



At the End

What if our theology could get up out of our armchairs and into the real world? That would be something worth talking about. This is The Armchair Anabaptist podcast.

*Father, we've forgotten
that you've called us together
to bear each other's burdens
and worship you as one.*

“Community loneliness - that might be the great evangelistic opportunity of our time, the great wound in the world that needs healing.”

“Mixing our faith with a political party is like mixing ice cream and horse manure. It doesn't do much damage to the manure, but it really messes up the ice cream.”

“It's very early. It's very primal. It's very deep within the human community, is that we are people who do not want to be alone.”

“I'd love to see us stand more in solidarity with one another, not looking down on one another, but together finding that level ground at the foot of the cross of Jesus and sharing in the hope of the resurrection.”

*One church,
One light,
One body,
Found in Christ.*

Introduction

Jesse Penner: You're listening to The Armchair Anabaptist. I'm Jesse Penner.

Andrew Dyck: And I'm Andrew Dyck. This is episode four, *At the End*.

JP: We are swinging right over to the other side of the Bible. Last week we looked at the beginning and now – I hope we're not giving you sort of theological whiplash, but we are right over into Revelation. We are going to be looking at the end of all things and how that plays into our understanding of community.

I think maybe this isn't as crazy as it sounds in some ways. There's a lot of parallel in terms of thinking about the plan that God has for where we are all headed as creation, as humanity, as those who are in relationship with Jesus Christ and following him, and where we started from. I think there's a lot of very specific dovetails that happened there, there's a lot of overlap in these things. And so it felt right, after we looked at the beginning of all

things, to go and look at what God's plan is; his redemptive plan is for all of creation and for humanity and try and understand how that can teach us more about community.

AD: Both the beginning and the end. We are still talking about design in both instances, we learn a lot about the design of creation from what God has revealed to be true for why and how he created in the first place. We also learn a lot about design when we see where we're headed and what that final destination is. So this is we've been created a certain way to function a certain way with a goal or an end in mind.

And so as much as it might seem a bit crazy to start at the beginning and go straight to the end, I think design ties both of these things together.

JP: I think the other thing here, and this has maybe been a little bit of a theological journey for me, is the end has often seemed – and when I say the end, I'm speaking again about this sort of master plan that God has, this journey that we see sketched out within Scripture that speaks to the trajectory of where things are headed and what things will look like when Jesus comes back victorious and makes all things as they should be. That felt like this sort of nebulous, abstract future thing that at best was kind of difficult to wrap my head around, it didn't really apply and at worst was terrifying, when you look at some of the apocalyptic literature that exists in Scripture. But more and more, I think I've become aware myself of the fact that where we're headed matters. And like you said, understanding that there's a design in place begins to change not just how we're thinking about where we're going, but actually what our orientation should be right now.

AD: And understanding and explaining eschatology is not easy in the least and so I'm grateful that we get to hand it off to our group of contributors. In this episode we'll be talking to Shane Claiborne, Dave Reimer, Kara Mandryk and Beth Stovell, some of which you've already heard from, and some which will be new contributors to the season. And they just do a great job in not only explaining some of these deep theological truths, but also grounding them in how our understanding of the end of all things matters to us today and our community today.

We're going to be starting off here with Dave Reimer. Dave Reimer is the president of Steinbach Bible College and he's also spent many years mentoring and guiding church leaders and pastors as a part of the Christian Mennonite Conference. We gave Dave the challenge of answering this question: when we think about our eschatology, our view of the end times, how does that change how we think about the concept of community?

When we think about our view of the end times, how does that change how we think about community?

Dave Reimer: Yeah, I think we're assuming here right away is that there is a standard Anabaptist eschatology because in our Mennonite circles, I've heard all kinds of ideas with regard to eschatology and what it ought to be. So in my mind, there's a couple of things. One is the church as the body of Christ, and the other is that the Kingdom of God has already been inaugurated. So I think of Jesus' parables of the kingdom, where the kingdom is the

wheat and it's also the tares. And in the midst of that, there is the life that we're living and the mission that we have in the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God.

And we're supposed to live it out as the Beatitudes show us with regard to our character and with our regard to our relationships, and our attitudes and the way that we relate with one another, in the way that we exist and experience the world that we live in.

So blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the peacemakers and all of that whole list of things says we are already citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven though we're still living in this world. So that tells us what we're looking forward to but it also tells us how we ought to be living in the here and now as we experience life in the Kingdom, we do it together, demonstrating this love and this peacemaking and the character of the body of Christ, the way of Christ in this world.

AD: The Reverend Dr. Kara Mandryk is the coordinator of the Henry Budd College for Ministry, as well as a priest in the Anglican Church of Canada and the Archdeacon for Ministry and Training in the Diocese of Brandon. I had the opportunity to talk with Kara and to ask her how does her eschatology inform our view of community and its importance?

Rev. Dr. Kara Mandryk: You know, when I was first thinking about this question and I kind of flippantly thought, well, in some ways it doesn't, because historically so many people have kept those things separate, right? They've kept the end things for the end things and community is something in the here and now. But of course, that's not my thought or the way I would approach that, because I have long been formed by the idea of what I've heard called prolepsis.

I heard this many years ago in my doctoral work and it kind of has connected me – the notion of prolepsis being living in the present and drawing the future into the present. And so I remember one time I preached a sermon, it was an Advent sermon, because, of course, in many ways, Advent actually focuses on the end of things, and it was an advent sermon entitled Remembering the Future, which is really the whole notion of being part of community, where we connect here and now in the present, and we remember the future, which plays a little bit of course, with the idea of time and space and all of that. But the idea of the things that we are assured of, that is, the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ over darkness, death and despair, does inform and must in fact inform and shape how I live in the present as an individual and as a community.

And so much of the work that you do, that I do, and in even in pastoral care. Where I live, I do a lot of funerals and I'm not even a parish priest. That's not even my role. But because the Anglican Church of Canada is kind of the default Christian community in many communities in northern Manitoba and many Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba, we are called to do a lot of funerals and preaching the reality of resurrection, the truth of Christ conquering of death, darkness and despair, and how that shapes, forms and help the family in that very moment of grief really is deeply connected.

And so I would never, ever use the language of how it is like eschatology help, you know, connect us with community, but I would preach and use the language and speak of how the truth of who Jesus is and the truth of Christ's conquering of all darkness, all death and all despair, shapes how we interact with each other in the here and now, particularly in our moments of grief.

AD: Beth Stovell also had the opportunity to respond on how our ideas or concepts of the end times inform our ideas and concepts of community. As a reminder, for those of you who haven't heard her introduced before, Dr. Beth Stovell has been involved with a variety of ministries over the years and is an Old Testament professor and the Chair of General Theological Studies at Ambrose University. Here's what she had to say.

Dr. Beth Stovell: So, you know, it's interesting. I love that I get to teach biblical theology because one of the things get to do is start in Genesis and end in Revelation and think about how the beginning and the end speak to each other and the ways in which Revelation reflects back so much of Genesis and also gives us hope for the future, for how we understand what will be.

And so I think one of the things that's interesting as we look at the book of Revelation and we think about what we anticipate in the end? My husband is a systematic theologian. He studies eschatology. That's his area. And one of the things he talks about is how the end informs what we think of now.

So to read from the end is actually a really valuable practice for us because one of the things it does is it says what will be. So when we look at the book of Revelation, we see things like everyone worshipping together and they're worshipping in their own tongues, in their own cultures, which gives us a picture of what worship should look like in community today where we are actually worshipping across our divides.

It also gives us a picture of renewal and restoration. And as we think about that, one of the things that it does for us is actually think about, in what way is God already active in restoring and renewing the things around us and how do we participate? My husband and I put together a little message, the gospel for a five-year-old, and it basically is this idea that God wants to make all things good and you get to be a part of it. He wants to restore all things. And I think this idea that we are in the practice of restoration and healing, we are in the activity as a community of participating with God in that work is really profound.

In biblical theology, we have this idea of the already and the not yet as a way of talking about eschatology. And so traditions sometimes fall in one of those two directions, sometimes they're very focused on the *already*. And when they do that, they can sometimes get very excited and almost like, "yeah, victory is already here." The hard part about that is that then you can miss the ways in which we are still struggling. We are still suffering. There are still dark and hard places.

