

LIVING IN HOPE
ON THE EDGE OF
ETERNITY



Living in Hope on the Edge of Eternity

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INTRODUCTION

LIVING IN HOPE ON THE EDGE OF ETERNITY

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, describes the beginning of the world; the last book, Revelation, prophecies the end. God's story began with creation, centers on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and continues with the Gospel lived out in the Church. His story is not finished. Everything in God's Word will be accomplished.

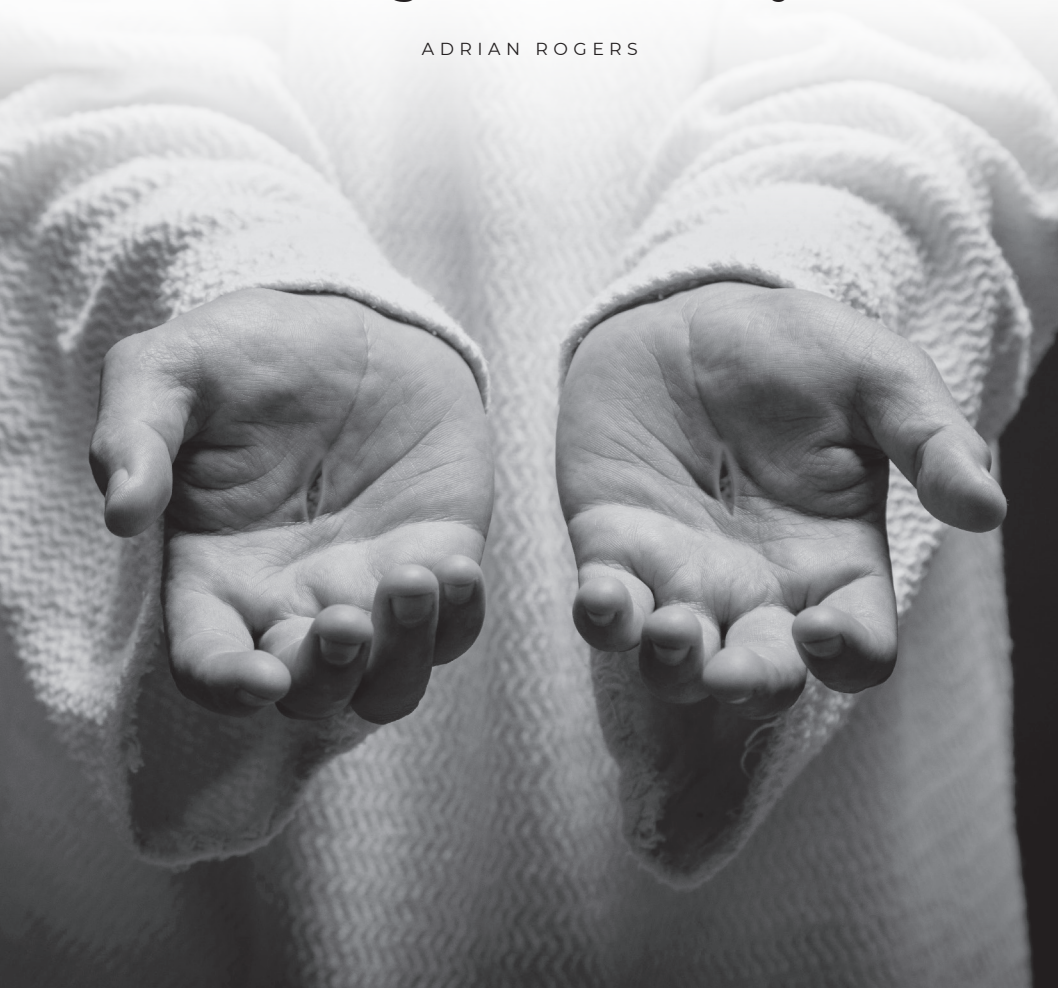
The Bible teaches that anyone who believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior will spend eternity with Him in Heaven. But when we hear the news from around the world, it feels like things are getting worse. The Bible tells us things will continue to get worse. There will be more trials, more wars, more disasters. But we must not lose hope.

The Bible does not tell us about coming hardships so that we will throw up our hands in despair or worry about what tomorrow will bring. The Bible tells us these things so that we can know Jesus as the King of kings and so that we can stay focused on doing the work that Jesus has given us to do—go into all the world and tell people the Good News of Jesus. God's desire is that all people everywhere would know the One who overcame death so that we can come to Him and have eternal life.

