the fullness of God’s future Kingdom. In God’s future Kingdom, the effects of the fall will be reversed. In God’s future Kingdom, sin, death, and corruption will not exist. **This world is not the way it’s supposed to be**, but God is in the process of fixing all that, and **God is building His kingdom**.

Let’s follow that concept through the pages of Scripture. You may follow along with me in your Bibles if you like, or just listen—whatever you prefer.

Right after the fall of man, in Genesis chapter 3, we find the first reference to God’s plan to reverse the fall. In Genesis 3:15, God confronted the Tempter. God spoke to the Evil One, and God said to Satan, *"…I will put enmity between you and the woman. And between your seed and hers. He will crush your head, but you will bruise his heel."*

**This is what God is doing**: He is going to send some future offspring of the woman, and that future offspring the woman—the Seed—is going to come as an antagonist to Satan. That Man—that seed of the woman—will crush the head of Satan. The promised seed of the woman will be victorious over Satan. God is going to send a man into the world who will defeat Satan and undo the work of the Evil One.

More information about **what God is doing** is found in Genesis 12. In Genesis 12:1-3, God appeared to one man, Abraham, and God said to Abraham: *"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing… And one day, all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you, Abraham."*

God made a covenant with Abraham—a binding promise—and God promised to give Abraham and his descendants land (a place to live), a seed (meaning offspring), and blessing. God promised that Abraham would not only receive blessing, but that, more importantly, Abraham would *be* a blessing, and that through Abraham’s offspring—through Abraham’s Seed—*all* peoples on earth would be blessed. God determined that one day, through Abraham’s line, there would come a Seed, a particular Seed—one Descendant—who will bring blessing to all the peoples on the earth.

God tells us a little more in Genesis 49. Here, Abraham's grandson, Jacob gives a prophecy about his son Judah. Jacob prophecies this, in Genesis 49:10: *"The scepter will not depart from Judah; nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until He comes to whom it belongs, and to Him shall be the obedience of all the nations."*

This is the first indication we find that this promised Seed of the woman—this Seed of Abraham, is going to be a king. He's going to be a king, and He’s going to be from the line of Judah. And one day the obedience of *all* the nations will be His.

It’s here, in Genesis 49, that we first realize that God is talking about a kingdom. One day there will be a kingdom of God that will encompass *all* nations—a kingdom of God that will rule over *all* the earth. The King over that kingdom will be from the line of Judah, a descendant of Abraham. He will be the promised Seed of the woman from Genesis chapter 3, and it is He who will undo the work of the Evil One, and He will bring blessing to *all* the peoples on earth. **God is building His Kingdom**.

Moving ahead in the Bible, in 1 Chronicles 17:11, God said to King David of Israel, *"When your days are over, David, and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for Me, and I will establish His kingdom forever."* The promised future King, who will reign over the kingdom of God is going to be a descendant of David. We also learn that His kingdom is eternal. This King will reign forever. **God is building His eternal Kingdom.**

And then, in the very next verse in 1 Chronicles, God says something very startling. In 1 Chron. 17:13 God says, *"I am going to be His Father, and He will be My Son."* This promised King is going to be called the Son of God.

There’s more. The prophet Isaiah revealed the nature of the promised King. Over 700 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah wrote this, in Isaiah 9:6, *"For to us (to the nation of Israel) a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders."* We’re speaking of a child who is born to be king. But listen to the next part: *"and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,..."*  stop right there. We’re talking about a baby boy who will be born one day—a human child, but the prophet reveals that this son, born to be King, will be called *Mighty God*!

The prophet continues: He's going to be called *"...Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. And of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom, establishing it and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.”*

**God is building His kingdom**. The promised King will reign in perfect justice and righteousness and peace, and He will reign forever. The Kingdom of God will flourish forever.

Back in the first century, the Jews lived under the authority of the Roman Empire, but they looked forward to a day when God would establish the kingdom He had promised. One day the promised King would arrive on the scene and that coming King would set up the kingdom of God. One day the people of God would be free from oppression, and they would enjoy the righteous reign of God’s chosen King.

In the gospel of Luke we can read of God’s provision of this promised King. Turn with me to Luke chapter 1, verse 26. "*In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be,"* Mary asked the angel, *"since I am a virgin?"* The angel answered, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."*

Look at the prophecies that were fulfilled in this announcement:

* Seed of the woman (virgin) Genesis 3:15
* Descendant of David 1 Chron. 17:11-12
* Son of the Most High 1 Chron. 17:14; Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2
* King on the throne of David 1 Chron. 17:11-12; Isaiah 9:6
* An eternal kingdom 1 Chron. 17:11

All of these prophecies are fulfilled in the announcement the angel made to Mary. Jesus is the King that God had promised. Jesus was appointed to establish the Kingdom of God. And so, the Son of God came, just as was promised, to the nation of Israel.

Back in the first century, before Jesus began His earthly ministry, the prophet John the Baptist appeared as the King’s forerunner, announcing that the Kingdom of heaven was near. The message that John the Baptist proclaimed was, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It’s near; it’s here! The King is on the scene!”*

The very first message that Jesus preached, even before He called His disciples, was the message of the kingdom. In Matthew 4:17. Jesus preached to the nation, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”* **God is building His Kingdom**, and the promised future King had come.

But although the promised King had come—back in the first century—the fullness of the Kingdom of God was not to be established in that day. Aspects of the Kingdom were already there, but the fullness of the Kingdom was not yet.

The promised King had come, but you all know what happened. The nation of Israel rejected Jesus. The Jews rejected their promised King. They unjustly accused Him of a capital crime and handed Him over to be crucified.

Now we know from the teaching of Scripture that all of this was according to the plan of God. It was man’s free and sinful choice to crucify the Savior, but it was God’s plan to use that sinful act to bring about salvation for the world. It was the evil in men’s hearts that nailed Jesus to the cross, but it was God’s love and mercy that used Christ’s death to pay the penalty for your sins and mine. It was man’s injustice that condemned our Lord, but it was God’s justice that was satisfied by Christ’s death on our behalf.

Jesus came to the Jews as their promised King. In His first coming, Jesus demonstrated the certainty and the reality of the Kingdom promises. The Jews rejected their king, and Jesus was put to death on the cross. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches that Christ died for an essential purpose. Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins. Christ died that we might live with Him forever. **God is still building His Kingdom**.

When we place our faith in Jesus as the Savior who died to pay the penalty for sins, we become citizens in the Kingdom of God. We are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of God’s beloved Son. **God is building His Kingdom**.

The crucifixion—the death of Christ—is not the end of the story. God raised Jesus from the dead, and Jesus has ascended to the right hand of God, where He reigns *today*. Jesus reigns from heaven over all creation, and we who acknowledge Christ’s authority in our lives—we are citizens of the Kingdom of God. We understand that Jesus is now and forever our King. **God is building His Kingdom**.

Jesus reigns from heaven today, but the Bible speaks of a future day when Jesus will return a second time in glory to establish the full consummation of the Kingdom of God. In His first coming Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God, but the full realization of the Kingdom promises awaits His second coming. And we as God’s people look forward to Christ’s return to establish that final kingdom of God on a new, re-created earth.

This future return of Christ is the reality that the book of Revelation describes for us. In our study of the book of Revelation, we will see the events that will surround the return of Jesus as risen Savior and eternal King. In the book of Revelation we will see the assurance God gives that the Kingdom of God in its fullness will indeed come one day. **God is building His Kingdom**.

**The world is not the way it’s supposed to be**, but there’s a new world coming. **God is building His Kingdom**.

Let’s close in prayer.