On the other hand, some traditions have a very strong *not yet*. In other words, we're not there yet. This world sucks, it's bad. And we just have to wait till the next world, that's really

what we're waiting for. Or we have to wait till the restoration of all things for everyone to talk about that we're just in a bad space now, we just got to wait it out and pray to die. Or come soon God.

And as you can hear in that, that is a very pessimistic approach to how we think about the world we're in right now. Already-not yet eschatology, that combination of the two says, on the one hand, God is already at work. God is currently restoring all things. God is currently healing and restoring our community. God is currently doing that work. But it is not yet completed. God has more to do. God has suffering to remove. God has healing to do. God has relationships to build and rebuild. God has a lot more work to continue doing.

And some of that work is through us, our continued involvement and some of that work is things that God only can do. And so what it does is it allows us in community to have hope, but also a realistic hope, a hope that is based in God's actual work in front of us, but also the awareness that this will be continue to be what life is until Jesus comes again.

And so there's a way in which we are forward-moving when we face suffering. We have ways of having hope. When we face struggle as community, that we can care for each other and we can believe that God will do real things to change the world we're in. But we also don't think that we can do that on our own and that we're going to fix it all right now. We can do the steps with God, the small steps sometimes, the step where I look over and I see someone in my church who's crying and I walk over after service and say, "hey, can I sit with you? Or do you want to talk about something?" And God uses that moment for healing and for connection and for care. And that's real. That's the kingdom of God with us.

But I'm not, in that conversation, going to fix all the pain that person's in. And that's where the not yet also reminds us that God has more to do. That the story isn't done yet and I think that combination can affect how we live in community together.

JP: Shane Claiborne is an author, speaker and activist who's worked with Mother Teresa and founded *The Simple Way* in Philadelphia. He's also the founder of *The Red Letter Way*, along with Tony Campolo. I asked Shane this same question, how does our understanding of end times begin to inform our theology of community or how we think about these things? Here is Shane's answer.

Shane Claiborne: Well, how we think of the end times and how this whole story ends makes a lot of difference. I heard one preacher say, I'm fine driving an SUV and, you know, using plastic and burning fossil fuels, because I think of it as just expediting the apocalypse, bringing Jesus back quicker. I don't want to name names, but that may or may not have been Pastor Mark Driscoll.

I think how even our theology of this world is not my home, and I love my blue grass, but there's some theology that's not as sharp as it should be. And some of that, you know, swing low, sweet chariot, coming forward to carry me home. And that idea that this is not our home, we're going home, can affect the way that we live right now. And I think there's an equilibrium here. Right.

If we think that this world is just a temporary place, that our faith is about going to heaven when we die, then that really has some real implications in how we live right now.

And there are a lot of versions of Christianity that have been, as it's called, the fire insurance, you know, escaping hell or just escaping this world to go to heaven. And if we aren't careful, our faith does become a ticket into heaven and a license to ignore the world that we live in right now. And that's why going back to Jesus and going back to Scripture is so important, because almost every time Jesus opens his mouth, he talks about the kingdom of God, the reign of God coming on earth as it is in heaven.

And it's not something that we just go up to when we die, but something we're to usher in on earth as it is in heaven, where we're to bring God's dream to earth while we live. Now, that really changes things, right?

If we believe that God's redeeming all things, that we are to not accept the world as it is, but to build the world as God dreams of it, it also affects how we live in this world if we think God's redeeming this world.

And even some of the theology that I've kind of challenged, some of the versions of eschatology or the apocalypse and how the world is kind of burning up and a number of theologians have pointed out that the fire that often used in this image, that the world will be consumed by fire, is not the destructive fire, but it's the refining fire.

It's like pruning your grapevine, right? So it's to renew and restore the earth. And that's really the image that you have, is that in Genesis, creation begins in the garden. But as you read Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we don't go back to the Garden of Eden, the garden, the vision, God's dream in the Garden of Eden actually comes to life in the city, which, you know, Revelation speaks of the new Jerusalem.

And this vision of the City of God or a renewed creation has kind of the best of the garden and the best of the city together. So the New Jerusalem has the river of life running through it, and I'm pretty sure it doesn't have lead in it. You know, the tree of life is flourishing.

It says the gates of the city are left open. I mean, that's got some beautiful implications when it comes to welcoming immigrants and refugees and living without fear. And then it also says, "and I didn't see a temple there." There was no temple there because God dwells with the people. So what a beautiful vision, you know. And one of my neighbours, I get some of my best theology not only from the seminary and the academia, but from the streets and from my neighbourhood.

