It is Written: Week 3 – Revelation 21:4

Introduction:

It is Written: A new series focusing on memorizing key scriptures

Week 3 – Revelation 21:4

Years ago, a young Christian father and husband reached out to me. He wanted to talk, deeply struggling with a lack of fulfillment in life. Although I was quite busy, I sensed his desperation and gave him my phone number. It’s amazing how you can often discern someone’s emotional state simply by the tone of their voice. His desperation was evident in every stutter, pitch modulation, and half-completed thought.

As a young adult, he had finished college, gotten married, and even had a child. He was fully convinced these milestones would bring happiness and dispel the unsatisfied depression that seemed to constantly loom over him. By the time he contacted me, he had already been exploring a new relationship and considering leaving his family. Why would he call a local church pastor? Perhaps he hoped I would support his decision, framing his desire to feel loved, whole, and satisfied as an altruistic greater good worth pursuing at all costs.

Most people reach out to pastors not to seek spiritual advice but to find inner peace for decisions they have already committed to. They are often surprised when they discover that the Bible disagrees with their feelings.

Is he the enemy? If you step back and honestly look at his state in life, you’ll see something interesting. What does he actually want? He wants what we all want.

We want to feel whole.

We want to feel loved.

We want to find a community where we truly fit.

We want to pursue these things without shame.

We are disappointed when we get what we think will work and it doesn’t.

We all desire a Heaven, both externally and internally.

Often, we attack the actions of people without addressing the deeper motivations and supposed methods people are using to find wholeness. What he needs is a real way forward, one that can actually lead to true wholeness. He needs a vision of real beauty and a clear way to get there.

Lectio:

Revelation 21:1–7 (ESV): The New Heaven and the New Earth

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6 And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

* During a time of heavy persecution John is having an intense vision from God. Jesus is speaking directly to the pain of disillusionment, discouragement, and displacement of His people.
  + The book of Revelation, traditionally attributed to the apostle John, is a prophetic and apocalyptic text written during a time of intense persecution of Christians, likely under the Roman Emperor Domitian in the late first century. Its purpose is to encourage and strengthen the faith of believers by unveiling the ultimate triumph of God over evil. Through vivid and symbolic visions, Revelation addresses the struggles faced by early Christians, offering hope and assurance of God's sovereignty and final victory. The book culminates in the promise of a new heaven and new earth, where God's justice and peace will reign eternally, providing a powerful vision of hope and renewal for the faithful.
  + The early church is facing the same questions we often face.
    - God, do you hear me?
    - God, are you working?
    - God, have I failed you and are you punishing me?
    - God, will your promises ever come true?
* From Judas to us today, we all face the feeling of needing to take things into our own hands to make a way to heaven’s peace. Matt. 26:47-50.
  + The idea that Judas was trying to force Jesus’ hand is a theory some scholars and interpreters have suggested, but it is not explicitly stated in the Bible. This theory proposes that Judas, rather than betraying Jesus out of pure malice or greed, might have been trying to push Jesus into a position where He would have to reveal His power and establish His kingdom by force, overthrowing the Roman authorities.
* Satan will seize your discontent and use it as justification to do all kinds of evil in the sight of God.
  + John 13:27, says, “Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly.’”
* Notice how humans find Eden made anew. Heaven comes from God (vs. 2). God totally overtakes manmade social structures (vs. 3; 5a; 7a). God makes all things new and is the beginning and end, the Eden and Heaven of humanity (vs. 5b; 6). God is the only one who can fully heal and satisfy humanity. We are made to run on God (vs.4; 6b; 7b).

Final Thoughts:

Recently I had a prayer breakfast with Mike Schultz and Steve Thompson, we discussed how people respond differently to the idea of Scriptural authority. Dr. Steve Thompson made a statement that resonated with me: “People today are surprised when they find God speaking against how they feel. They will do everything they can to make their feelings about something the truth.” -Dr. Thompson.

He is right. This is a rapidly increasing reality that I encounter in ministry. People fervently search for preachers, social media “experts,” and even translations of the Bible that match their feelings. When many modern Christians say they believe in Scriptural authority, what they actually mean is that they believe in having the authority to decide what counts as Scripture.

Dr. Thompson added another profound insight to our conversation: “People hate the word ‘submit,’ but there is no real salvation without it.”-Dr. Thompson

I don’t think we truly know if we have submitted to Jesus until we are faced with a command of His that we don’t like. Don’t misunderstand me—I’m not talking about a command you agree with and wish others would follow. I mean a command that you personally dislike but choose to submit to. It’s in these moments that we discover if we are the rich young ruler who walks away from Jesus (Mark 10:17-22) or a disciple who drops everything to follow Him (Matthew 4:18-22).

Revelation 21:4 is a map to humanity to the full. The road is simply this. Trust God above all else. He is the only way.

Revelation 21:4 (NIV) “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Actio:

Is there an area in your life where you have chosen to trust in something other than God? Would you write it down and leave it at the altar?