

The Apocalypse

Revelation 1:1-8

September 2-3, 2017

From verse one of this book we understand that this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond servants the things which must shortly take place. Jesus then sent and communicated this Revelation by His angel to His bondservant, John.

In other words, God the Father wants us to receive this Revelation. John also wrote that whoever reads and hears and takes heed to the things written in the words of this prophecy will be blessed.

It's called "The Revelation," in the Greek, it is translated, the apocalypse, and it means, "The Revealing," or "The Unveiling." When people think of the word 'apocalypse,' mass destruction, chaos, and suffering, often come to mind, but God uses this book to reveal Jesus Christ, especially as Lord over all the earth in the latter days. He is the center of this book.

The Revelation was not sent to strike fear in the church, although for those in the world who don't know Christ there could be considerable cause for concern. But for the church, it was sent to encourage and strengthen your faith, it was written so you might know that God wrote the end before there was even a

beginning. He is Lord over all the nations of the earth and he is our Champion who has defeated death and won for us our victory.

As we study through Revelation, you will see many symbols. Symbols are helpful, but sometimes difficult to interpret.

Aviah and I were driving somewhere and she wanted to practice giving directions using her tablet. At one point, she said, “Turn right on ‘Springwood Doctor.’” Springwood Doctor? It took me a minute to realize she misinterpreted Dr. for doctor. It’s now a running joke between us.

Symbols are helpful because they transcend time. Language changes, but signs and symbols more clearly convey the thoughts and intent of the message. They also communicate the message more powerfully: it’s one thing to say that a powerful world leader will come on the scene, it’s another to say, “The Beast is coming.” It’s one thing to say that Jesus has authority, but another to say that He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah!

Bible scholars have interpreted Revelation in various ways. These are basically organized in four categories; spiritually – this interpretation method teaches that the book is simply a collection of spiritual lessons and does not contain prophetic words at all.

The Preterist – this approach teaches that the events described all took place in the first century; everything has already been fulfilled. There are many problems with that view, but the biggest problem is that the events they say fulfill this prophecy took place about 25 years before the book was even written. The Historicist – this view teaches that the book was written as a prediction of what we now call church history. Everything has been fulfilled, they say, but it was fulfilled through all of church history.

The Futurist – this view, which is the one I hold, teaches that the book contains prophecies of end times events including the rapture of the church, a seven-year period when God’s wrath will be poured out on the world called the Day of the Lord or the great Tribulation; the Millennial 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth, and the final judgment. It speaks of The Antichrist that will arise on the scene and deceive many. It includes the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and the nations of the world coming against Israel in the battle of Armageddon.

Before we begin our study, we should also understand the significance of Israel in latter-day events. There is a branch of Christian theology that believes that the nation of Israel is no longer significant spiritually and that all the promises given to Israel have now been given over to the church. This is sometimes referred to as *replacement theology*;

Israel's promises have been replaced by the promises given to the church, they say. I don't believe that doctrine at all.

I believe that God's promises to Israel are eternal and that the words of Genesis 12 still apply, "Those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who curse Israel will be cursed." I believe that doctrine should inform our foreign policy as a nation. The nation of Israel, therefore, becomes central to the understanding of the events of the last days.

As we study through the book of Revelation, we will also tie in prophecies of Scripture from Jesus in the Gospels, the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and many more. It's amazing to see how prophecy throughout the Bible comes together in the unveiling of last days events in The Revelation.

We are also going to connect biblical prophecy to the events that are happening in the world today. We need to look at current events through the lens of biblical prophecy. That makes this study extremely relevant and important for those concerned about the direction this world is heading in.

I. Revelation often Comes in Suffering

- The famous apostle John was given this Revelation while he was exiled on the

island of Patmos by the Emperor Domitian.

- Verse 9 - He was exiled because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.
- The church had suffered terribly under Emperor Nero and Jerusalem was destroyed under Emperor Titus. When Emperor Domitian came to power, there was no reprieve. He felt threatened by this Jesus whom the Christians called the Son of God. He insisted that he be called '*dominus et deus.*' -- master and god.
- That persecution included capturing the beloved John who was the last living apostle and elder statesman of the church. It was rumored that he would not see death until Christ returned, so Domitian had him boiled in oil. When, by a miracle, he did not die, he was exiled to the island of Patmos.
- But it was there, on the island of Patmos, in the midst of suffering, that John received the Revelation; a great encouragement to the church at a time when they needed hope.

A. We learn the most in tribulation

- There are things you just can't learn in a bible study. It's often times of greatest difficulty that we learn the greatest lessons and come to experience the hope of God's promises.