And one of my neighbours saw us out in the garden. We're doing a lot of urban farming and gardening in North Philadelphia. And she said, "I get what we're doing. I get it." And I said, "What?" And she said, "we're trying to bring the Garden of Eden to North Philadelphia." Boom. N.T. Wright can't even say it that well, that's kind of what we're going for.

And the last thing I'd say on this is that the word apocalypse, it doesn't just mean everything's ending, but it means the great revealing, the ripping away of the veil. And

that's what revelation – right there, revealing – we often think of this is like the Armageddon, the zombie apocalypse or something. But this is actually about revealing the world that God dreams of, God's dream is bursting forth in this world.

And we're also revealing, a time of revelation is a time of truth-telling. Right. It's a time where we're reckoning with the sins of our past and we're trying to heal those things so that creation restored. We're trying to live more responsibly. So that matters. You know, and one of the last things that we see in Revelation two as New Jerusalem comes is it says Babylon falls, and Babylon, of course, is this kind of iconic image of empire and the power of this world.

And I think also all the markets and systems of economics that have been built on the backs of the poor and have slaughtered and shed the blood of the prophets. I mean, these aren't my words either words of Revelation. Right? But all this and it says, as Babylon falls in the book of Revelations, there's two responses.

And my friend Tony Campolo does a great sermon on this. But he says there's two responses: the kings of the earth and the merchants weep as Babylon falls and they weep and they wail and they say, how could Babylon fall? You can hear the the stock market crashing kind of thing. And then there's another response, and as Babylon falls, it says, the angels rejoice.

So Tony always says, will we be rejoicing with the angels or weeping with the merchants when Babylon falls? And that's a good question for all of us.

AD: We've entitled this episode The End. But it's no mistake at all that all of our guests here brought into the conversation how it matters to us here and now, which is a bit of foreshadowing because that's going to be our follow-up question that we'll hear them go into even greater detail in a few minutes.

But of course, where we're headed does affect how we live now. And so how does this look for community? Well, for Dave Reimer, he was definitely bringing out the tension of the *already but not yet* nature of the kingdom of God. That it's inaugurated. It's here. We live differently in it, and yet we still await its ultimate fulfillment.

Something that I also saw in Kara Mandyrk's response: she really talked about giving the hope of the good news of Jesus, how he has conquered and will conquer evil and the forces of darkness, and how when people are grieving and they're going through a difficult time, that can be a real message of hope. And so there's different implications for community, but lots that matter right here today.

JP: Yeah, it is a fascinating thing how everyone that we spoke to sort of pulled it back very quickly to how it affects this moment. And like you said, there's a sort of tension in the in-between that we live in. This recognition that Jesus has won victory, that we've entered into the kingdom of God in a meaningful way, and yet that hasn't been fully realized.

When I look at what Shane and Beth had to say, there's also this flavour of recognizing that we're not headed towards destruction. I think sometimes, certainly when I think about myself growing up, there was a sense in which the world was going to end in a blaze of fire, that everything that was here was going to get burned away and that we would be sent off to some other place, some other heaven, somewhere else.

And more and more, I've been captured by a belief in a God whose primary purpose for creation and for us is redemption, and that he's working towards restoration and not a destruction of all things, but rather a bringing back of all things to the way they are supposed to be. Which again, is a beautiful reason to have the beginning and the end juxtaposed in this way, like we have this season.

It's become a really powerful, kind of defining thought for me as I've understood my own role as a pastor, as I thought about what it means to be the church, that there are ways in which our call becomes to be a prophetic voice that sits in the middle of brokenness and pain and darkness, but looks towards the promise of what Jesus is going to be doing in the future and in so many ways, what he has already done, even in this moment, and speaks to that in a profound way. And I think that both Shane and Beth really hit on that in powerful ways.

AD: It all comes back to this notion of goodness, and we acknowledge that in our understanding of creation, God declared that it was good. And then as we look forward to this redemptive re-creation, it is going to be perfectly good. It's going to be great. And that has always been the design and it continues to be this end goal. And it's just really good news that nothing we do in between is going to deter that mission, but we can definitely participate in it.

