

BIBLICAL RESOURCES



Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 93 (92):1-2,5; Revelation 1:5-8; John 18:33-37

Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice

John 18:33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” 35 Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” 36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” 37 Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

This is a wonderful passage from John 18, which goes to the heart of the Christology of that Gospel. It is read chiefly on Good Friday, but is also appropriate here. It must be said, however, that the presentation of the conversation with Pilate serves the theological programme of the Gospel rather than our need of historical facticity. Echoes of other texts abound.

KIND OF WRITING

As may be observed from the chart, John offers an intricate sequence of scenes, in

an intentionally theatrical manner. The scene chosen for our reading is the second scene, from early in the dialogue. As you can see from the pairings of the scenes, scene 2 is meant to be read in conjunction with scene 6. In both scenes, Pilate asks the key questions: “Are you the King of the Jews?” and “Where are you from?” In a Gospel in which those against Jesus always presume to know “where he is from”, paradoxically only Pilate asks truly open questions.

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

“Kingdom” is an important category for understanding the preaching of Jesus and the subsequent Christian tradition. There are two sources. There is the commonplace of all religions that God is a ruler or king. This is also found widely in the Hebrew Bible. Of the many possible illustrations, two may suffice:

For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us. (Is 33:22)

Say among the nations, “The Lord is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity.” (Psa 96:10)

You may notice the connection of kingship with salvation and with justice. When, however, Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God (common in the Synoptics but rare in John—John 3:3, 5), he is not reflecting this religious cliché that

Thought for the day

It is possible to contrast the various philosophies and religions as systems of ideas and as ethical paradigms. What is distinctive of Christianity, however, is the centrality of the person of Jesus. In his own ministry, he proclaimed the Good News of the reign of God. The Good News for Paul is Jesus’ death and resurrection. Christianity is different: we have not only a message but a person to proclaim.

Prayer

O Christ, you stand at the very centre of our existence as believers. Show yourself to us and help us to know you, love and serve you. Amen.

God is in charge. Rather, the use of the expression is apocalyptic, deriving from works such as the book of Daniel. The hope in a future kingdom of God is a recognition of the felt absence of God. It is answering the question: where is God in all this mess? As a result, today’s first reading goes very well with the Gospel:

To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed. (Dan 7:14)

NEW TESTAMENT FOREGROUND

It is a common place of New Testament studies that while Jesus proclaimed the kingdom, the early church proclaimed Jesus, the king. The shift from the teaching of Jesus to the person of Jesus is very noticeable from the letters of St Paul onwards. It is very noticeable too in the Fourth Gospel, where every single scene is not so much teaching offered by Jesus as teaching about Jesus himself. This is true even across the whole Gospel: John 3:3, 5; 18:36.

King: John 1:49 (Nathaniel); 6:15 (the people); 12:13, 15 (Scripture citation); 18:33, 37, 39; 19:3, 12, 14–15, 19, 21 (all with Pilate).

1. OUTSIDE 18:28-32 The Jews demand death	=	7. OUTSIDE 19:12-16a The Jews obtain death
2. INSIDE 18:33-38a Pilate and Jesus on kingship	=	6. INSIDE 19:9-11 Pilate and Jesus on power
3. OUTSIDE 18:38b-40 Pilate finds no guilt; choice of Barabbas	=	5. OUTSIDE 19:4-8 Pilate finds no guilt; “Behold the man”
		4. INSIDE 19:1-3 Soldiers scourge Jesus

The category of kingship arises from the historical Jesus tradition, as we see:

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. (Mark 15:16–20)

The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." (Mark 15:26)

The Fourth Gospel then takes this tradition and explores it in an almost Pauline way: Jesus will be king not by force but by frailty precisely because his kingdom is not of this world.