In this study, we will look closely at the Scriptures that help us to know what to expect so that we can have steadfast hope in an uncertain world. We have also included an appendix that provides an overview of what the Bible teaches about the sequence of events. We hope that, through this study, you will see Jesus as the King of all kings, that you will give your life to Him, and that you will share Him with others.

When we stand before
Jesus and see Him face to
face, faith will turn to sight.
The things that we hoped
for will be reality, and love
will go on and on and on
throughout all eternity.

ADRIAN ROGERS



WEEK 1

LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ETERNITY

■ INTRODUCTION

The New Testament Book of Revelation is a confusing part of Scripture for many people. It contains illustrations and symbols we might not understand in the twenty-first century, but when we take time to study it, its message brings eternal hope to those who are saved. In Revelation, God has given us one of the most exciting books of the Bible, and it is a blessing to those who believe in Jesus Christ.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near (Revelation 1:1-3).

The Book of Revelation is often ignored, sometimes debated, or even discounted, but God said, “This is the blessing book. If you want a blessing, read it and heed it.”

In this study, we will learn what God says about the past, present, and future through the Book of Revelation.

■ PRAY OVER IT

Dear God, Thank you for the gift of Your Words in Revelation to those who believe in Jesus! I want to receive the blessing of reading and heeding the prophecies. Help me to understand Your Word on a deeper level this week and give me the courage to share it with others. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear Your Word! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

CENTRAL PERSON AND PURPOSE

■ PONDER IT

Many people want to study prophecy because they're concerned about things that are going to happen. But in reality, we study prophecy because we want to know the One who is coming. The most important aspect of the Book of Revelation is its hero: Jesus Christ. He is the Person the entire book is about. We see this in the very first verse:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants (Revelation 1:1a).

The word “revelation” is the Greek word “apocalipsis,” which is where we get our English word “apocalypse” from. It literally means “to unveil.” Imagine the unveiling of a grand statue on a town square. The sculptor, the mayor, the city council, and all the town’s residents come to behold something beautiful and new in their city. Similarly, the Book of Revelation is the unveiling of Jesus Christ. You will see Jesus Christ in a different way than you have ever seen Him before as you study God’s Word in Revelation.

When He came the first time, Jesus was born into this world through a virgin’s womb, was laid in a dirty feeding trough, and was the son of a carpenter and a Jewish peasant. All of His glory was veiled, but in the Book of Revelation, that glory was unveiled. The first time He came to redeem through crucifixion. When He comes again, He’s coming to reign as King. God gave us the Book of Revelation so we might know the Person of Jesus, but also the purpose He came to fulfill.

To show His servants—things which must shortly take place (Revelation 1:1b).

The word “servants” is the Greek word “doulos,” which means “bondslave.” A bondslave was someone who had been a slave, had been set free, and then willingly went back to his master. A bondslave said to

his master, “I don’t want to be free. I want to serve you. I want to stay with you. I love my master!” In the same way, we are bondslaves of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are not a bondslave to Jesus Christ, if you have not chosen to recognize Him as your Lord and Savior, you will struggle to understand the Book of Revelation. The entire book is designed to be understood by those who love Him. As you study Revelation, have you dedicated your life to serving the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you trusting in Him alone for your salvation? Are you a bondslave to Jesus?

Revelation was written about a Person for a specific purpose. It is all about Jesus, and the words prophesy what is to come for those who are willingly enslaved to Christ.

■ **PUT IT IN WRITING**

- What thoughts and emotions surface when you hear the phrase “bondslave of Christ”? How does this understanding of your relationship with Jesus change your posture toward Him?
- Have you fully surrendered your life to Jesus, the hero of Revelation? What parts of your life are not fully surrendered to Him? What is He asking you to surrender more completely to Him?

What is this world coming to?
Jesus!

ADRIAN ROGERS

THE PROMISE

■ PONDER IT

Revelation is about a Person, it is for a purpose, and it contains a powerful promise for those who read and hear the words.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near (Revelation 1:3).

The comforting promise of Revelation is this: those who are saved will be blessed if they read it and heed it. Those who want God's blessing must read Revelation and put the words into action.

