



The Book of Revelation

Study Notes

Book 1 - Chapters 1-3

Among the books of the Bible, few generate as much interest, anxiety, or confusion as the book of Revelation. For some, it is an unfamiliar book shrouded in mystery. For others, it lives on the margins of their Biblical consciousness, having read things *about* Revelation or the end times, but not much *from* Revelation. Still others are drawn primarily out of curiosity. Questions about who the Antichrist will be or what the mark of the beast will be drive speculation and study alike.

To be sure, Revelation has plenty of challenging imagery and multiple genres of writing that demand our careful attention. But this should not prevent the Christian from approaching this book of the Bible much like we would any of the other 65. It is, after all, God's word to us, and as such, is meant to be read, understood, and applied.

In the first message of this series, I hope to convince you of that truth and invite you to undertake this study together. As always, I encourage you to read and reread Revelation. Pray for the Holy Spirit to teach and guide you through God's word. Our time together will not be exhaustive, nor will we answer every question. But we will commit ourselves to an honest examination of the text in dependence on the Holy Spirit. While we will encounter many wonderful truths about the consummation of God's redemptive plan, I pray that if we learn nothing else, we will know more of our Savior when we are done.

SERMON NOTES – Why study Revelation?

Revelation 1:1-3 – “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bondservants....”

– *NASB*

1. It is the Revelation of _____

2. It has application for _____
 - a. It records the consummation of our

 - b. It reveals God’s _____
 - c. Gives urgency to our _____

3. It promises a _____

4. It can be _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

In many ways a study of Revelation requires us to stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before. Faithful teachers of the Bible from previous generations are a gift to the church. In my preparations for teaching Revelation, I have been greatly aided by the work of such men as Epp and Wiersbe. More contemporary works by LaHaye and MacArthur have also proved invaluable. While we may not agree with every point these and other commentators make, the Holy Spirit undoubtedly uses their efforts to refine, correct, and enhance our understanding of God's word. One word of caution for you as we begin this study, don't rely on commentaries as a replacement for reading the Word of God yourself. They are great tools but a sad replacement.

Theodore Epp notes that Revelation presents Jesus in three ways, His Person, His power, and His program. The scope of this book can be overwhelming but remember, this book is about Jesus, He wants you to read, understand, and apply its truths.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who is the focus of the book of Revelation?
2. What subjects do some mistakenly make the focus of this book?
3. What has been the result of this in the church today?
4. What can we do to maintain a posture of preparation rather than speculation when studying Revelation?

SERMON NOTES – The Author and His audience

Revelation 1:4-5a – “...grace and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come...” - *NASB*

1. John is the _____ author

2. _____ is the source of Revelation

3. The greeting reveals a _____
 - a. _____

 - b. _____

4. The greeting reveals the _____
 - a. The triune _____
 - i. _____

 - ii. _____

 - iii. _____

b. The focus turns to _____

i. The faithful _____

1. To God's _____

2. To God's _____

3. To God's _____

ii. The 1st born from the _____

1. His _____

2. The _____
of our resurrection

3. His role as our

iii. _____ if the kings of
the earth

1. He is _____

2. He has all _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

It is telling that at the beginning of the Book of Revelation we find the salutation of grace and peace. For many of us we associate this book with judgment and calamity, which is of course, the just result of sin. Perhaps less recognized is that this book contains display after display of God's grace. Each time He addresses His church in chapters 2 and 3, He makes an appeal to repent. Before judgment falls during the Tribulation, He again makes a plea to repent. He would be justified if He were to let judgment fall in a flash but He is patient, as Peter reminds us, not wanting any to perish.

As we begin to see Jesus more clearly through this study may we also see His grace more fully. If you are already a believer, praise God for His mercy and grace. If you are not, consider the description of Jesus this greeting gives you. The faithful Witness, the firstborn from the dead, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, offers you grace and peace. But they are on His terms not ours. We must repent (turn from sin and agree with God) and believe (place our trust in Jesus alone). My prayer is that all will come to know His grace and peace.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Consider the greeting of “grace” and “peace”: what do these words mean to you?
2. Why is it important to recognize these greetings are offered by God rather than by John alone?
3. Which of the three aspects of who Jesus is stands out to you? Why?