ST PAUL

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. (1 Cor 1:18–25)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 33 In John's Gospel, Pilate is made to go out to the Jewish leaders who refuse to defile the Passover by entering the house of a Gentile. The irony is palpable, because Jesus is the Lamb of God as the Baptist proclaims at the start of this Gospel. The question put by Pilate need not be insincere, because it is one of the questions which really matter. Later in chapter 19, we read: Pilate also had an inscription written and put on

the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." (John 19:19) Then, the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" (John 19:21)

Verse 34 The questioner becomes the questioned. This turning of the tables is even clearer later on: Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." (John 19:11)

Verse 35 Historically speaking, some Jewish leaders plotted the death of Jesus. To make sure the Romans would pay attention, an essentially religious charge had to be converted into a political one. Later on we read: The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." (John 19:15) This is an especially hard saying on the lips of those for whom God alone is king. The earlier uses of the word "nation" help us understand the force of the dialogue: *If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.* But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. (John 11:48–52) John's Gospel excels here in the ironic and unconscious proclamation of the truth. Finally, "What have you done" is a tremendous question.

Verse 36 The "whence" (where from) of Jesus is a powerful technique used in this Gospel to explore his true identity. The texts are too many to give fully, but here are the references: John 1:48; 2:9; 3:8; 4:11; 6:5; 7:27–28; 8:14; 9:29–30; 19:9. The climax is 19:9. The non-violence of his followers is portrayed ironically too in this Gospel: *Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus (= king!). Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"* (John 18:10–11)

Verse 37 Born: i.e. as a human being. Come into the world: i.e. as the Word who was in the beginning. The reader of course knows the deep origin of Jesus since the very first words of the Prologue.

On the lips of the Johannine Jesus, we hear the typical faith vocabulary of his community: testify and truth. To testify is found widely and significantly: John 1:7–8, 15, 32, 34; 2:25; 3:11, 26, 28, 32; 4:39, 44; 5:31–33, 36–37, 39; 7:7; 8:13–14, 18; 10:25; 12:17; 13:21; 15:26–27; 18:23, 37; 19:35; 21:24. Perhaps the most intense moments are in chapter 5:31–39. "Truth" reminds the reader of two texts: *And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14) *And you know the way to the place where I am going.* Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:4–6) Hearing the voice reminds us of the Good Shepherd in Jn 10.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The feast we have today and the gospel give us an opportunity to reflect on the different ways in which we, and others, exercise influence and leadership. The authority of Pilate came from position and power. The authority of Jesus came from his integrity and what he stood for. Recall leaders you have known whose influence was like that of Jesus.
2. The values of the kingdom of God cannot be imposed. It is never a matter of fighting battles, or forcing others into compliance. Perhaps through experience you have learned the limitations of the use of force, as a parent, a teacher, a group leader. What has been the good news, the learnings for you, in this?

3. Jesus came to bear witness to the truth and we are all created for a purpose. What do you believe is the purpose of your life? Recall times when you have been able to bear witness to this. What fruit has this witness had for yourself and/or others?

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God, to Jesus Christ, first-born from the dead, you have granted everlasting dominion and a kingship that shall not pass away.

Remove from us every desire for privilege and power, that we may imitate the sacrificial love of Christ our King, and, as a royal and priestly people, serve you humbly in our brothers and sisters. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead

Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

7 Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.

Rev 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

This is a very appropriate reading for the end of the liturgical year and for the feast of Christ the King.

KIND OF WRITING

The apocalypse begins with a Title or Introduction (1:1-3), which is expanded in these verses giving us more detail before we come to the Vision of the Son of Man (1:9-20). Then follow the letters to the seven church (Revelation 2-3), which constitute a kind of naming of the specific contexts in different places. To smooth the transition from the Title to the Vision, the writer amplifies the greeting in a very rich way. Rev 1:4-8 make up the Letter Opening. The overall purpose of chapter 1 is to put in place a great reassurance before the penetrating assessments of the letters to the seven churches.