The first blessing you will receive is that you will understand the mystery of history. This world does not make sense apart from the Book of Revelation and what God reveals through it. God answers the mystery of history.

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15).

The mystery of history is that God has been moving all things toward the purpose of Jesus' Kingdom. That is what life is all about. One day, our war-torn, sin-saturated world will see Jesus upon the throne, and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus.

If you read the first two and last two chapters of the Bible, you won't find the devil anywhere. The whole world will be under Jesus' authority. We know the end of the story:

...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

Jesus wins. The kingdoms of this world will become kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through this truth, we can make sense of the sin and suffering of this world. We bring hope to those living in grief, pain, and hardship because we know that it's not over yet. There is more to this life than grief, pain and hardship. Jesus' Second Coming gives us hope, which gives us stability through the pain in this life. This is why it is a blessing to read Revelation because we know that what it says will come true.

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (James 5:8).

A circus performer who walked the tightrope with no safety net underneath him was asked, "Doesn't it frighten you when you look down?"

He said, "I don't look down. See that silver star at the other end of the tightrope? I keep my eye on that star and I never look down."

We are to keep our eyes on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Just as the man successfully walked the tightrope, we can walk through the suffering in this life by looking toward Jesus' Second Coming.

■ **PUT IT IN WRITING**

- How does the promise of Jesus' Second Coming give you hope in the midst of what you are currently walking through? How does this promise change your perspective?
- What do you do to help keep your focus on Jesus? What are the obstacles you face that pull your focus away from Jesus?

Where God doesn't rule, He will overrule.

ADRIAN ROGERS

CERTAINTY OF PROPHECY

■ PONDER IT

In the Old Testament, the Jews looked forward to the first coming of Jesus by listening to God's Word through the prophets. Today we look forward to the Second Coming of Jesus by reading God's Word. Just like the Old Testament prophecies came true, we can be certain about the prophecies of Jesus' Second Coming.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near (Revelation 1:3).

Two thousand years ago, Jesus said that the time was near. He was right. God's plan may not be immediate, but it is imminent. "The last days" began when Jesus ascended to Heaven, and we are still living in them.

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers (1 Peter 4:7).

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand (Philippians 4:5).

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand (James 5:8).

These words were written two thousand years ago, which means that His coming is nearer now than it was. Jesus' coming is imminent, so we must be ready.

■ **PUT IT IN WRITING**

- Read the Bible verses from today again. What phrases and commands stand out to you? Why?
- Do you live like you believe that Jesus' Second Coming is imminent? Why or why not?

He came to a tree the first time.
He's coming to a throne the second time.
From the time that Jesus came the first
time until He comes again, we are walking
on the edge of eternity.

ADRIAN ROGERS

IMPORTANCE OF PROPHECY

■ PONDER IT

We know the Person, purpose, promise, and certainty of the prophecy of Revelation. As believers, we must also understand its importance.

The Apostle John was imprisoned on the Island of Patmos, similar to the Alcatraz Island of our day. He was banished for preaching the Gospel of Jesus. God used his imprisonment to give him an important message and commanded him to share it with those who believed in Christ.

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this (Revelation 1:19).

John saw a vision of Jesus, the glorified and conquering Christ. In Revelation, Jesus is not pictured as a Savior, but as a Judge. In His first coming, He was crucified, raised to life, and ascended to Heaven; in His Second Coming, we see the glorified and coming Lord, and He is beautiful to behold. Read this description of Jesus from Revelation 1.

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength (Revelation 1:12-16).

We often hear about the humble Christ walking the shores of Galilee, but He is also the reigning King, our sovereign Lord. It is His right to reign and rule, and He is coming again.

Revelation 2 and 3 are all about Jesus' message to seven churches. When Jesus said to John, "the things which are," He was speaking about the Church Age. That time began with Pentecost in the Book of Acts when the Holy Spirit came, and it continues even today. It will end with the Second Coming of Jesus as King. The Book of Revelation was intended for us to read so that we will know that Jesus is coming again for His Church

Each time Jesus addressed the seven churches, He began by saying, "He who has ears let him hear what the Spirit is saying." What Jesus said to the churches in the first century is just as important for the Church today. Many will hear, but will not listen. Jesus commands us to listen and obey.

■ **PUT IT IN WRITING**

- When you think about Jesus, do you picture Him as the ruling and reigning King? Does the Scripture from today change your attitude and posture toward Christ?
- Why should we study the Book of Revelation? What are you hoping to taking away from this study on Jesus' Second Coming?