SERMON NOTES – A song of praise

Revelation 1:5b-6 – “...and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father...” – *NASB*

1. His _____ for us
 - a. His is a love of _____
 - b. His love is _____

2. His _____ work for us
 - a. Sin brings _____
 - b. Sin is a _____ problem
 - c. We cannot _____ ourselves

3. His _____ at work in us

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

Some events in our lives are so impactful that they create a pivot in our lives. Once they happen, we talk about life in terms of before they occurred and after. Situations both good and bad can turn out to be pivotal moments in our lives. For example, in our family we might talk about life events as happening before or after we moved to Verndale (a good experience). Or we might talk about something as being before or after Aletha's accident (a not so good in the moment experience).

For the believer the moment of our salvation is one such pivotal moment. Before we are saved, we are dead in our sins, rightly condemned, and without hope. After we are transformed by the grace of Jesus we are made alive in Him, free from the judgment our sin deserved and we receive a living and active hope.

2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us that, "...if anyone is in Christ he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come". What a reason to praise Him! What a reason to proclaim Him!

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Read verse 6
 - a. What does it mean we are made a kingdom?
 - b. What does it mean we are made priest unto God?
 - c. According to what we saw in verses 4-5, how do we enter this kingdom?
2. According to verse 5b, how should we view our sin?
3. How does this contrast with how the world often views sin?

SERMON NOTES – The return of Jesus

Revelation 1:7-8 – “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him...” - *NASB*

1. The return of Jesus will be in two stages

a. The _____

b. His coming in _____

2. His coming

a. Is _____

b. Will be _____

c. Will be _____

3. Our present response

a. We live with _____

b. We live with _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

As noted in the sermon, not every Christian agrees on the order, timing, or nature of the events surrounding the return of Christ. While these points of disagreement should be acknowledged, they should not determine our fellowship. What we agree on, namely that Jesus will return, is sufficient for today.

That is not to say that how a person views these events is unimportant. As a kid I had a lot of confusion and questions about what this all meant. I was familiar with words like rapture and tribulation, but was not well informed about what these all meant for me. I knew I was supposed to look forward to His coming but also did not want to miss out on anything here.

I believe the proper understanding of the Biblical text leads us to see the rapture of the church before the great Tribulation and to our reigning with Christ when He returns to the earth to establish His millennial Kingdom. I believe this view demands we live with the hope His return holds for us and the urgency it requires of our gospel mission.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of the timing, order, and nature of the return of Christ?
2. What sources have most influenced your perspectives?
3. Read Acts 1:10-11. What elements of Christ's return can be drawn from these verses?
4. Read Matthew 24:29-30. What do these verses indicate to us about the timing of Jesus' return?

SERMON NOTES – Lessons from the lampstands

Revelation 1:9-20 - “And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands, I saw one like a son of man...” - *NASB*

1. Christ is the _____ of the church
 - a. He has _____ over His church
 - b. He is _____ within His church
 - c. He is _____ through His church

2. The church is a _____ bearer
 - a. The oil points to _____
 - b. The light is _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

The fact that Jesus is the head of His church is clearly taught in Scripture. While most, if not all Christians, would acknowledge this truth by what they say, the practical outworking of this truth is sometimes harder to find. If a church is not careful it can lose sight of who we really are. The necessary structures, ministries, or procedures can begin to consume more and more of our attention. Human leadership, ordained and gifted by God, can slide into the dangerous belief that they are what make the church go. At its worst a church that neglects the headship of Christ becomes a self-serving and self-glorifying business rather than a God-serving and God-glorifying assembly of believers.

Reflecting on John's vision of Christ walking among His church can help us keep things in the right perspective.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Reflecting on the picture of the lampstand, when is a lampstand at its best, fulfilling its purpose?
2. By picturing the church as a lampstand, how would you describe the church at its best, fulfilling its purpose?
3. How can a church maintain a right perspective concerning the headship of Jesus and our role as light bearers?
4. Read John 15:4-5. What results when a church keeps Christ as its head?

SERMON NOTES – The Lord of glory

Revelation 1:9-20 – “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, Do not be afraid...” - *NASB*

1. The garments indicate _____
 - a. His role as our _____
 - b. His judgment is in _____
 - c. His judgment is _____
2. His hair indicates _____
3. His eyes indicate _____
4. His feet of brass indicate _____

5. His voice indicates _____

6. The sword is the _____

7. His shining face indicates _____

8. His proclamation indicates _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

I remember once in 5th grade I was kicked out of music class with another kid. We were in the back row as the class stood practicing for a concert. We must have thought we were invisible because instead of singing we were goofing off. To our dismay we were not in fact invisible, and having put up with us all she was going to, the teacher sent us to the office. I was scared to say the least. I had always been a rule follower, a good kid, I stayed out of sight and out of trouble. As we sat in the outer office, the principal, whom I only knew by reputation, walked in talking to a teacher. He was in mid-sentence and I heard him say something about getting the paddle out for some poor soul. At this point he stopped, turned to us, and said, “maybe for these guys too.” I went from scared to petrified. I knew if I got it at school I would get it at home later. I do not recall the conversation that happened next but I do remember two things; I did not get paddled and I did not screw around in music class anymore.