CONTEXT IN THE COMMUNITY

The NT Apocalypse was written at a time of considerable pressure for the faithful. Specifically, the imperial cult was emphatically promoted in Asia Minor. Domitian liked to be addressed as “our Lord and our God”—an address impossible for both Jews and Christians.

RELATED PASSAGES

The NT Apocalypse bristles with allu-

sions to the Hebrew Bible and other writings, even though direct citation as such is not employed.

Verse 4

God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” (Exodus 3:14)

Verse 5

And indeed you are faithful and true. (3 Maccabees 2:11)

Verse 7

As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. (Daniel 7:13)

And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)

Verse 8

Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, am first, and will be with the last. (Isaiah 41:4; cf. Is 44:6; 48:12).

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 4 John is an otherwise unknown Christian prophet within the Johannine tradition. Asia means western Turkey, i.e. what we call Asia Minor. The specific issues of the seven churches will be taken up in Revelation 2-3. Seven is also symbolic of the church *as a whole*. Grace and peace—by now a traditional greeting, taken from Judaism. The extra words (from him who was etc.) fit in with the teaching of book as a whole. The seven spirits really mean the churches in their transcendent dimension, already in the secure hold of the risen Lord.

Verse 5a The writer adds Jesus as the also the sender of grace. Each word counts. In the order of the Greek: he is a witness (lit. *martus*, just as the readers will be witnesses); faithful (*the* key virtue in Apocalyptic; the readers will also be called to be faithful); firstborn of the dead (i.e. risen, the first of many, the source of hope); ruler of the kings of the earth (not obviously the case at the time of course but central to Christian belief).

Verse 5b-6 This doxology—one of many in the Apocalypse—takes us from the identity of Jesus to his effect in the lives of believers. In contrast to Jewish tradition, this doxology is directed to Christ. Each word is again important. Believers are loved by Christ and the measure of his love is the forgiveness of sins in his blood, on the cross. The symbolism of the blood as event and as (unlikely) “detergent” is a key to the New Testament Apocalypse. Because of that, the believers have been made into the community of the Kingdom, i.e. sharing the victory of Christ, now and *into the future*. Likewise in him, believers have been made into a priesthood, that is, enjoying effective access to God. We have communion in Christ because with him, we also serve his and our God and Father. The final ascription of glory combines a reference to the liturgy, as the vital source of faith and courage, with a reference to final victory on account of Jesus’ resurrection.

Verse 7 The writer combines references to Daniel and Zechariah, showing Jesus as the Son of Man.

Verse 8 Properly speaking, it is God who is speaking here, echoing the disclosure of the name at the burning bush. As the Apocalypse unfolds, there are interesting exchanges of these attributes between God and Jesus, very much part of the Christology of Revelation. See Rev 1:17, 2:8; 21:6 and 23:13. Almighty is literally *Pantocrator*, the one who holds all (in being). The preceding attributes form a frame with v. 4 at the start of the Letter Opening.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The New Testament Apocalypse is written to meet the urgent need for reassurance and courage. How do I experience these needs in my own life?
2. In Christ, God loves us and forgives us. We all need love; we all need forgiveness.
3. What would later be called the priesthood of the faithful is affirmed in the NT Apocalypse. What does it mean to me to have such unhindered access to God?

PRAYER

God, faithful one, help us to embrace your gifts of love and forgiveness through Jesus, the faithful witness. As we face the struggles of life, give us the reassurance we need, that we too may be faithful witnesses to you through Christ.

I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven

Dan 7:9 *As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire.* 10 *A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.* 11 *I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.* 12 *As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*

13 As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. 14 To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The lectionary offers us only vv.13 and 14 as the reading; here, however, more of the context is given here so that it may make sense. Dan 11:5-39 makes it clear that the context of writing was the brutal persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC; also reflected in the Maccabean literature).

KIND OF WRITING

Daniel 7, a little apocalypse, shows the following content and structure:

7:1-8 The Vision of the Beasts

7:9-14 The Vision of the Heavenly Throne (our reading comes from this).

