

HOW THE KINGDOM COMES

John sees a scroll in the hand of God, and **that scroll is God's plan for all of history.**

The problem is that no one can open the scroll, which means that God's plan to make all wrongs right will never happen! John realizes this and starts uncontrollably sobbing:

And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. [5:3-4]

But then John hears that someone called the Lion of Judah is the one—the only one!—who is able to open the scroll, because the Lion has conquered.

Jesus is the Lion, and it is by means of his life, death, and resurrection that the Kingdom will come.

But *how* will the Kingdom come, and what is the church's role in its coming?

THE JUDGMENT

The Revelation is filled with scenes of judgment, *but that judgment never produces repentance:*

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. [9:20-21]

So, what *will* produce repentance?

THE CHURCH

Jesus will use his church to bring the nations to repentance:

⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. ⁶ They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. ⁷ And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, ⁸ and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. ⁹ For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, ¹⁰ and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. ¹³ And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. [11:4-13]

When the church is faithful to Jesus and testifies to him *even to the point of death*, then it is that suffering witness of the church that will lead to the repentance of the nations.