

He Knows the Whole Story

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come (Revelation 1:4).

Scripture: Revelation 1:3-8

Song: “Amazing Grace”

Studying English in college, I learned the importance of a thesis statement to establish that the writer will bring certain closure to an essay. Today’s key verse is a sort of thesis statement for the book of Revelation—and for all of history, including parts still to come.

In his epic letter, the apostle John addressed seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. His opening greeting in today’s passage was intended to encourage the churches as they dealt with adversity, such as persecution and the rise of false teachers. John emphasized God’s eternal nature, the Holy Spirit’s presence with them, and the assurance that Jesus would return as King.

As believers today, we find some parts of John’s vision exciting—for example, the description of heavenly worship in Revelation 19—but other parts can be confusing and even scary because we don’t understand yet exactly how they will unfold. Likewise, our lives have ups and downs that are exciting, scary, or surprising, but they don’t surprise God. We can trust Him to keep us in His grace and peace as He finishes the story.

Father, remind me that You’re always with me and that, come what may, I can rest in Your grace and peace. In Jesus’ name, amen.

February 24–28. **Cynthia Thomas** lives in southwest Missouri, where she enjoys writing about faith-based topics, local ministries, and veterans. She and her husband enjoy the outdoors and spending time with their adult children and three adorable grandchildren.

Bad Choices Have Consequences

Save us, LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise (Psalm 106:47).

Scripture: Psalm 106:36-48

Song: “Be Exalted”

The young man didn't intend to land in court on suspicion of possessing an illegal substance; he'd just borrowed a friend's car for a quick errand. But following a minor traffic violation, an alert officer detected a suspicious smell coming from the glove compartment and discovered something that should not have been there. Thankfully, a merciful judge believed the young man when he explained the situation, but he learned a valuable lesson about choosing friends wisely.

After entering the promised land, the Israelites didn't fully obey God's command to drive out the previous inhabitants, which led to God's people adopting idol worship and other pagan practices. God was repeatedly merciful when they cried out to Him, but the growing consequences of their choices finally led them into exile. But even then, God spoke through the prophets to encourage the faithful. Several psalms, like today's passage, review Israel's painful history while looking forward to the future Messiah, Jesus, who would come through the lineage of David.

It's important to recognize and address our failure, confessing our sin to God and making needed changes. As we go forward, we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us learn from our mistakes and stay focused on obedient service.

Father, help me stay focused on You and not be sidetracked or derailed by poor choices. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our Actions Should Reflect His Holiness

[God said,] “Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2).

Scripture: Leviticus 19:1-10

Song: “Purify My Heart”

At the front of the festively decorated room, my son stood proudly as his scoutmasters spoke of the respect the words *Eagle Scout* would earn on his resume. Reviewing the Scout oath and Scout law, they challenged him to take pride in the values and work ethic it took to earn the Eagle rank and to continue those things throughout his life.

Moses’ challenge to Israel in Leviticus 19 was not the first nor the only time God’s people have been instructed to reflect God’s holiness. The nation of Israel was to separate itself from pagan nations. The New Testament instructs believers to “follow God’s example” (Ephesians 5:1), to “be perfect” (Matthew 5:48), and to “be transformed” (Romans 12:1-2). Among the ways we can reflect God’s image are things like treating people kindly, adhering to moral standards, and being generous to the poor.

As believers living in a culture where God seems valued less and less, it can be a challenge to remain consecrated to God and to demonstrate His character. But if people don’t see a difference in our lives, we will have little impact in pointing others to Christ. God is merciful and patient with us as we grow in our faith, but we must be committed to learning to reflect His holiness.

Father, draw me close to You and help me speak and act in ways that reflect who You are and what You are like. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Work Hard, Be Fair, Be Generous

[God said,] “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly” (Leviticus 19:15).

Scripture: Leviticus 19:11-18

Song: “Here I Am, Lord”

When our kids were teens, we wanted to instill in them a solid work ethic. Since they are musically talented, we proposed a plan to help each of them purchase a quality instrument after they had earned part of the cost. One son recalls the paper route that led to his owning a nice Fender guitar; the other worked as a lifeguard to earn a custom violin. As they saved up, we also had them put money into a “giving envelope” to share in some way.

In Leviticus, God instructed Israelite land owners to leave gleanings of the harvest for the poor to gather. This allowed the wealthy to be generous and the poor to retain the dignity of work, since God values both. We see the same concept in the New Testament. Even Jesus learned a trade during His earthly life, and the apostles’ letters to the churches frequently remind Christians to work hard, give generously, and not show favoritism.

Many people experience times of having plenty to share and other times of needing to be grateful recipients. Sometimes we can give of our time, in prayer or volunteering. Although finances and circumstances change with seasons of life, health, or family responsibilities, we can always be committed to treating others kindly.

Father, guide me by Your Spirit as I seek to serve with diligence, generosity, and kindness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Faithfulness Never Goes Unnoticed

They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

Scripture: Revelation 20:1-6

Song: “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus”

Our daughter was 4 years old when her first brother was born and 10 when our youngest child came along. She dived right into lots of responsibility, helping faithfully as I recovered from a difficult childbirth. Later on, that experience led to well-paying babysitting gigs, teacher aide jobs, and references for her career.

The theme of a godly remnant who stays faithful in spite of Satan’s attempts to deceive humanity is recurrent throughout the Bible, including the glimpse of end-time events given in Revelation. Although scholarly and denominational viewpoints vary as to the timing and sequence of events, today’s passage indicates that believers who are found faithful will be rewarded during Jesus Christ’s millennial reign. Standing fast during the worst of persecution will lead to honor.

This passage is reassuring, as the enemy brings an endless barrage of attempts to deceive believers into compromise. Faithfulness will be rewarded. Some may see rewards in the near term as their children grow up in the faith or friends receive salvation through their witness. But even those experiencing dire circumstances or imprisonment can hold onto hope that the faithful will reign with Christ and spend eternity in the presence of our Lord.

Father, please help me be faithful to do what You call me to do. When it’s painful, remind me of the hope of eternity with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.