

The Greatest Hope of All

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Imagine a boy being bullied on the playground. Kids surround him, taunt him, push him onto the ground. He's fighting back the tears, but that's about all he can fight; there's no way to stop the terror and the torment.

Then, almost out of nowhere, a car pulls up. It's the kid's father. "Get in the car, son," the dad yells. Rolling out of the other kids' grasp, the boy scrambles to his feet and stumbles to the car. They speed off. As the boy looks briefly out the window, he is sure the bullies are laughing. The boy is safe, but there's no way to count that as a win. An evacuation is not a victory.

The end of the Book of Revelation—the end of the Bible itself—shows us a picture not of our evacuation or escape but of God's arrival. Jesus conquered sin and death on the cross. In John's

gospel, Jesus said from the cross, "It is finished" (19:30). Here, in John's revelation, the one who is seated on the throne says, "It is done." The first statement was an announcement of completion; the second is a proclamation of things coming to pass. The victory of Jesus on the cross was made manifest in his resurrection, but it will arrive in fullness at his return.

We know that the season of Advent is a time of waiting between two arrivals. But the truth is, it is also a waiting between two *victories*. Jesus the Mighty One has overcome, and Jesus the Mighty One is coming again.

And when he comes, he comes to *dwell* . The vision of the end that Revelation provides is of God making heaven and earth new, uniting the new heaven and the new earth as one, and filling it with his presence



And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”

REVELATION 21:3

and light. This is a victory that comes with an occupation—only in this case, the occupation is good news, the best news the world could receive! The Creator has redeemed his creation and has come to fill it with his glory. The story that began in Genesis has been perfected and completed.

Back to the playground. Creatively imagine a totally different scenario: Instead of the dad yelling for his kid to get in so they can drive away, the dad parks the car, gets out, and walks slowly over. The authority of his very presence drives away the bullies. He embraces his son. He calls out to other kids who are hiding, who are hurting, to come out into the light. He decides to settle in and remake the playground entirely, now with better equipment and brighter delights. Food and drinks arrive. Then comes the music. And ice cream. Laughter abounds. Somehow the place of pain has become the place of joy.

Reflect on Revelation 21:1-6 and 21:22-22:5.

What stands out to you in this description of the Mighty One’s ultimate reign? What hope and comfort does it bring? How do you desire to respond to Jesus?