One of the prevalent ills of our current day is the seeming lack of respect we give each other in general and authority specifically. This change in our social construct has had a deep negative impact on our society. But worse even than the culture slide into

disregard is the slide that has taken place in the church.

Sadly, many Christians, and therefore many churches, have lost a sense of reverence for the Lord. Like 5th grade me, we assume He cannot see us in the back row. That perhaps He is too busy or distant to notice how we conduct ourselves. We have adopted the caricature of Jesus the world prefers; the white-haired, aloof God in the sky. The church today will benefit from considering carefully the description John gives us of Jesus and His relationship to His church. Maybe then we would not find John's response in verse 17 so strange.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Read the following verses:
 - a. Ezekiel 8:1-2
 - b. Isaiah 6:1-6
 - c. Matthew 17:1-13
2. Under each reference write down what stands out to you about what these men saw.
3. Read the following verses and note how those who encountered God responded.
 - a. Exodus 3:2-6
 - b. John 18:3-6
4. What can we apply from these examples to our own view of God?

SERMON NOTES – The neglectful church

Revelation 2:1-7 – “But this I have against you, that you have left your first love.” - *NASB*

Christ’s approval

1. They were a _____ church
2. They were a _____ church
3. They were a _____ church
4. They were a _____ church
5. They were a _____ church

Christ’s accusation

1. They left their first _____
2. They kept the right _____

3. They forgot the right _____

Christ's admonition

1. We must _____

2. We must _____

3. We must _____ fellowship

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

In Ephesians 5 Paul draws comparisons between the marriage relationship and the relationship of Jesus to the church. In Revelation 19 this picture comes to fulfillment at the marriage supper of the Lamb. I love this picture of the church as the bride beloved by Jesus because it holds so many lessons for us. It reminds us of His love and care. It also reminds us of His faithfulness to us and our response of commitment to Him.

Sadly, there is another parallel this picture presents. When we neglect our spouse, it invites a coolness and hardness into the relationship. We begin to take them for granted. We start to find it easier to get distracted by lesser things. Ultimately, we find ourselves simply going through the motions and what was once a vibrant relationship seems empty.

That is what we see in Ephesus and if we are not careful, that is what could become of our church as well. The call of God to salvation is a call to a living, vibrant, and growing love relationship with Him. It is not enough for us to do all the right things if we are not doing them for the right reason, our love for our Savior.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. How does Jesus' assessment of the church in Ephesus help elevate our understanding of what it means to serve Jesus?

2. How do the following verses inform our understanding of this topic?
 - a. John 14:15

 - b. 1 John 4:19

 - c. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

 - d. Romans 5:1-5

SERMON NOTES – The suffering church

Revelation 2:8-11 – “Do not fear what you are about to suffer...” – *NASB*

Christ’s approval

1. They were a _____ church
2. They were a _____ church
3. They were an _____ church

Christ’s admonition

1. Do not _____
2. Remain _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

According to the article in Christianity Today titled, *The 50 countries where it's hardest to follow Jesus in 2024* by Jason Casper, “365 million Christians live in nations with high levels of persecution or discrimination. That’s 1 in 7 Christians worldwide, including 1 in 5 believers in Africa, 2 in 5 in Asia, and 1 in 16 in Latin America.” Casper goes on to note that, “Almost 5,000 Christians were killed for their faith last year. Almost 4,000 were abducted.”

While it is tempting for the church in America to view persecution as rare today or to define any inconvenience as persecution, the facts tell a different story. That’s not to say that no American Christian is ever persecuted, but many of our brothers and sisters around the world face this reality daily.

It is interesting that there is no word of accusation from Jesus as He examines His suffering church. It appears how God sees things is very different from how we might see things. We often try to avoid the cost of following Jesus, preferring comfort to pain. The church today can take a lesson, not only from what was said to Smyrna, but what was not.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Those who take a prophetic view of these seven churches see in Smyrna the church between 100-312 AD. This was a time of great persecution by the Roman rulers. It was also a time of great evangelistic growth.
 - a. How might these two facts be related?
 - b. How do conditions in some parts of the world today confirm this connection?
 - c. What lessons might the church in America learn from this connection?
2. According to Ephesians 6:10-20, how do we combat the affliction Satan brings on the church?

