

Wednesday Teaching Series
Revelation 1:1-8
January 28, 2009

The Book of Revelation
Lesson #3-Chapter I (Part One)

Introduction: As we open the expositional aspect of the Revelation teaching, we begin with an overview of how the four interpretive approaches handle chapters 1-3.

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What is the Significance of Christ's Commission to John?
What do the Seven Churches Signify?

Historicist Approach:

- John is given a vision of Christ, who announces that he is to write the things that would soon begin to take place, and which would extend through the entire age of the church.
- Seven churches in Asia received these letters, but they represent seven periods of church history, each exhibiting the special features of the respective original church.

Preterist Approach:

- Christ appears to John on Patmos, commissioning him to write things that would soon afterward find fulfillment in the fall of Jerusalem.
- The letters reflect the conditions prevailing in seven churches in the Roman province of Asia prior to the Jewish war of A.D. 66-70.

Futurist Approach:

- While a prisoner on the isle of Patmos, John sees a vision of Christ, commanding him to write of events that would be fulfilled at the end of the present age, just prior to the Second Coming.
- Some futurists take the letters in the same manner as do the historicists while others take them more as do the preterists or those taking the spiritual approach.

Spiritual Approach:

- The symbolic vision of Christ depicts His glorious character and sovereignty, conveying Christ's sovereign involvement in the affairs of the world and of the church, including his intimate concern for His suffering servants.
- The churches resemble churches that might exist at any time throughout the church age, and the letters are applicable to any churches that may share their conditions. The number seven is symbolic, suggesting application to the whole Christian church of all ages.

I. Introduction (Revelation 1:1-3)

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, 2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. 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.
Revelation 1:1-3 NKJV

NOTE: The book begins with a statement in regard to the origin and transmission of God's revelation through Jesus Christ and an angel to John, who in turn is to make it known to others.

- An introduction or prologue to the entire book.
- Tells how and for what purpose the book is written.
- A blessing on the reader and obedient listener.
- John clearly communicating that this is not just his set of visions, but visions that came directly from God.
- In the midst of the crisis (churches of Asia) God is not silent but still in control!

A. The Revelation of Jesus Christ

1. Greek allows for Christ to be the subject of revealing or the one doing the revealing.
2. Certainly in chapter one, five, fourteen and nineteen.
3. God is understood to be the revealer of all mysteries.

But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: 29 As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. Daniel 2:27-29 NKJV

Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold — the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure." Daniel 2:45 NKJV

4. In Revelation it appears that Jesus is the mediator of this unveiling or disclosure.

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. John 1:18 NKJV

B. To show His servants what shortly must come to pass.

1. Preterists: are most comfortable with “shortly come to pass.” (all about 70 A.D.)
2. Historicists: fulfillment would begin shortly after John’s time but extended through the entire church age.
3. Spiritual interpreters: time is always near.
4. Futurists: “Shortly” or “near” have alternate meaning.
 - a. “Quickly” or “suddenly”- a rapidity or fulfillment once the proper time comes. (But what about time is near?)
 - b. “Time is near” God’s way of reckoning time.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 2 Peter 3:8 NKJV

QUESTION: Did the first readers think that?

- c. A sense in which imminence is intended.
 - o Victory already won (see 6:1)
 - o Salvation history events have already begun.
 - o Because of the resurrection.

I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8 NKJV

And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Romans 16:20 NKJV

C. Signified it by his angel to John:

1. Signified "semaino" figurative representation. "To make known by some sort of sign."
2. Should warn reader that this is a symbolic portrayal of that which must take place.

D. John bears witness to this testimony; these visions are indeed true. (Word of God/testimony of Jesus is synonymous).

E. Blessing for hearer and doer:

1. Reader (probably the public reader).
2. Those in the congregations who hear and obey. (5 on feast days, 6 on Day of Atonement, seven on the Sabbath).

F. For the time is near:

1. Focus is not just on eschatology.
2. Also on ethics:

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 2 Peter 3:11 NKJV

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. 1 Peter 4:7 NKJV

II. Greeting and Doxology (Revelation 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, 5 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, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Revelation 1:4-6 NKJV

A. Grace and Peace from the Triune God

1. Father (who is and was and is to come)

And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Exodus 3:14 NKJV

2. Spirit (seven spirits of God)

NOTE: Seven fold spirit of God

The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2 NKJV

3. Christ (v. 5)

NOTE: His description is meant to encourage the persecuted church.

- a. Faithful witness: (Set the example for those called to bear witness in a hostile world).

I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 1 Timothy 6:13-14 NKJV

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10 NKJV

b. Firstborn of the dead:

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. Colossians 1:17-18 NKJV

- o Jesus death vindicated by the resurrection.
- o So persecuted church should be encouraged by it as well.

c. Ruler and King of the Earth:

- o May look like Kings of earth are set against him.

The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, Psalms 2:2 NKJV

- o Pull back the curtain:

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision. Psalms 2:4 NKJV

NOTE: These visions are to remind the church of that very truth!

d. And His love is meant to encourage us as well:

Loved us and washed us from our sins.

NOTE: Present love of God is demonstrated by the past work of Christ!

B. To Kings and Priests (see also 5:10)

Or "Kings of Priests"

And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." Exodus 19:6 NKJV

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10 NKJV

NOTE: God's Kingdom is now associated with the church; no longer Israel.

NOTE ALSO: The concepts of Saints participating in God's rule is a common theme of Revelation.

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. Revelation 2:16 NKJV

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. Revelation 3:21 NKJV

And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." Revelation 5:10 NKJV

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Revelation 20:4 NKJV

NOTE: Already begun but not yet fully realized.

III. The Lord Who is Coming (Revelation 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." Revelation 1:7-8 NKJV

NOTE: Introduced to the great theme of this hope.

- Provides comfort for suffering believers.
- Warning to the obstinate

(Same today)

A. Behold He is coming

1. Behold; "Idou"- 26 times in the book to highlight critical prophetic oracles. "Pay attention" or "listen carefully."
2. Parousia; coming; key is imminent.
3. Have discussed His redemption; culmination is His coming.

NOTE:

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. Zechariah 12:10 NKJV

- a. Mourning, repentance
- b. Too late

B. Differing understanding

1. Futurist: A prediction of the 2nd Coming of Christ at the end of the present age.

NOTE: Historicist and spiritual approach as well: MOST NATURAL

NOTE ALSO: Spiritual view sees his coming repeatedly throughout history.

2. Preterist view: Radical, Christ coming in A.D. 70 to destroy Jerusalem, not in person but through the Roman Armies.
3. Promise of His Coming: To the people!

C. Who is the speaker? (v. 8)

1. Who was, and is, and is to come: Father
2. Almighty; El-Shadai-Father
3. Salutation; turned doxology
4. Father is first to be mentioned; v. 4 but quickly Christ
 - a. Love purchased freedom from sin.
 - b. By His death and resurrection He has equipped us to serve as priests.
 - c. To Him, glory and power are ascribed.
 - d. He is the one who will come in the clouds and the entire human race will witness His triumphal return.
 - e. God Himself approves all praise directed toward the Son and the reader is prepared for the vision to come.