

Encouragement as We Wait for Christ's Return

DARRELL DELANEY

When we go out to dinner as a family, I have to resist the temptation to eat dessert first. I know that I should eat the dinner first, and then leave room for the dessert, but I envision how much I will enjoy the dessert that I want. One thing I learned was to keep my fork when the server comes to clear the dishes away. I keep my fork because I know sweet dessert is on the way. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we will look at the end of the book of Revelation and how sweet it is to worship a loving God forever. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in the conclusion of this book, and our six-part series on the book of Revelation; and we have covered a lot of ground—it has been a lot. I know that we haven't been able to talk about every single thing that has happened in the book, which we have encouraged people to read the book in its entirety to get the context, but we have seen John talk about how Jesus is the Messiah and he is the one to be worshipped, even in the good times and the bad times.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; we looked quite a bit at the opening chapters of Revelation through particularly Revelation 7; and then we jumped around a little bit in the whole big middle part of the book, where God's history-long battle with Babylon and with evil takes place; and then in the previous episode...number 5...we were in Revelation 21, where we saw the great vision of the dwelling of God coming down to dwell with us here, and we will be referring to that in this episode, but we want to devote this episode to the final chapter of this book, and the final chapter of the entire Bible, which is Revelation 22.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, after all the holy war and all of that stuff, this is to me...21 and 22 of Revelation...kind of like an epilogue. This is the aftermath; this is what happens after all that drama, all the sin and death are dealt with; after Satan has been judged, we are the saints that get to enjoy and see the victory and actually experience it in the presence of God, in what he intended in the beginning of all things. So now, we pick up here...and actually, there are some similarities with other parts of the Bible, and hopefully we can pick that up when we talk about it after.

So, it picks up here at 22. It says:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ²down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the Tree of Life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁴They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. ⁶The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true... and the things that must soon

take place.”⁷“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.”

So, we want to be reminded, Darrell, that all of this is taking place now in Chapter 22; and what we saw in Chapter 21, and what we talked about in episode 5, is that indeed the dwelling of God comes down. We often think that when history is done, we are going to go *up* to heaven...*up* into some spiritual realm, which is totally different than anything we have ever experienced. No, no, the Bible says. God comes down to this earth. It is a new earth. So, this creation gets redeemed. So, everything we just read here is taking place on this earth; and Darrell, there are some real parallels here to the very first part of the Bible, and maybe a certain garden.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is true, Scott. In the book of Genesis, we hear of the Garden of Eden, we hear of the river, we hear of the Tree of Life; and in Revelation, we see right here the river, the Tree of Life. They are right there. This is the world now that has been redeemed; that has no curse; that has no groaning. Like in Romans 8 it talks about how creation groans. That curse has been lifted; and now, we see the fullness of the beauty of what God was getting at and what he was trying to do the first place before the fall.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And indeed, it is a garden like Eden; it is a garden city...and actually, a lot of my friends from Canada say: Yes; think Vancouver. Well, Vancouver is very beautiful. I'm sure this is even nicer. But it is...it is a garden city, and it is bringing...as you just said, Darrell, it is bringing the Bible around full circle: a renewal of the place where God had fellowship...before sin came, God had fellowship in the garden with Adam and Eve; and as we have said in the previous episode, too, one of the things that was true of the Garden of Eden is that it was basically the first temple, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

What is a temple? Well, a temple is where God and people meet and live together; and now the whole creation is becoming that garden, and the whole creation is becoming that temple; and God will...another echo back to Genesis even before the Garden of Eden was created...what is the first thing God creates? Light.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Not the sun; not a star; just light; and now, the very last chapter of the Bible says: We won't need a sun; we won't need stars. God will give them light. It is just going to be light. So, this chapter really clamps together Genesis and Revelation in a very beautiful and striking way.

DARRELL DELANEY

And they live in that light that you just mentioned, and that light is the very presence of God; and that, for John, I am assuming is a real comfort right now, because it is like a person who has been convicted of a crime and they get parole and they get pardoned, and they get released from prison. Just that fresh air outside of prison, and that first breath you get when there is no more...that the sentence has been paid...you are already out; and I think that when John actually goes to die, he will be set free from this. All of the things that have happened to him on this world that were against him because he served Christ, he is getting a foretaste now, while he is on the island, of what the good place is going to be that he is looking forward to.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And he goes on in this 22nd chapter: ⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. ⁹But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!” ¹⁰Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. ¹¹Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.”

