

Long Story Short

DAILY DEVOTIONAL • WEEK ELEVEN

INTRODUCTION

This devotional contains a Bible reading plan that is designed to help you engage the story of the Bible in chronological order—to see the overarching story that God is writing through history, to uncover threads of themes that are found throughout, and to discover the inciting incidents that propel His mission on the earth. You will engage with every book of the Bible as we highlight the key people, places, and events.

Five Practical Tips for Long Story Short

1. Read strategically. Set aside a certain time and place each day.
2. Read with pen in hand. Write down what you're learning!
3. Read it looking for new revelations of God, His character, His will for your life.
4. Ask: What is God saying to ME in these scriptures?
5. Ask: How am I going to respond to what God is saying to me?

WEEK 11: REVELATION

Day 1

Reading: Revelation 1-3

According to church tradition, John was the only disciple who was not martyred. He was exiled on the island of Patmos. While there, he had a vision of the coming return, judgment, kingdom, and reign of Jesus.

As apocalyptic literature, Revelation can be difficult for modern readers. It is filled with vivid imagery and layered symbolism that can feel unfamiliar or even confusing. Part of the problem is that we read the book of Revelation as though it is a revelation of a timeline of events. Instead, its primary purpose is the revelation of a person—Jesus Christ—victorious and seated on the throne. There are several different interpretations but at the end of the day, Revelation points us to the assurance that Jesus will be victorious and we will spend eternity in His presence.

The book of Revelation is structured into 7 sections, the number representing perfection in Jewish literature. The first three chapters of Revelation contain messages to seven different churches. The messages follow a pattern of affirmation and correction and addresses timeless challenges that are still felt by the church today.

Before anything is said to the churches, John is given a vision of Jesus—powerful, unignorable, and present, walking among the lampstands. Then, in each message that follows, Jesus begins the same way: “I know.” He knows their faithfulness and their failures. Their endurance and their compromise. Their love, their apathy, their suffering, their reputation. Nothing is hidden from him.

As we begin digging in to Revelation, we’re invited to pay attention. Where do you see these same patterns from the seven churches showing up in the church today?

Day 2

Reading: Revelation 4-5

John gives us a glimpse into the presence of God, which is so overwhelming that worship never ends. Every part of creation is caught up in it, responding to who God is. During this vision, John notices a scroll in God’s hand. While Revelation doesn’t tell us why the scroll is important, we know from Daniel 12:1-4 that this scroll contains the names of all who will be resurrected. So you can see why Daniel was so upset that no one was worthy to open the scroll. What follows is a lovely twist. John is informed that the one who is worthy has returned triumphant. This conqueror is described as a lion. We might be expecting to see a fierce warrior, a powerful king, a vision of dominance and strength. But when John turns to look at him, we’re surprised by a sacrificial lamb. The idea of the mighty conqueror is subverted by the image of the bleeding lamb. This lamb is Jesus, and his greatest display of power was the point at which he laid it all down.

Sometimes we look around at the world and all that’s going on around us and despair. It seems like there is no one who is willing or able to fix the messes that we’re in. No one can

stand up to evil, no one can set things right, and weight of it is overwhelming. John despaired too, until he saw Jesus. The one who is worthy. The one who has already overcome.

Day 3

Reading: Revelation 6-9, Revelation 11:15-19

We live in the tension of a defeated enemy and an unfinished world. Jesus has already triumphed through his death and resurrection, but we have not yet seen the fulfillment of all he has promised. This is often described as the “already, not yet” Kingdom. Yes, the Kingdom is here, but not fully yet. These passages represent the ongoing struggle between good and evil as Satan seeks to advance his own kingdom and Jesus builds His kingdom through the church. What stands out amidst this conflict are the seals and the trumpets, which represent God’s patience and restraint. The judgments are measured. The warnings are repeated. There is an unfolding sense that even in disruption, God is not absent or uncontrolled. The world is not left to collapse without direction.

And though we hear the cry of those who have suffered: “How long, O Lord?” It is not a question of doubt, but of endurance. A prayer that names both faith and fatigue at the same time. And heaven responds, worship continues. God’s reign is not interrupted by the noise of earth below it. Revelation 11 brings the reminder into focus: the kingdoms of this world do not have the final word. The kingdom of God does. What feels unstable is not ultimate. What feels unfinished is not forgotten. Even with God’s restraint and patience in these chapters, Revelation points forward to a day when God will fully set the world right—when injustice, evil, and suffering are no longer allowed to remain.

Day 4

Reading: Revelation 12-13, 15-16

Jesus will ultimately and finally destroy the works of Satan. In the midst of final judgment and the outpouring of His unrestrained wrath, we also read about God’s character and blessings towards His followers.

Revelation 12 and 13 introduce a number of frightening beasts. John’s original audience would likely have seen the first beast as a symbol of the Roman Emperor and the second as the Imperial Cult that upheld his authority. That reading makes sense in their context. But Revelation is also doing something broader and more enduring.

These beasts represent the recurring systems of power that humans create and participate in—systems that place themselves above God and above others. They are the systems that depend on division, create scarcity, normalize greed, and that quietly turn the world into a place where the suffering of some sustains the comfort of others. They are the patterns that shape how we cling to identity, possessions, and control, often without recognizing how deeply entangled in sin we become to protect them. It is not just the specific Roman Emperor, or even just the Roman Empire itself that Jesus came to defeat. Jesus came to overcome and render obsolete the very systems of violence that have persisted since Eden.

In Revelation 16:15, Jesus’ language of coming like a thief in the night echoes what he said in the Gospels. In Matthew 25, he tells a parable about bridesmaids who fell asleep while

waiting for the groom and were ultimately unprepared for his arrival at the wedding banquet. A thief doesn't announce their arrival, and often comes precisely when attention has drifted and your guard is down. In both images, Jesus is urging his followers to stay awake and remain attentive. Do not drift into spiritual sleep.

But what does that actually mean in practice?

It's worth considering where we become complacent, or quietly complicit in patterns that do not reflect the kingdom of God. Where we begin to normalize things we once resisted. Where comfort or convenience slowly shapes what we tolerate, without us noticing the shift.

Day 5

Reading: Revelation 21-22

The closing chapter of Revelation shows the unveiling of the new heavens and the new earth and points to an eternity that experiences what God intended for in the Garden at the very beginning—perfect communion between God and people. One of the key verses of the whole Bible is Revelation 21:3. It shows the heart of what all of this has been about. And while we're talking about "dwelling places" and new cities and a new Earth, the heart of this isn't really about place, it's about presence. God is with us. And God's creation is not wasted either. The story doesn't end with escape from evil and suffering, escape from the world. It ends with the world being made new, being made into what it was always meant to be.

I know we've asked this before but it's always worth reflecting on: where do you see signs of God's renewal in the world around you, and how might you join in the Kingdom breaking through?

If you'd like to go deeper in your study of the Bible as a whole, here are a few additional resources:

Surprised by Hope, N.T. Wright

A deeper look at heaven and what happens after we die.

The Bible Makes Sense, Walter Brueggemann

General guidelines for scriptural interpretation and application

The Great Divorce

The Problem of Pain

Mere Christianity

C.S. Lewis

A philosopher's approach to some of the difficult concepts we confront in Scripture.

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart

General guidelines for how to read and interpret the different genres of Scripture

The Story of God, the Story of Us, Sean Gladding

A survey of the Bible using a fictional, narrative setting that connects themes throughout the Bible.

Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible

Footnotes and articles give insight into what was happening in the surrounding culture and the cultural nuances found in scripture.