And I liked that idea that I saw all the way through. How can we participate now with this glimpse of what it will ultimately become? I especially liked when Beth Stovell talked about how Revelation is a book of worship and worship happens over and over and over again, and it's worship from people from all over the earth, through all human history. And this really for us just shows that we can worship across our divides even now.

And if we're looking for, again, these practical ways to put theology into practice, then this notion of being worshipers in community with one another, despite our differences and things that seek to divide us, that is the way in which we live out this reality in community right now.

JP: The words of Shane Claiborne at the end there also kind of ring in my ears a little bit. He's an effective communicator and he knows kind of when to push a little bit and to make you a little bit uncomfortable. And I think he did so there at the end as he asks this question, when Babylon falls, are we going to be in a place where we are rejoicing with the angels or weeping with the merchants?

And so there are really strong implications for how we're living our life right now that are formed by what we believe that God is doing in the world in this moment and what his plan is for the future of all things. We're going to dig more into that in a little bit.

How does our view of the end times change the way we think about life here and now?

JP: As their conversations continued with these guests, we drilled further down into this question of what our eschatology has to say in regard to community. We asked, when we think about community and eschatology, how does our view of the end times begin to change the way that we think about what life is like here and now in this moment?

This is what Dave Reimer had to say.

DR: Yeah, and I think that would connect back to the Beatitudes conversation again. We are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven now, not just further down the road and we are definitely looking forward to the consummation of the kingdom when Christ comes again. That's got to be clear in the way that we think, there's a hope, there's a trajectory, there's a purpose for why we're here now and it's something beyond this. That's real and that leads us in that direction, that points us to where we want to go, how we want to behave now, so that we bring the best body of Christ into the kingdom down the road. So this is this is significant for the way we live now.

But again, I go back to the Beatitudes. Yours is the kingdom of heaven if you are poor, pure in spirit, if you hunger and thirst for righteousness, if you are peacemakers, all the rest of these pieces, this is how we want to live here and now because we are citizens of the kingdom now. We look forward to the rest but we're here now. So I think that does drive our community now because that's who we are. We have begun. We're already in this kingdom, which is not yet consummated.

AD: In her response to how our view of the end changes things for us here today in the present, Kara Mandryk really focused on the recreation and redemption of all things, specifically even the land that we inhabit and how our attitudes towards creation are to be affected by that. Here's what she had to say.

KM: Without going deeply into my own understanding of Scripture and belief system, when I think of eschatology, I suspect people in different traditions will think different things when it comes to eschatology.

I always think about and tend to focus on the ultimate victory and return of Christ. The gathering of the Nations. One of my most favourite images is from the very end, like the book of Revelation. Two things have always been so important in forming my understanding of both eschatology and then worship and liturgy, because that was a big part of my life.

The first is in Revelation 21, where God comes down and earth and heaven unite together again and there's no longer any sea, there's no longer any chaos. And all the tears are wiped

away. I mean, there's the comfort piece, there's the connection and even community piece, because, of course when we think about community, typically I think we would default to human community.

We need to think biblically about community, and that is community between humanity, our good Creator, and then the good creation that God has placed us in. So in fact, our community is not just individual humans one with another. Our community is with God, our Creator, Jesus, our Saviour, and the Spirit who lives within us and empowers us and as well as the earth, the seas, the waters and the creatures.

Whether that's like in my world, we talk about the creatures and the sky fliers and the water swimmers and the land swimmers, the four leggeds. And I don't use that language very often because I don't want to co-opt a language that's not my own but working with so many indigenous and Cree communities, it is the reality of communing with the land and the waters and the creatures as part of our community is absolutely essential.

And so when I think of the end of things, I don't think just of Christ returning and defeating all evil, that's the first place. But very quickly from there, the reunification of heaven and earth or the recreations of the new heavens and the new earth and all that entails, right? The harmony and the shalom that we live with, with the creatures of the earth and on the land in the waters, in those places where communities have lived for generations, for some places for millennia.

That to me, is a way that eschatology informs the way I live now, is to recognize that the land that I inhabit, the people I live with, and the creatures that are around me, that I can see, somehow the way I interact and live in the here now, with the land and the seas and the creatures and the people have to be formed by the reality of new creation.