So, here we get an urgency here that this isn’t just to be sealed up and, you know, squirreled away somewhere for future reference way, way, way down the road. These are words of life right now, the angel says, so don’t seal them up; send them out; let people know that this is our hope.

DARRELL DELANEY

This is our hope, and also the fact that God is paying attention to everyone’s needs. He knows the ones who are being righteous...doing righteous things; he knows the ones who are wicked and doing wicked things; and he, at his divine moment in time, will judge holy and righteous. We as believers, like Psalm 37 says: We don’t need to fret because of evildoers because that day is coming where they will be addressed, and God will set the record straight because he is the judge who has even scales. He doesn’t do favoritism; he doesn’t do, oh, you can bribe me; he doesn’t do any of that; and we can be vindicated when that time comes; we don’t need to seek it ourselves.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; for so much of history, the so-called problem of evil, or the whole book of Job, you know: Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do bad things happen at all? Is God asleep at the wheel? You know, they even had this heresy from way early Church days of Deism...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Which tried to explain that, well, the reason this world is sometimes rotten is God is not paying attention. He is far removed; he kind of wound up the universe like an alarm clock and it has just been ticking down on its own. God has nothing to do with it. Uh, uh, John says; it may look like God is not in charge; it may look like Babylon is winning; but this whole book has been to say: No; it has been losing all along; and God is not off duty; he is not asleep at the wheel; he is not far removed. He is right here, so be encouraged; and, there is more encouragement to come in this 22nd chapter, and we will look at that in a minute. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and we are digging into Revelation Chapter 22, where we have just seen, Darrell, that John has been mightily encouraged; and believers everywhere can also be strengthened by the words that have been revealed to John. The angel says: Don’t seal up these words. This isn’t for a deep, deep future; it is for right now. Because what do people need most in this world? Hope.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think that is the word that I would use to summarize this section of scripture. It is designed to give them hope. The fact that God has always been in control, like you said before. He is not some Deist that is not paying attention. I always pray in my prayers that you are in complete control of every situation; not in

heaven twiddling your thumbs and wondering what is happening next, but you know exactly what you are doing, and you have a date on the calendar for every moment. So, God has a date on the calendar for when Satan will be addressed, when sin will be judged, and when the righteous will be redeemed; and that hope is something that John is holding onto right now. It is a hope we can hold onto right now.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, there is a part of mythology...Greek mythology...Pandora's box, and so forth, where when somebody opens this box, all kinds of stuff escapes and falls down to the earth; and one of the last things that escapes from the box and comes down to earth is hope; and it is almost as though, in that myth, that hope is a bad thing. Like, oh, boy; now people have hope, which is going to make them miserable, right? I mean, boy, you know, it is a *hopeless* world. So, if you have hope, you are just going to be miserable. That is almost like a curse. The Bible is very clear: No; hope is a strength. Hope is a gift of God. Hope keeps us alive. Hope keeps us moving. Hope keeps us believing; because we believe that the words of this book are true; and we believe this is true, too, Darrell. Revelation 22 at verse 12:

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. ¹⁴Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."

DARRELL DELANEY

So, Jesus is serious about his promise of returning soon, and he wants John to write it down so that it can be written before it actually happens...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And sometimes when Jesus gave prophecies to the believers and the disciples in his time, he said: I am telling you this now so that when it happens, you will know that it was me. So, he is having John write this down that he is coming; and the scripture also says in Matthew 24:42: No one knows the day or the hour when the Son of God will come. He could come today, because all the things are ready for him to come. We need to be found faithful. We need to be found continuing to trust him, even in hard times.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we note, too...I mean, a couple of things here: One is: I am coming soon. Well, it's been a couple thousand years since John was on Patmos, so God has his own timetable. Soon for God isn't soon for you and me, but we believe the promise is true; and we also want to make clear that even though it says here: I will reward each according to what they have done; again, this doesn't mean we get saved by works after all. This isn't undoing the theology of Paul and Jesus and the whole rest of the New Testament. One of the things we do is believe in Jesus by grace; so, we are still saved by grace, not by our deeds; but the point is, yes, you want to be found on the right side of things. You mentioned Matthew 24, and indeed, that is part of what we call the Olivet Discourses, which you find at the end of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where Jesus talks about the return of the Son of Man...the return of him himself, basically; and one of the things that he says there is that, yes, this is happening, but you are not supposed to just twiddle your thumbs and watch the horizon. You have to be faithful. In fact, I love it that in Matthew when Jesus says, you know, what should you be doing when I come back? Well, it is like a faithful servant who just keeps making dinner for everybody at the right time every day. What should you be doing when Jesus comes back? Your duty. You know, your job: Make dinner, feed the kids, feed the dog, you know; do your work, and that is what you need to be doing: Being faithful to your call when Jesus returns.