Jesus became forever like me that
I might become forever like Him.

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ORDER OF EVENTS IN REVELATION

■ PONDER IT

As we live on the edge of eternity, we must understand the things to come. The Bible tells us the specific, future events that we can anticipate.

- 1. The Rapture and translation of the saints.** Jesus will descend, and those who believe in Him, both dead and alive, will meet Him in the air (see Revelation 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). The Rapture could happen at any moment, and you need to get right with Jesus or get left behind. Jesus is coming.
- 2. The Tribulation and regimentation of the world.** After the saints are raptured, the Antichrist will come, bringing darkness into the world. There will be a time of terror. In many parts of Scripture, God calls this “the day of God’s wrath,” in which Satan and all his demonic forces wreak havoc on the Earth (see Revelation 6:12-17). Jesus is the Lamb of God, full of mercy, but He’s also the God of wrath, judgment, and justice.
- 3. Armageddon and the destruction of the beast.** There will be a battle against Satan and all the forces of evil. When the world is at its darkest, Jesus will come and cast Satan, his demons, and the Antichrist into a lake of fire (see Revelation 13:1-3; Revelation 16:13-16; Revelation 19:19). This time, Jesus will come not *for* His Church, but *with* His Church. Jesus will win the Battle of Armageddon with the words of His mouth.
- 4. The Millennium and the glorification of the Savior.** There will be a time when Jesus and all His saints will rule and reign on Earth (see Revelation 20:1-6). In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven” (Matthew 6:10). He would not have taught us to pray those words if they were not going to happen. One day, the Earth will be filled with the knowledge

of God's glory, and we will rule with the Lord Jesus Christ here upon this Earth.

5. **The final judgment and the condemnation of the sinners.** This will be the day when those who do not put their trust in Christ will also be cast into the lake of fire along with Satan and his demons (see Revelation 20:11-15). Is your name in the Book of Life? One day, we will all stand before the unavoidable, inescapable Jesus Christ.
6. **The eternal state and the destination of the species.** Jesus is the beginning and the end of all things. On that day, Jesus will inherit everything and will reign forevermore (see Revelation 21:6-8). Charles Darwin was concerned about the *origin* of the species, but he should have been more concerned with the *destination* of the species. When God made you, He created you as a living soul, and your soul will live forever. You're made in God's image, and you will exist somewhere for eternity—either in Heaven or in Hell.

■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- Did you learn something about a specific prophecy today? What did you learn? Which topic would you like to study more? How does this influence your life this week?
- How does knowing the destination of the unsaved impact how you interact with those who do not know Jesus?

On the Rapture: Cut my
shoelaces; I'm ready to go.

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THE EDGE OF ETERNITY

■ PRACTICE IT

In order to see the blessings in the Book of Revelation, you must know Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Once you understand how sinful you are and how holy God is, you will see that Jesus is the only way to bridge the gap. You will either spend eternity in Heaven or in Hell. It all depends on what you believe about Jesus. He is the only way to Heaven.

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

If you want to be saved, come to Jesus! The Rapture of the Church could happen before you lay your head down to sleep tonight. If you're thirsty, God's word to you is this: Come to Jesus.

He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly” (Revelation 22:20a).

Jesus' coming is imminent. If you would like to have your name written in the Book of Life, you can say “yes” to Jesus today. If you want to be saved, pray this prayer from your heart:

Dear God, I am a sinner, and my sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You with all of my heart. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, cleanse me, save me, and help me to publicly acknowledge You as my Lord and Savior. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

■ PROCLAIM IT

God gave us the Book of Revelation so that we would know how to live with hope in this world. If the Holy Spirit has impressed on you that something in your priorities, your time, or your life needs to change, share your next

step of faith with a trusted friend or mentor. Ask that person to join you in prayer and to keep you accountable to do what God is asking you to do.

If you prayed to receive Christ for the first time, please share your decision with another Christian you know or with your pastor. We would also like to hear about it, so that we can provide you with free resources to help you grow in your new faith. Please let us know by going to lwf.org/discover-jesus, scrolling down the page and clicking on *I Believe*.

As the end gets closer, the day gets darker. As the day gets darker, the saints shine brighter. As the saints shine brighter, the world sees clearer.

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