SERMON NOTES – The compromising church

Revelation 2:12-17 – “But I have a few things against you, because you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam...” - *NASB*

Christ’s approval

1. They were an _____ church
2. They had a faithful _____

Christ’s accusation

1. They allowed _____ teaching
2. That corrupted their _____
3. That corrupted their _____

Christ’s admonition

1. We must _____
2. God will judge us by His _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

One of the paradoxes of the Christian life is that we are to be in the world but not of it. This means we are to remain unspotted in a messy world. While no one is perfectly able to do this on this side of glory, we are reminded in this section of the dangers of a pattern of compromise. The church in Pergamum was in a spiritually dark place and maintained a testimony for Jesus' name even in the face of persecution. But they did not remain pure in their doctrine. They allowed false teaching to flourish side by side with the truth. Whenever we do this our walk and witness suffer.

This church is a reminder of the importance to be like the Bereans in the book of Acts who made a habit of checking what was taught in the church against what was written in the Bible.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Read the following verses and note what they tell us about false teachers:
 - a. 2 Peter 2:1-3
 - b. Matthew 7:15-20
 - c. Jude 1:3-4
2. Based on these descriptions, how might the church today safeguard itself against false teaching?
3. Why do you think Christians so often get deceived by false teachers?

SERMON NOTES – The corrupt church

Revelation 2:18-29 – “But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel...” – *NASB*

Christ’s approval

1. They were a hard _____ church
2. They were a _____ church
3. They were a _____ church
4. They were a _____ church
5. They were a _____ church
6. They were an _____ church

Christ’s accusation

1. They tolerated _____

2. They practiced _____

3. They were unwilling to _____

Christ's admonition

1. True believers were to _____

2. And look for His _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

Considering the prophetic application of the letters to the churches, a progression begins to stand out. The church whose love for Jesus grows cold is in danger of compromise and compromises of truth always lead to corrupt living. Here again we see an interesting relationship between the absence of persecution and these problems in the church. The church that is in the thick of the battle has little time to let their love grow cold or to listen to false teachers.

It should also stand out to us that both the compromising and corrupt church still had some good things going on. How easy it is to outwardly have it all together yet inwardly be in serious trouble. Today we have access to more content from more teachers than ever before. This has proven to be both a blessing and a curse for the church. It is a blessing because this access can greatly inform our Christian walk. It is a curse because the wolves in sheep's clothing can find many more entry points into our lives. May we exercise the discernment necessary to tell the true from the false and be quick to reject false teaching.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Review the story of Jezebel in 1 Kings 16-19. What did she cause Israel to do?
2. While likely used symbolically of the woman in Revelation 2:20, what does the use of this name imply about what was going on in the church?
3. Read Psalm 1. How does this Psalm reflect the progression into corruption noted in the additional thoughts section?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. According to this passage what is the answer to the offer for compromise and corruption?

SERMON NOTES – The dead church

Revelation 3:1-6 – “I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead...” – *NASB*

Christ’s approval

1. They had a good _____

Christ’s accusation

1. They were a _____ church
2. Their work was _____

Christ’s admonition

1. They must _____
2. They must _____ what remained
 - a. They must _____

b. They must _____

c. They must _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

Warren Wiersbe attributes the following statement to Dr. Vance Havner: “Spiritual ministries often go through four stages: a man, a movement, a machine, and then a monument.” Sardis represents the church in the monument stage. The work God had done in the past was more important than what He wanted to do in the present.

Even within our own denominational family, The Christian and Missionary Alliance we can see the wisdom of Dr. Havner’s observation. The man would be A.B. Simpson who responded to the call of God on his life with missionary and evangelistic fervor. Even to this day the stories of those early days are exciting to read as Dr. Simpson’s zeal caused others to join the work. A mission sending movement was launched that still marks the Alliance today. But we also see the machine at work as the growth of the movement necessitated a more robust structure with policies and procedures. None of this is in and of itself a bad thing. The function of a machine can still carry a vibrant movement forward as I believe the Alliance demonstrates. But we must be careful that we don’t become a museum to the past or a slave to machine. Otherwise, it may well be said of us, “You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Some scholars argue that the message to Sardis does not contain an approving commendation. How does having a good reputation alone fall short of what God has called us to?
2. What work of the church was likely left incomplete in Sardis?
3. What is the relationship to being a dead church and a church who has left the work incomplete?
4. How can you tell a monument church from a living church today?
5. How can we demonstrate gratitude for God's work in the past without letting it keep us from doing the present work of making disciples?