AD: When I was able to have a good conversation with Beth Stovell, I asked her how the view of the end changes things for us here and now. And I really appreciated her response to that question.

BS: I will say that something that we don't always talk about in the book of Revelation is there's this interesting dynamic between the lion and the lamb.

Jesus is represented both as a lion and as a lamb, but what's fascinating is that in the passage, it's the lamb who is able to open the scrolls. This opening of the scrolls is something that's throughout apocalyptic literature, literature that is very similar to the book of Revelation, that was in the time period.

When you open scrolls, you reveal something. When you think about what was in those other kinds of writings, they always closed scrolls. So there was always hidden revelation you couldn't get access to. Whereas in the book of Revelation, it's all about opening the scrolls and having everything revealed. What's interesting is there is a moment where Jesus is able to do this because he is slain. Not because he is the lion who is the powerful military leader, but because he is the lamb who is slain.

And I think this is a really important thing as we think about what does it mean to walk as Jesus's followers. When we lean into being lions, when we think of ourselves as the victorious, we repeatedly hurt people around us and hurt the land and basically, we become a problem.

But if we lean into what it means to be the followers of the one who is slain, the one who is the king who chose to be crucified, it changes how we think about what it means to live in community with each other. Because we live with someone who, yes, he is victorious in his resurrection, but he also walked into death and to loss.

And I think that we are really afraid to walk into death and to loss and to walk alongside people who are in those spaces. As a culture, we run from disease and death. We find it really terrifying and so we avoid it. It's the reason that we don't actually treat our elders very well. It's the reason that when people end up in the hospital, we don't go visit them, because we forget that the person we follow is someone who allowed himself to walk into death. And so I think part of what the end gives us, part of what Revelation as the book gives us, is this picture of someone who is the lion only because he was the lamb, because he was slain he has victory. And those things are intimately linked with each other. They're connected to each other in the same way that *already not yet* is connected to each other. And it is important for us not to try and foremost live as the powerful ones, but to live as the ones who follow a slain lamb.

JP: When I asked Shane Claiborne about the difference that our end times theology makes on how we think about community now, this was his response.

SC: So it makes all the difference in the world whether we think this world is just going to be destroyed and we're all going to have a, you know, VIP pass into heaven to get out of this world, or if we believe that God cares about this world, that God cares about the creatures that God has made and the people that God's made in God's own image. As it's often said, so many Christians are so "heavenly minded that they're not much earthly good." And that's what theology can become if it's just about escaping this world, that we concentrate more on life after death while a lot of people are asking, is there life before death? We promise people heaven and we ignore the hells that they're living in right now. We talk more about souls than about systems. And I think we got to talk about both. I believe in life after death. I also believe in life before death.

And I believe that a lot of why people have kind of tuned out of Christianity is that they hear us talking about heaven and they say, doesn't God care about this world? Doesn't God care about what happened to indigenous people? Doesn't God care about police misconduct and racism and gun violence, or in Canada, knife violence or you know what? Doesn't God care about this world?

And that's why it's so beautiful and unmistakable as you read scripture, Jesus is talking about this vision for the kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven. And when he's speaking parables, they are stories about unjust judges and widows and orphans and day

labourers and vineyard workers and the stuff of earth, right? It's not about this pie-in-the-sky theology, but it's about what is God's dream for the world and how do we pursue it. And that extends to the afterlife, too. I mean, I often say I believe when we die, we will party like there's no tomorrow and there won't be, you know. But at the end of the day, this is not just about what happens when we die, but it's God's good news right now, right here.

And that's what people saw in Jesus, is a gospel, good news that was relevant right now, that was liberating right now, that was good news to the poor right now, and disruptive to the rich and the powerful, so this message is timeless. It's infinite. But if we divorce the gospel from the world we're living in right now, I think we lose a whole lot of people and we betray a large portion of the gospel, which is not just about saving souls when they die but transforming lives and communities in a broken world right now because God cares about this world.

The kingdom of God begins now. That's exactly what Jesus said. It's within us. This gospel is something that we don't just have to hope for when we die, but we can incarnate and live out the good news right now.

JP: I think one of the things that continue to appreciate about the opportunity to do a podcast like this is the wide variety of guests that we get on, and I think it comes through in an episode like this again, where we have this topic, which can be a bit of a divisive topic, thinking about the end times, and while I feel like everyone who spoke is generally in agreement about the big picture of this, we still have a variety of experiences, a variety of histories that are contributing to this.

