

Revelation

1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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A. INTRODUCTION

1) A difficult book?

American humorist Josh Billings said, "Don't ever prophesy, for if you prophesy wrong, nobody will forget it; and if you prophesy right, nobody will remember it."

The Book of Revelation is known as a difficult prophetic book to understand, thus many people including pastors and Bible teachers avoid to teach and listen. At the same time, there are many people who want to study for the sake of curiosity of the future. The Book of Revelation is not here to satisfy our curiosity, but to reveal the supremacy of Jesus Christ. If we miss that, we will not get anything out of the Book of Revelation.

2) Historical background

In A.D. 95, Roman emperor Domitian who was an egomaniac like his predecessor, Nero thought he was a god and demanded worship from his subjects. Each year, festivals were held throughout the empire in which the citizens were required to offer incense to Caesar and proclaim him as lord god.

This practice put Christians in a desperate dilemma. Recognizing Caesar as lord meant denying their true King, Jesus Christ. Yet refusing Caesar was considered an act of disloyalty to Rome, and the consequences were persecution and even death.

One of the millions people who were persecuted was Apostle John. Following a failed attempt to boil him alive in the pot of oil, Domitian banished John to the rocky, barren, seemingly God-forsaken island of Patmos. And it is here on Patmos that John was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

That's the way it always is. Truly, the things I know about the Lord weren't learned in Bible commentaries, nor teaching tapes. The things I know about the Lord were learned on my own "Patmoses," my own Tribulations, my own difficulties. And the same is true for you. When you are given a medical report that doesn't look good, when divorce papers are sent your way, your business goes belly-up, when the relationship doesn't work out, when the child runs away - you will have a choice on that seemingly forgotten and forsaken island whether to launch out in spiritual rebellion, or await fresh revelation of Jesus our Savior.

3) Outlining

This is the only book in the whole Bible that comes with its own outline:

In Chapter 1, verse 19 where Jesus tells John to "Write the things which you have seen (Chapter 1 The supremacy of Jesus), and the things which are (Chapter 2-3 The letters to the seven churches), and the things which will take place after this (Chapter 4-22 God's judgement and His kingdom).

B. THE FINAL WORD OF THE UNFOLDING TRUTH

1) Remember how the Scripture began in Genesis?

Remember how the Scripture began in Genesis? The promise of a Deliverer was first given as the "Seed" of the woman who will crush the serpent's head in Gen 3:15.

The hope was passed on to Abraham, who passed it on to his son Isaac, who passed it on to his son Jacob, who passed it on to his sons. Then it was beautifully illustrated in the Exodus. It was longed for by the judges, amplified in the kings, and predicted by the prophets. Finally, it was fulfilled in the Gospels. But not until the Book of Revelation does it come to its fullest climax. Christ rides out of heaven to destroy sin and Satan and to restore creation to its original glory for our good and His good pleasure forever.

Hardly a book of fantasies, Revelation cuts to the heart of our deepest yearnings and questions about life in Christ Jesus.

2) Four approaches to unlock the Book of Revelation

Of all the books in Scripture, Revelation is the most glorious, yet perplexing. Through the centuries, Bible scholars have taken four approaches to unlocking Revelation's mysteries:

- a. **Idealists** - They view the images non-literally, as spiritualized symbols that represent timeless truth.
- b. **Preterists** - They limit the meaning of the book to its original readers, saying the images represent only first-century subjects, such as Caesar, Rome, and the persecution. They believe that the events have already taken place.
- c. **Historicists** - They see the book as a historical timeline from the first century on. The churches in chapter 2-3.
- d. **Futurists** - They view the book, primarily chapters 4-22, as a window to the end of time. The images symbolize the people and events that will play key roles in the final drama of world history.

We find that the futurists' path is the best approach.

3) Three study guidelines

To study the Book of Revelation, it will be helpful to us to follow a few guidelines:

a. Don't overanalyze the details.

It's easy to lose the central message by wandering into speculations about what the mark of the Beast will be or whose name totals 666. Apostle John interprets many of the symbols for us, and we should stay focused on what he says.

Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa taught us that when we don't know, we should fall back to what we know.

b. Be careful not to read too much of our world into the text.

Apostle John was not a time traveler, beamed into the future by God. The locusts and hail probably aren't John's attempts to describe fighter jets and nuclear fallout in first-century terms. Try to avoid the temptation of correlating every image to a modern equivalent. Instead, look for connections in other parts of Scripture.

c. Emphasize the message behind the image.

For example, apostle John describes Christ as having "a sharp two-edged sword" coming out of His mouth in Rev 1:16 and 19:15. We are not to take this literally. The important thing for us is the meaning that the image communicates - that is, Christ is coming with judgement.

C. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF REVELATION?

Rev 1:1-2 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants--things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by

His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

1) The definition of Revelation

The word translated “revelation” simply means “unveiling.” It gives us our English word apocalypse. The verb simply means “to uncover, to reveal, to make manifest.” We have studied about what happened with Jesus in the Book of Matthew. Now we are going to study the future of Jesus Christ. In this book, the Holy Spirit pulls back the curtain and gives us the privilege of a glimpse of the glorified Christ in heaven and the fulfillment of His sovereign purposes in the world. Revelation is not written to quench our prophecy thirst, nor it should be a way to know the future like a crystal ball, but it is revelation of Jesus Christ. v1 is the true definition of the Book of Revelation.