SERMON NOTES – The faithful church

Revelation 3:7-13 – “Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut...” – *NASB*

Christ’s approval

1. They were a _____ church
2. They were _____ to the word
3. They were not _____ of Jesus

Christ’s admonition

1. Jesus will _____ the church
2. Jesus will _____ the church
3. We are to _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

In 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Paul reminds the church that God chooses the people He wants to use differently than the world does. God often chooses those who the world sees as weak, small, or foolish. But when a person is surrendered to the will and work of God great things can come from unexpected places. We see a similar principle at work when Samuel is instructed by God to anoint a new king over Israel. In 2 Samuel 16:7 we read, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

I believe this holds true for churches as well as people. Sometimes we assume flash is a substitute for faithfulness or size a proof of effectiveness. But what does God see when He examines a church? The church of Philadelphia, and all churches who follow their faithful example, are rewarded with open doors of ministry.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The church in the western world has enjoyed prolonged seasons of influence. How has this benefited the work of the gospel?

2. How has it hindered that work?

3. Jesus commends this church in part for not being ashamed of Him despite their trials and status in society.
 - a. What do you think marks such a church?

 - b. What behaviors would such a church avoid?

 - c. What behaviors would such a church engage in?

SERMON NOTES – The lukewarm church

Revelation 3:14-22 – “...because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.” – *NASB*

Christ’s accusation

1. They were _____
2. They were _____
about themselves

Christ’s admonition

1. Buy refined _____
2. Buy _____
3. Buy _____

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

The church is Laodicea is sometimes referred to as the apostate church. Prophetically it is suggested to point to the church of the last days that has a form of religion but has rejected Christ. For this reason, it is also sometimes called the false church. We have been primarily considering these churches from the typological perspective, that they represent how any church could be at any time in history. Regardless of the perspective applied, this church presents us with a problem.

Due to a misunderstanding of the command “do not judge” recorded in Matthew 7:1, many Christians are hesitant to examine the fruit of some who call themselves Christians. But if we read further in Matthew 7 we find these words, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine...” (vs. 6). What is pictured here requires discernment on the part of those who proclaim the gospel. While we are not to judge hypocritically, we are to discern wisely and act accordingly.

It is not surprising that just a bit further down in chapter 7 we find the reminder that not everyone who says Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom. (vs. 21).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Despite this church's condition, what does Jesus offer them?
2. How does this impact the gospel mission of the true church today?
3. What does the invitation of verse 20 indicate?
4. Throughout these letters, what common thread can be found in Christ's admonition?
5. Read 1 John 1:5-10. How does this mirror Christ's admonition for the churches to repent?

Sermon notes answer key

Why study revelation?

Jesus
Today
Redemption
Holiness
Witness
Blessing
Understood

The Author and His audience

Blessing
Grace
Peace
Blesser
Triune God
Father
Son
Holy Spirit
Jesus
Witness
Word
Love
Righteousness
Dead
Resurrection
Promise
High Priest
Ruler
Sovereign
Authority

A song of praise

Love
Action
Boundless

Redeeming
Bondage
Universal
Save
Mission

The return of Jesus

Rapture
Power
Certain
Visible
Sorrowful
Hope
Urgency

Lessons from the lampstands

Head
Authority
Present
Active
Light

The Lord of glory

Authority
Priest-Judge
Love
Necessary
Holiness
Omniscience
Pure judgement
Authority
Word of God
Glory
Victory

The neglectful church

Serving
Sacrificing
Steadfast
Separated
Suffering
Love
Activity
Motive
Remember
Repent
Restore

The suffering church

Persecuted
Poor
Afflicted
Fear
Faithful

The compromising church

Afflicted
Testimony
False
Morals
Fellowship
Repent
Word

The corrupt church

Working
Loving
Faithful
Serving
Steadfast
Effective
Evil
Immorality

Repent
Hold fast
Return

The dead church

Reputation
Dead
Incomplete
Wake up
Strengthen
Remember
Obey
Repent

The faithful church

Weak
Obedient
Ashamed
Vindicate
Protect
Hold fast

The lukewarm church

Lukewarm
Deceived
Gold
White clothes
Eye salve

Bibliography

The following resources have proven invaluable to me over the course of my ministry, especially in the preparation of these messages. While I would not agree with every nuance or detail, I appreciate the contributions each has made to my understanding. If you should have access to any of these, I believe you would benefit.

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