ORIGIN OF THE READING

The book of Daniel, written during the terrible oppression under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, is in two parts. Dan 1-6 recounts tales of extraordinary and exemplary Torah-piety, a kind of ideal portrait of the faithful Jew. The second part of the book, Dan 7-12, takes us to the inner world of an apocalyptic prophet. The initial tales are set in the courts of Babylon and Persia, supposedly at the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 7, from which our reading is taken, is the most vivid and familiar of the visions.

The two parts of Daniel are connected: Torah-piety and faithfulness was literally life-threatening at the time. The question naturally arises of God's presence / absence in suffering. This is the question which the apocalyptic parts address. It is not an accident that the book of Daniel is the first Hebrew book of the bible to come up with a (fairly) clear doctrine of resurrection (in 12:1-3).

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

The wider OT background is found in the earlier apocalyptic passage of the Hebrew Bible, such as Joel 2:28-3:21, Zech 9-14, and Isa 24-27. One example may suffice:

I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls. (Joel 2:30-32)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 9 The throne vision begins, echoing motifs from the Old Testament and from Ancient Near Eastern mythologies. Cf. Is 6, Ezek 1 and 10.

Verse 10 Fire is a symbol of mystery, purification and danger. The court is portrayed as extraordinarily larger than any corresponding human court. The books introduce the idea of judgement and final reckoning—the very thing that the persecuted are awaiting. For the heavenly court, cf. Dan 10:20-21; Deut 33:2; 1 Kings 22:19 etc.

Verse 11 The arrogant horn is none other than Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who referred to himself on his coins as an epiphany of God (hence the name). He is the fourth beast, now comprehensively put to death and his body burnt. Thus the complete victory over the forces of evil is declared.

Verse 12 Other political figures, seemingly indestructible in their day, are permitted to rule for the strictly limited period of half a *septenarium* of years. The

seven year period remains significant in the NT apocalyptic and the half period comes out as 1260 days. The limit placed on this exercise of power is meant to be profoundly reassuring for the first hearers of the book of Daniel.

Verse 13 It is not quite clear who these figures are and their interpretation is disputed. In books such as Ezekiel and other literature of the period “*bar enosh*” (Son of Man) in Aramaic means simply a human being. However, this particular *bar enosh* has the role of agent of final salvation and this provides the background for Jesus' own use of the term. But there have been many interpretations, both communal (Israel) and individual (the awaited Messiah). It could also be the angel Michael. Who is the Ancient of Days? Our spontaneous inclination is to think God himself. But apocalyptic in general has a strong sense of God's transcendence and often uses intermediary figures, such as angels. It seems to be a figure, in any case, who is outside or above the unfolding of history. In that role, the Ancient of Days, perhaps as intermediary, communicated somehow God's mysterious presence.

Verse 14 It becomes clear in this astonishing series of affirmations that this particular son of man has a distinctive, even unique role at the time when history ends and God's justice will be established.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. When I am suffering, where do I find resources for hope? Does my faith help me at times like this?
2. Jesus himself preached the future Kingdom of God: has that teaching been part of my own spirituality over the years?
3. In the Psalm, we are told the decrees of the Lord are to be trusted. Is this true to my own experience and can I name times in my own experience?

PRAYER

O God, our king and our rock, in you we place our trust, knowing that your rule is an eternal rule. You have sent your Son as Emmanuel, God with us, till the end of time. May we never lose heart but always place our faith in you.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

THE LITURGY

Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 93 (92):1-2,5; Revelation 1:5-8; John 18:33-37

READINGS 1 AND 3

The first reading talks about a future kingdom of God which “will have no end.” The Gospel likewise talks about kingship, but in a very different way. Jesus’ rule, as we see across the New Testament, is going to be quite different.

THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 93 (92): The psalmist affirms that the Lord is the king of the universe who preserves order and suppresses the destructive forces in the world. It fits extremely well with the feast and the chosen readings. The last line can serve as an illustration: Truly your decrees are to be trusted. Holiness is fitting to your house, O Lord, until the end of time.

SUNDAY INTRODUCTIONS

First reading

Daniel 7:13-14

The book of Daniel was written at a time of intense religious persecution against Jews. The natural question is, “Where is God?” The prophet speaks of a future kingdom, which will never end.

Second reading

Revelation 1:5-8

The book of Revelation is always a bit of a challenge; nevertheless, the teaching within it is deep and rich. In this reading, listen out for all the different things it says about Jesus and ask yourself which of these metaphors or affirmations speaks to you today.

Gospel

John 18:33-37

“Kingdom” suggests to us splendour and glory, power and authority. Is this what the Bible has in mind when it speaks of the Kingdom of God and Jesus as king of the Jews? Absolutely not, the very contrary in fact, as we hear in this remarkable reading.

WEEKDAY INTRODUCTIONS

Monday 26 November

Apocalypse 14:1-5

A vision of heaven opens—for those

who following the Lamb. The 144,000 is symbolic (12x12x1000) meaning the whole world, everyone.

Luke 21:1-4

Though brief, this is a powerful story. We all recognise that quantity is not the measure of the *gift* but quality of the *giving*, the attitude of the heart. The little anecdote is in sharp contrast to the preceding avarice of the scribes.

Tuesday 27 November

St Ferga, bishop and missionary

Apocalypse 14:14-19

In this vision, the sufferings of the end of time are read using harvest imagery. Harvest, suggesting fruitfulness and ingathering, is a natural metaphor for the end of time.

Luke 21:5-11

Luke wrote long after the destruction of the Temple. The issue for him is not the destruction but the link between its ruin and the end of time. He writes to prevent useless speculation and insists that the end will not be at all secret but public.

Wednesday 28 November

Apocalypse 15:1-4

In this vision, the victory over evil is accomplished. The hymn quoted was probably used in the regular worship of the hearers. It’s use here is to encourage those still undergoing significant harassment if not persecution.

Luke 21:12-19

Our gospels is a demanding teaching on the cost of bearing witness. As such, it looks forward to the Acts of the Apostles and there we see the early church suffering and courageously confessing Jesus. Jesus asks his disciples to follow his own example of costly faithfulness.

Thursday 29 November

Apocalypse 18:1-2, 21-23, 19:1-3, 9

Today’s reading is a fantastical mock funeral for the forces of evil, represented by Babylon (= the Roman Empire). Thankfully, it ends positively.

Luke 21:20-28

There are two fairly distinct parts to our Gospel today. Firstly, Luke looks back on the actual destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans. He reads the tragedy in the light of Old Testament predictions. The second part looks forward to the future coming of the Son of Man. For Luke, the extended “time of the church” leads to the end of time itself, at which point the believers will have nothing to fear. Meanwhile, we are to undergo conversion and to bear witness.

Friday 30 November

St Andrew, apostle

Romans 10:9-18

St Paul reflects on the importance of the preached word, from which faith comes. Who were the people who brought me the living proclamation?

Matthew 4:18-22

Stripped of all inessential detail, this call story goes straight to the heart of the matter: the sovereign call of Jesus and the unflinching yes of those called. We would like to know more on a human level, but all we really *need* to know is here. Does the account resonate with my own experience?

Saturday 1 December

Apocalypse 22:1-7

A marvellous image of the New Jerusalem, without Temple, because God will be our light. The New Testament Apocalypse ends on a resoundingly positive note. The Bible begins in the heavenly garden and it ends in the heavenly city.

Luke 21:34-36

Just because the end is not yet is no reason for relaxing. For Luke, the urgency of discipleship remains—that is, the urgency of our continued conversion, our prayer, our service, our bearing witness. The delay is the coming is not a reason for complacency. Cf. *The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3:9)