

Week of January 20-26

THE END?

Scripture Reading: Read Revelation Chapter 22

260 chapters and 27 books later, we have reached the end of our New Testament Challenge. Finished. Fini. Finito. Ferdig. Acabado. The End! Satan has been vanquished. The beast and the false prophet too. Evil has been judged. Righteousness reigns. The curse is removed. The tree of life from the Garden of Eden has been restored. The river of the water of life, clear as crystal, flows regularly and fully from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The church is victorious in the presence of God, serving and worshipping him, face to face. All of this made possible by Christ's first and second comings. The first – a Savior led to the slaughter for the sins of humanity. The second – a King triumphant, overpowering all his foes. A Lamb and a Lion! Both necessary. One to disarm the principalities and powers and kick them out of heaven. The second to remove them from the earth and send them to the lake of fire for eternity. One to pay the price for our sin and to break its power. The second to remove sin's very presence. Christ's first coming initiates the beginning of the end of this evil age while his second coming initiates the consummation of all things and begins the transition into eternity. Evil gone. Blessings galore. No wonder Revelation finishes with the cry of John, "Come, Lord Jesus." Revelation yearns for the end.

Yet, in coming to the end of Revelation, we haven't really reached the end. Not if we're believers. Eternity with Christ is not the end but the beginning of a whole new adventure which our minds cannot begin to grasp. We who are limited to time and space cannot even begin to imagine what eternity will be like. In part, it's because we think in linear fashion: past, present and future. God, however, is not limited like we are. He sees the end from the beginning and in eternity we'll be operating in his time. Not so much time without end as a timelessness in the presence of God. We taste those moments occasionally in worship in these jars of clay on earth when we are so caught up in his presence that time seems to stand still, only to find out we have been hours in his holy presence. There, with redeemed bodies, we'll be in his presence forever! It's way past us but we know it will be good to be sure.

It's not the end in another way either. Just because we have read through the New Testament doesn't mean we no longer need to read it again. Scripture is like a gold mine with new nuggets of truth to mine and old truths that go deeper as we grow up in Christ. Because God is eternal and his Word is God-breathed, there is always more that we can learn and apply. Plus, there is that other testament, the Old Testament, that beckons us as well. The Testament that lays the foundation upon which the New is built. The one that lays out the hope that finds its fulfillment in the New. Both inspired. Both worthy of study. The end? Nah, not a chance!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: What did God teach you through this New Testament Challenge? How have you changed? Pray for God to show you the next step to take.

Take-a-way: *We never really reach the end in Christ, just the beginning of new possibilities and adventures.*