DARRELL DELANEY

And when you are faithful to your call, when Jesus returns you don't have time to focus on when he is returning...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

You have time to actually follow the commission to go and be and make disciples; to be a light and a witness like he said. That is exactly what we are called to do, and that is the reason why John is on the island in the first place...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Because he was letting his light shine a little too bright for Babylon—a little too bright for the Roman government; and it is really powerful to see that God is paying attention to the ones who are doing these things on the inside, and doing these things on the outside; and John is actually wanting to make sure that he writes down what Jesus says to write down.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You pointed out something really good that we should have pointed out maybe more directly earlier in this series, now that we are in the last episode here, but John never...basically in this whole book...never mentions Rome...he never mentions the Roman Empire, but anybody who reads this book knows who Babylon is. It is like, what do you think the Roman Empire is; the kingdom of God or Babylon? Mmm, let me think about it: Babylon? Yes! So, John is naming the Roman Empire without naming the Roman Empire; but let's pick up a little bit more here, just from the very, very, very last part of Revelation 22.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, picking up at verse 16, it says: "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." ¹⁷The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life. ¹⁸I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of the scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. ¹⁹And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the Tree of Life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. ²⁰He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. ²¹The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Amen. I am reminded of what the Heidelberg Catechism, the great confessional document of the Reformation era says. At the very end of the Catechism, when we get to the end of the Lord's Prayer, there is a question that says: What does *amen* mean? Why does the Lord's Prayer end with *amen*? What does *amen* mean? The Catechism means *this is sure to be*. Amen means in Revelation 22 here, the last word of the book...two of the last words of the book...are amen. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen. This is sure to be. We absolutely can know that what is written in this scroll...and don't edit, God says...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, don't add; don't subtract; it is good the way it is; don't edit the Bible; take it for what it says. Amen; this is sure to be.

DARRELL DELANEY

And in the book of Hebrews it talks about how the Word of God comes through prophets and other people, but in the final days the *amen* comes through his Son, whose name is the amen—Jesus Christ is the amen; and we have known that this scripture is coming to pass because the grass may wither and the flower may fade, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.

So, as we wrap up this part of the segment, and actually go into the end of this episode, we want to get into some practical application. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork* and this sixth and final episode in our series on the book of Revelation; and we have been in Revelation's last chapter in this episode, Darrell...Revelation 22, as we said; we have had to skip around this book. You could do fifteen episodes on Revelation and you still might not get it all, but we have tried to narrow the book down; hit a lot of its high points; all of which is meant to encourage us. I think that is a good thing to focus on, Darrell, here at the end of this episode and series. Revelation is supposed to encourage us. Unfortunately...we have noted this before in the series...in history, sometimes people have taken Revelation to frighten us; you know, the whole "mark of the beast" thing, and all of that stuff. I mean, sometimes people have turned this book into something kind of scary. Now, make no mistake, this book is serious about coming judgment and punishment. You have to take it seriously, but it is not meant to scare us.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

For believers, it is meant to buck us up...to give us, as we just said...hope.

DARRELL DELANEY

It could be sobering...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

But it doesn't need to be terrifying. I think because pop culture, and even in entertainment and Hollywood have gotten ahold of some of this stuff and now the phrase "biblical proportions..."

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, right.

DARRELL DELANEY

We have heard that in a lot of different places, but if we read this the way John intended it, it will encourage us, it will strengthen us, and it will remind us to serve the Lord and continue to be faithful; but I think another thing that we need to think about is the fact that the consequences of not serving the Lord are far more serious than the ones from this earth and from this government...from this system that Satan is actually in control of. Those consequences are far less important than losing and being separated from God for eternity.

