



Enter the Story

New Creation

A narrative describing where all of God's creation is headed.

THE BIBLE

Revelation 1, 4-5, 7-9, 11, 21

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

- Every great story has a great ending. Share about the ending of one of your favorite movies, books, or children's stories. Why do you love this ending?

Rewind the Story

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- Saul to Paul - Road to Damascus conversion.
- Peter – Peter's vision and revelation
- Paul's Mission – Trouble with church planting
- Final Days – Paul's trial and letters from prison

Hear the Story

Scene One: Persecution & John's Vision

Decades after Jesus' death and resurrection, Roman oppression against the Jews had become so severe and cruel that Jews revolted against the empire. But their uprising was no match for the massive Roman army, who crushed them and destroyed the temple in Jerusalem.

The Roman emperor was furious about this rebellion and decided to punish anyone who didn't worship him and show allegiance to his kingdom. Jews and Christians faced cruel and violent persecution.

Many Christians were arrested and killed, causing many believers to flee and scatter across the known world. Jesus' followers wondered when and if the persecution would ever end.

One follower named John was imprisoned on the island of Patmos for his faith in Jesus. One day, while praying, he had a long and intense vision. He described it this way.

"At first, a man appeared to me. He was dressed in a robe with a golden sash around him. He had white hair, his eyes looked like a blazing fire, and his voice roared like the ocean's waters. It was Jesus! When I saw him, I bowed down at his feet.

"He put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever! Write down all that you'll see in this vision and send it to the seven churches in Asia.'

So, John wrote all that he saw and heard. His vision continued with Jesus giving words of encouragement and a strong challenge to each of the seven churches.

These churches were struggling to hold on to their faith in the midst of persecution. Some had become discouraged and apathetic. Others were enticed by the ways of the empire, worshipping human idols, becoming immoral, following false teachings, and pursuing greed and wealth.

Jesus challenged them to wake up, hold on to their faith, and have courage during these dark times.

Scene Two: Worship in the Throne Room

After the challenges to the seven churches, John's vision continued to unfold with images of a great throne. Next, he wrote:

I saw a door open in heaven, and I heard a voice say, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this.'

Instantly, I saw a great throne in front of me that was beaming as radiant as the finest gemstones, and the glow of emerald circled the throne like a rainbow. And I caught a glimpse of the one sitting on this great throne.

"Flashes of light and rumbling thunder surrounded me. In front of the throne was a beautiful sea of glass, sparkling like crystal.

"Around the throne were living creatures, angels, and elders.

"One of the elders said, "Look, there is the powerful Lion from the tribe of Judah, the heir to King David's throne. He has victory over evil and death!"

"When I turned to see the lion, I saw a peaceful lamb instead. This lamb was bloodied and had been killed but was alive again.

"Then all of the creatures around the throne began to sing: 'Worthy is the lamb to receive honor and power and glory forever!' And they sang this over and over again."

John's vision continued to unfold with wild and vivid imagery. These images held deep symbolic meaning to Jesus' followers facing persecution. Some of the events John saw there were:

Angels holding back the wind and the waves.

Plagues of hail, fire, blood, and locusts coming from the skies.

A great dragon that battled with God's angels.

A sea serpent that brought chaos and destruction.

People wearing a mark that is in the image of a greedy empire.

After these events, John saw an angel blow his trumpet and announce, "God's Kingdom and His Messiah-king will reign over the earth forever and ever!"

Even though John's vision contained some violent and wild imagery, they were a comfort to Jesus' followers because they symbolized the evil empire being overthrown and defeated for good.

Scene Three: A New Heaven and a New Earth

At the end of his vision, John saw something remarkable. He wrote: *"Then, I saw a new heaven and a new earth, A Holy City, the new Jerusalem descending from above...like a bride dressed beautifully for her husband.*

And the chaos of the seas was gone.

"I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among God's people. God is living with them! And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. Darkness will once again be pushed back. All these things will be gone forever!"

Then, the One seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new! It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty, I will give the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all of this. I will be their God, and they will be my children."

"In the middle of the city was the river of life flowing from the throne of God down the middle of the great city street. On each side of the river stood the Tree of Life, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

"On no day will the gate of the city ever be shut, and the glory of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it ... only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Then, John's vision concluded with Jesus offering a great promise to all who follow God. He said, *"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give each person according to what he has done."*

EPILOGUE: HOPE FOR THE CHURCH

For the early churches that were scattered, persecuted, and enticed by the power and wealth of the Roman Empire, John's visions revealed a better future.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, is victorious and on the throne of God's kingdom. The world is restored and made new, full of wholeness and peace. And a new reality emerges where God lives closely with creation.

Christians throughout history have seen John's letter in Revelation as an invitation to choose the giving, selfless, and peaceful ways of Jesus and God's kingdom over the greed, selfishness, and violence of empire.

This is the end of the Bible's narrative-but it's not the end of the story.

We're created to reflect God's image and continue God's creative work.

We're called to be God's blessing to all people, extending God's wholeness and love.

We've been chosen to work with God to continue to tell His amazing story.

Retell the Story

- What was life like for Jews and Christians during this time?
- What were they being persecuted for?
- Where was John when he wrote Revelation?
- What was John's vision of the "son of man" like?
- Describe the throne room scene in John's vision.
- What other strange images were shared in John's vision?
- Describe God's promised New Creation.
- What was Jesus' final message in John's vision?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?

- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- Which of the pictures in John's vision stick out to you and why?
- What underlying messages do you see in John's vision?
- Why do you think God gave John a vision like this?
- Why do you think people struggle with the book of Revelation?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of *other* stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- From this story, what do you notice about God's character or His qualities?

1) WORTHY OF WORSHIP

In John's vision, he received glimpses of heavenly worship. What do you learn about worship from these scenes? How might this shape the way we engage and enter into praise of our God?

2) WITH HIS PEOPLE

In our story, the proclamation is made that "God will dwell with His people once again." Where have we seen God express His desire to be with His people before? Because this is one of His greatest desires, what can you do on a daily basis to stay close to God and have a dynamic relationship with Him?

3) NEW HEAVEN & NEW EARTH

Read Revelation 21:1-4, 21:22-27, and 22:1-5.

The Restoration of all things is more than a "reset" button. According to what you read, what will this New Creation be like? What jumps out to you, or what do you feel communicates something deeper?

Pray

God,

What an amazing adventure we've been on. We thank You from the beginning to the very end for showing us new things about You and about ourselves through this incredible story. It's a story that continues on as we continue to live our lives following You. Thank You for giving us hope for the future and grace for every day. We thank You, the Author of the greatest Story, for Your hope, Your grace, Your peace, and Your love. Amen.