I think it's one of those places where you really do see the lived experience of these guests coming through. You see stories kind of sneaking in from their lives and their experiences and the ways in which the things that they've experienced now have helped them to understand better what it is that Jesus is heading towards in the end times.

AD: Yeah, I know from my church we had this opportunity to learn and study Revelation together about a year ago and just really understanding together the importance that this book has on the present. In fact most of the book talks about what is really truly happening right here, right now and with an eye to what will be completely true in the future.

It's one of the things that really struck me from the responses of our guests was this idea of being followers of the lamb. We have this incredible picture in Revelation, and there's always this slight difference between the things that John hears and what he sees. And so he has this vision of what is truly real and the angel announces to him and he hears, "behold the Lion of Judah," that's what he hears. And then he turns around and he doesn't see a lion. He sees a lamb that was slain.

So this is victory. This is conquering power, this extreme self-sacrifice and so when we start to understand this as followers of the lamb, it has to change the way that we live and has to change the way that we relate to one another. We follow Jesus, into that self-sacrifice of wading into brokenness and sickness and death and truly laying ourselves down for the

sake of those around us. And so this is something that has been revealed to be true right now, and we'll understand it more completely in the future. And so to me, that really becomes where the rubber meets the road and we have to live differently in response to that revelation.

JP: There's sometimes a risk or maybe a temptation to see what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross as sort of a one-time thing, a moment there, and to imagine Jesus' returning to be some different person, some other character that has a different set of priorities and a different temperament and a different level of sort of aggression, and that he's going to come in, you know, sword swinging and sort of attack.

But the Jesus who died on the cross is the Jesus who is coming back in the future. And I appreciate the recognition that the lion is the lamb and the lamb is the lion. And you can't actually take either of those things out. Jesus, the lion died for us on the cross and Jesus, the lamb is returning and we need to be able to hold these things together at the same time, the fact that we follow a God who has decisively won the battle against evil and is ushering in a good and perfect future for us, and also calls us to pick up our crosses and follow him into brokenness and darkness. The promise of victory in the future allows us to walk with confidence into situations that seem lost and broken and dark, with a recognition of the redemption that is coming here in these things. And I think, our guests, all in their own ways, kept drawing us back to that hope.

AD: Of course that hope matters here and now. It's not just about hope that's future-only. And I think to really kind of bring it back to the foundation of the present, I mean, it's not just about where we go after we die, it's not just about what will happen in some unknown time in the future, it's about the kingdom of heaven is now. It's already, not quite yet in its complete fulfillment but how we live now matters in light of that. How we can offer people a quality of life and fulfillment in Christ now is part of what he has done and is doing and will continue to do to completion.

And so we are all called to participate in this process. This act of redemption has begun and it is continuing to culminate and we work towards that and so, yeah, we have been reminded by our guests that this matters today. And I think that it just gives us clear direction as we try to move about our own days.

Our feature song for this episode is Future Eye by Peters and Pilgrim, enjoy.

Future Eye, Peters and Pilgrim

Did you find what you were looking for
Did you find the pearl on the steppe or at your door

And I hope you find your peace of mind
And in your future eye, I hope you find that peace of mine

Did you find what you were looking for
Did you find it on the path behind
Or under thin ice below

And I hope you find it before it's time
And winter sends snow
Oh honey, we'll find that peace I know

I'm getting cold
So please come close

Closing

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A special thanks to our guests who have joined us today. They were Dave Reimer, Kara Mandryk, Beth Stovell and Shane Claiborne. Our intro song is *Making Us One* by Shades, and our closing song this episode was *Future Eye* by Peters and Pilgrim.

Our executive producer is Erica Fehr. Our producer and audio engineer is Jesse Penner, and our administrative assistant and social media manager is Betty Ramones.

I'm Andrew Dyck, and I'm Jesse Penner and we have been your hosts for The Armchair Anabaptist.

We certainly hope that what you have heard today will do more than stay as merely food for thought, but that it can help inspire each of us to get up out of the comfort of our armchairs and translate into living more like Jesus.

Join us next time as we talk about the incarnation, how our community is transformed by Jesus being God-with-us.

Edited for clarity.