SCOTT HOEZEE

One of the great temptations is always to go with the flow, right? I mean, you know, the powers that be in this world are the powers that be. They are in charge; and so, in a thousand ways we are always encouraged to compromise, to live for the moment, go for the gusto, grab the brass ring, take the shortcuts, cheat, lie, steal, whatever it takes to get ahead, you know; whatever it takes to get famous, do it; because, look; that is the way the world works. Revelation...the whole book is here to say: That is the way the world works; that is not how it is ultimately going to be. It is ultimately going to be a new creation...a new heavens and a new earth, as we saw in Revelation 21 in the fifth episode of this series. That is what is going to endure. So, yes; your actions have consequences. The choices you make are not just for this life and to feather your own nest; they go on and on.

DARRELL DELANEY

And as believers, we are encouraged by this book and other books of the Bible to persevere in our faith; not give up in well-doing because we will reap if we don't quit and we don't give up. The only way we can lose this race is if we forfeit now, because Christ has won it already, thanks to his atonement—thanks to his death, burial and resurrection; and Jesus says this himself: If you save your life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it; and John is reminding believers in an indirect way that they need to keep their faith.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Even in sometimes in secular contexts you hear the phrase that so and so is “on the wrong side of history...”

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, Revelation tells us there is a right and wrong side of history, and you want to be on the right side of it, and that is on the side of Christ...on the side of justice...on the side of mercy and graciousness. That is where we want to be.

DARRELL DELANEY

So actually, another thing that I wanted to think about, too, based on these passages in Revelation 22 is that worship. It has got to be awesome there. I have had some really powerful moments of worship here on this earth, and this is in the broken and fallen state; but just imagine there is no broken and fallen state, and this is the presence of God that is glowing, that is light, and every language and every tribe are all there together. That will be a beautiful place to worship.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It's amazing...we sort of said this in a couple of other episodes in this series...it is amazing John managed to get anything written down at all, because, as you said, Darrell, in a previous episode, his mind was blown. I mean, this was just mind-expanding...mind-blowing worship in the kingdom of God before the throne of the Lamb that John saw; and you are right. When we get caught up in that, our minds will be blown and it will just be something to experience for all eternity that we can only dimly anticipate now, right? C. S. Lewis said that even the best worship services we have on earth for now, it is like the tune-up time for the orchestra before the real concert starts. We are still just tuning up; but boy, when the real symphony starts, it is going to be something.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, man; I cannot wait! And so, I am thinking about the multitude of every tribe, language, people and nation; and down here we have biases, we have challenges, we have misconstrued motives, we have eggshells when we meet someone that is new...that is different from us...who has a different culture than us. All of that stuff is going to be gone when we get there; and we will be able to approach people without

awkwardness; we will be able to approach people with confidence and enjoy each other's company around the throne. But I think that last thing that I was thinking about is that, not just the brokenness in relationships will be done away with, but the brokenness of this world will be done away with; because in Romans 8 it says that this creation is groaning, and that is because of the curse that came in Genesis, but that curse will be lifted, and everything will be better; not in just people relationships; the whole creation will be better.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Romans 8:22. Paul writes: We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption [to sonship], the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved.

So, there it is. The whole creation is...it is painful, Paul says, but it is the pain of childbirth. It is giving birth to something great and something new; and as you just said, Darrell, the racism, the biases, the hatred, all the bad things are going to be put down because Christ...as this book makes eminently clear...Christ is not *going* to win, he *did* win.

DARRELL DELANEY

Already.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is done, right? The decisive battle has been won, and now we just wait for the fullness of that kingdom to come; and when it does, Darrell, the Bible has a word for it: Shalom!

DARRELL DELANEY

Shalom is when there is nothing missing; there is nothing broken; everybody has everything they need; and finally, I think this is where God wanted to get us in the beginning anyway, if it wasn't for what happened in Genesis 3, but now we see a God who is in complete control; who is the one who is redeeming us finally; and when we share the gospel, we help people to enter into that, and we end up with the response that they did: Worship. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Thanks be to God; and thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney, and we hope you will join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

Connect with us at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

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