Illus – Dr. Criswell, pastor of a church in Dallas, writes of a time on an airplane flight he sat next to a well-known theologian. He began a conversation only to discover that the man had recently lost his son in death...

Illus – Spending time on an island in the Aegean Sea may at first sound wonderful, but it was a barren place. It was like being cast away on a remote rock filled island so he could no longer influence the churches; and to make sure of his suffering, the Emperor had him first boiled in oil.

- But God met the apostle John on that rocky, barren island with the Revelation that God was sovereign over the forces of darkness and the nations of the world.
- God brings triumph out of tragedy; He brings beauty out of ashes and He often brings the greatest lessons out of the greatest difficulties.

Illus – When Moses was leading Israel to the desert, at one point he was about to lose his life at the hands of an angry mob. They had been three days without water and finally when they did find water it was bitter.

Moses was told by God to take a branch and throw it into the water and when he did the water became sweet. It was there they discovered a name for God they had not known...

Exodus 15:26, “for I, the Lord, am your healer.”

B. We choose how we respond

- John had a spiritual bearing, he had heaven in his heart and it determined the course of his life and the response of his heart.
- You choose how you respond to life’s difficulties, hardships and even persecutions.
- You can become spiritually rebellious – and tell God that if He doesn’t do things the way you think He should, then you won’t be close to Him anymore. But that only makes things worse.

- You can become bitter - you can hold it against God and others and ‘eat sour grapes’ and go through life with a chip on your shoulder and have a heart that focuses only on pain.

Illus – Moses grew up in Pharaoh’s house and when he saw how his people were being treated, he took matters in his own hands and ended up killing an Egyptian. He had to escape to the desert and ran for his life. Things didn’t work out the way he thought they should; he spent the next forty years in the desert. But it was there that God gave Moses a revelation – “My name is YAHWEH, all that I AM I will be to you...”

- The third choice is get closer to God and wait for spiritual revelation.
- When you read though the bible you see so many places where they were going through trouble or facing great obstacles; it was then that God gave fresh vision or revealed an aspect of His character or gave a new promise.

Illus –When the nation of Israel was being taken captive by Babylon, Jeremiah the prophet received a revelation and a great promise from the Lord.

Lamentations 3:22-23, The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease; His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

II. There is Blessing in Revelation

- God reveals who He is for the purpose of blessing our lives. There is a special blessing for those who read and hear and take heed to the words of this Revelation.

A. Blessed are they who take these words to heart

- The purpose of this book is to encourage the churches because they had already gone through Nero's persecution, and now, under Domitian, they were once again suffering persecution.
- The point was that they were to take these words to heart and prepare their lives. We need to do the same. Don't just study, take these words to heart.
- What does it mean that the time is near? We must see that the Lord carries only from our perspective, but He has the times and ages perfectly in His hand.

2 Peter 3:8-9, Do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- To be ready, to take these words to heart is have your priorities set on God; things can and will happen quickly; John wrote in the Greek – ‘tachos’ which means events will take place quickly – and our priorities will change immediately.

Illus – On October 17, 1989 at 5:03 pm, the World Series was considered one of the most important events taking place on the planet, as the Oakland A’s were facing off against the San Francisco Giants. At 5:04 pm an earthquake shook Candlestick Park in San Francisco, registering 6.9 on the Richter scale. At 5:05 pm all priorities were immediately changed.

The same could be said of September 11, 2001. Not only did priorities change, the history of the world shifted from that dramatic moment.

- These prophetic words regarding the end of this world and the judgment which follows things are eternally important.
- No one knows the day or the hour, but as we will see, God gives us the signs of the times so we know that the time is drawing near. Now is the time to prepare, now is the time to set your priorities because things can change very quickly.

B. Grace to you and peace

- Vs 4 - Grace to you and peace from God the Father, from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness.
- The church was going through great troubles because of the persecution of the Emperor Domitian, but in the midst of those troubles, God Himself sends His grace and His piece.

John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

John 16:33, “These things I’ve spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world

you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

- Can you have peace even in the midst of troubles? When that peace comes from God, yes, you can.
- “Grace to you from Him who was, who is, and who is to come.” It means that He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega. He is El Elyon, God most high. He is the Lion from the tribe of Judah – we must see the power and majesty of God over the nations...

Illus – In early England when Richard was king, he was known as Richard the Lionhearted. When he was leading his armies in one of the crusades, his brother John tried to take the throne in his absence, but as Richard was returning, word began to spread, ‘The Lion is coming!’

Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and He is returning. He is also the one who bears the scars of our sins upon Him. He is the one who sets captives free.