In other words, Revelation is an open book in which God reveals His plans and purposes to His church. When Daniel finished writing his prophecy, he was instructed to “*shut up the words, and seal the book*” in Dan. 12:4. But John was given opposite instructions: “*Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book*” in Rev. 22:10.

2) Shortly come to pass?

V1 says, “*Shortly come to pass?*” But you say, “*This book is over two thousand years old!*” The Greek word translated “*shortly*” is ‘en tachos’, meaning “*must come to pass rapidly.*” It’s the same Greek word from which we get the word “*tachometer*”—the instrument used to determine the speed of an engine. What the Lord is telling us in this verse is that when end-time events begin to happen, they’ll increase their RPMs and happen with greater speed.

Let me put it this way: Let’s say we are heading east from Tucson, AZ on I-10 toward Houston, TX, I don’t see a single sign that says Houston until I get past El Paso, TX, where I see only one. Then I don’t see another one until I get to Fort Stockton, TX. But as I go farther East, the signs start appearing a little more frequently, until I get to Kerrville, TX. Suddenly, the signs appear every fifty miles. When I get past San Antonio, TX, the signs appear with even greater frequency until I finally see the sign reading, “*Welcome to Houston.*”

3) The word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ

The word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ are the reasons why apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos and are often the reasons Christians are still persecuted today.

D. IF YOU READ, HEAR AND KEEP

Rev 1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

1) The reason for the Book of Revelation

This is the reason for the Book of Revelation. This book alone promises anyone who reads it or even hears it receives a blessing.

John did not send this book of prophecy to the assemblies in order to satisfy their curiosity about the future. God’s people were going through intense persecution and they needed encouragement. They were not only to hear the Word, but they were also to keep it—that is, guard it as a treasure and practice what it said. The blessing would come, not just by hearing, but even more so by doing according to James 1:22–25.

E. THE SEVEN CHURCHES & THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Rev 1:4-6 John, to the seven churches which 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, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1) The seven churches

The seven churches were located in the Roman Province of Asia, which today is southwestern Turkey.

The number seven is important in this book because it signifies fullness and completeness. In Revelation, God tells us how He is going to complete His great work and usher in His eternal kingdom. In Revelation, we will find seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, seven stars, and seven lampstands.

2) Grace and peace

"Grace and peace be unto you," is not the equivalent of "What's up?" It has a depth of meaning. The combination of the two, grace and peace, is powerful because man can't have peace until he understands the favor God has given to him in and through the grace of Christ Jesus.

3) The supremacy of Jesus Christ

"Aha!" the cultist says. "Jesus is firstborn. Therefore, He didn't always exist." Wrong. We refer to Laura Bush as the First Lady. Does this mean she's the first lady who ever lived? No. "First Lady" refers to her position. So, too, in Jeremiah 31:9 God calls Ephraim His firstborn. Was Ephraim the firstborn? No. Although he was the younger brother, however, Ephraim had prominence. Thus, "firstborn" in Scripture speaks not of precedence, but of preeminence.

4) I am that I am

In the OT, we find that God the Father call Himself "*I am that I am.*" That means He is not bound by the time limit. Now we find that Jesus claims the same thing in the Book of Revelation.

Rev 1:7-8 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

5) A preview of the second coming of Christ

As the final word of Scripture, Revelation unveils the central figure of Scripture in all His glory: Jesus Christ. He is the Savior to whom all the symbols point, as we will see in our unfolding study.

6) Jesus Christ is God

One common denominator of all the cults is that they deny the deity of Jesus Christ. They would call Him a great teacher, a great man ever lived, or a good role model, but they would not accept Him as the Savior and Lord and God Himself.

Jehovah's Witness and Mormon insist that Jesus is not God. Here are two verses that would blow their doctrines completely out of water. V7 is an obvious description

of Jesus. Before you show this verse to them, ask them to see a few verses from the OT and NT.

Isaiah 41:4 Who has performed and done it, Calling the generations from the beginning? 'I, the Lord, am the first; And with the last I am He.'"

Isaiah 44:6 "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.

Isaiah 48:12 "Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last.

Revelation 21:6-7 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Ask them who these "the First and the Last" and "the Alpha and the Omega" which are the first and last word of Greek alphabet are. They will gladly tell you that it is Jehovah God. Then, ask them who this person is in Rev 1:7-8. They have a major problem with their false doctrines.

This word Almighty translates the ancient Greek word 'pantokrater', which literally means "the one who has his hand on everything." It speaks of the great sovereign control of Jesus over everything - past, present, and future. This great word 'Almighty' is used ten times in the New Testament, and nine of the ten times are in the Book of Revelation. This book has a striking on God's sovereignty, the understanding that He has His hand on everything.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) The Tribulation you may be going through even now is for one purpose: to bring us a fuller revelation of Jesus into our lives.
- 2) We must understand that all the cults deny the deity of Jesus and their "Jesus" are not same as our Jesus the Messiah.
- 3) We must remember that all the things happen in our lives are under the control of Jesus Almighty God.