Bible Study-The Revelation of John

September 25, 2022

1. Prayer
2. Introduction
   1. We are going to take a bit of a different view of this book this time around.
      1. Last time we focused on many of the “myths” surrounding this book.
      2. This time we are going to focus on the life affirming aspects of this book and what this book has to say to us in these times which seem dark but the Bible assures us will get darker…and that is GOOD NEWS!!!

* 1. This books largest challenge is not in understanding it…it is not that hard to understand.
     1. The biggest challenge of this book is perhaps, like no other in the NT, is opening up our lives to the adjustments that this book calls for.
     2. This book is not one that should bring us fear…but blessing.
     3. Revelation cuts to the heart of our deepest desires and questions about life…Why are we here? …Where is our mixed-up, out of control world heading? Are we alone in the universe? It reassures us that we’re NOT crazy – that something IS missing in our lives and that something is wrong with this world. Things are NOT the way they should be or will be. It is OK to feel dissatisfied with this world, because we were created for a better one. And we must be “unsettled” with this life, otherwise we come to love

“it” too much taking our eyes off the world to come which is far better. This world as it is now is not the believer’s home.

* 1. Revelation was written to fortify Christians to live in the world, even enduring its harsh treatment, with a firm confidence that this world is not all there is, and that, in fact, what may seem like defeat, on any given day, is going to give way to the greatest victory…in His time.

* 1. OH…and we will look at some of the “myths” surrounding this book…simply because they are too fun to skip.

1. Overview of the Revelation of John
   1. What are some of the things that you have heard about this book through the years?
      1. “Everything I knew about the book of Revelation I learned from

the

Late Great Planet Earth by Hal Lindsey.”

* + 1. “Was told that it was very difficult to understand and what you could understand would be scary.”
    2. “I was told to interpret this book in light of modern events and military equipment.”
    3. “I was told about it from a mystery position…God’s word was cryptic for a reason…and the end time view was presented in a negative way…and that there was a chance you would be Left

Behind.”

* + 1. “This book is only about the prophecy of the end times.”

* 1. Helpful definitions:
     1. Revelation is defined in “The Devil’s Dictionary” (a parody, 1947) this way: *“Revelation, N. : A famous book in which St. John the Divine concealed all that he knew. The revealing is done by commentators, who know nothing.”Ambrose Pierce.* From my background in the Pentecostal church back in the 70’s we were taught that the understanding of the images of Revelation are basically hidden from most men…only select men were able to articulate its meaning. I had no idea at the time how gnostic this sector of the church was…not even knowing what being Gnostic meant. But, of course, so much was based on special revelation that was still occurring by certain people so the same would have had to be true of this revelation as well. The church’s position was not that much different from this evil parody in that in their teaching what we have in revelation is unknowable by the common people.
     2. Merriam-Webster definition:
        1. an act of revealing or communicating divine truth- something that is revealed by God to humans

an act of revealing to view or making known; something that is revealed; especially an enlightening or astonishing disclosure

* + - 1. a pleasant often enlightening surprise; Her talent was a revelation.
      2. If capitalized- an apocalyptic writing addressed to early Christians of Asia Minor and included as a book in the New Testament —called also the Apocalypse

* + 1. The Biblical definition for REVELATION = APOCALYPSE = disclosure or unveiling of the ultimate goal of history.
       1. Everything is revealed, not hidden. Just like it was in the beginning: “The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no

shame.” (Gen. 2:25)

* + - 1. This book was written to be understood, not concealed. John was told to write, to send letters concerning his visions and God’s commands for the purpose of God’s church in all ages.

* + 1. It was not meant to be hidden or feared by the church:
       1. Rev. 1:3- -“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what

is written in it, for the time is near.” makes in abundantly clear that this book is for our good…and as such then must be taught…and by necessity can be understood by God’s people in order for it to be a blessing.

* + - 1. Rev. 22:10 tell us this: “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.”

(3)“The Revelation is not intended to tickle our fancy, but to strengthen our hearts.”- The Geneva Bible commentary

3. Why do some stay away from it?

a. Most people don’t want to think about the day of the Lord.

(1) They will grant that sooner or later all “good things” will come to an end…but personally they take little interest in the end.

We are convinced that this is as good as it gets…or gonna get…based on our experience.

1. Since we are NOT people of the BOOK any longer our influence is the world and so what other position would we take?
2. And there is persecution of Christians in there…our/their god

(little “g”) wouldn’t do that.

1. It scares them,
   1. For if what it says is true and the world is literally in a world of hurt…in what is coming and /or in what is happening already….that is a scary thing…and if you are not a believer or

if your faith is weak it is scary…

* 1. But it is never meant to be scary to the believer…it was meant then and now to bring hope to God’s people.
  2. Revelation is filled with interesting characters…
     + Scary to some…other worldly…though given the stuff on video games probably not so scary more common place now.
     + It does demand we use our imagination since someone has not drawn a picture for us.
  3. It is not written in a genre form we are used to reading and understanding…one has to work at developing skills for reading apocalyptic prophecy…the people then were fairly used to the prophetic.

1. There are so many disagreements over the meaning of this book.

(1)This is true…but so what?

There are a variety of approaches as to how to read and understand Revelation forgetting and sometimes actually excluding its actual genre that confusion can prevail.

(3) People get put off by how some people go down so many rabbit trails because of the imagery they find within.

1. Many think it is either primarily or exclusively about the future with nothing for today.
   * 1. Nancy Guthrie in her book BLESSED reminds us, “Revelation is actually less about when Jesus will return and more about

what

we are to do, who we are to be, and what we can expect to

endure as we wait for Jesus to return to establish His kingdom.”

* + 1. As II Peter 3: 14-18 says, speaking of these latter days, “Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother

Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction,

as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day

of eternity. Amen.”

1. They enjoy being ignorant of God’s truth and they openly seem to reject the blessing of God that this book guarantees. “As we get older,

the ‘hardening of the categories’ tends to set in and most of us

aren’t given to the living and breathing character of the Bible.

Read Revelation with the heart of a child.” (Unveiled Hope- Scotty

Smith)

*4.* Now, we need to understand a little bit about how these people would have saw this revelation so:

1. Rev.1:1 tells us this is: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show His servants the things that MUST (Divine Directive…not a maybe…but those things that must take place.) soon(without delay) take place.”
2. And then again in Rev. 1:3: “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”
3. And then again at the end, Rev. 22:7-““Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

(1) What do we know of these people at this time? What was life like?

* + - These Christians were constantly in peril…John had been exiled from the Church while many in his congregations were being persecuted, tortured and put to death.
    - Considering the time it was given, when the church was suffering under extreme persecution, the Book of Revelation uncovers a future in which creation would experience rebirth;

a time when the ugliness of “this present age” would be transformed into the glory of the “age to come”.

* + - We see the same themes of a future hope in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

* + - This rebirth would only come through divine intervention (“…that soon must take place”). How fitting then it is for this present age when there are so many similarities occurring in these last days.

(2) How might these passages bring hope and comfort to a people who are being persecuted?

* + Like the prophets of old, the people would have heard God’s reiteration of His covenantal promise. These were people of the book…in the midst of persecution….which made knowing

God’s word even more important to them then when they were at ease.

* + They would have received these words with great anticipation and hopefulness, because the events described mirrored some of the events they had and were experiencing at that time leading them to believe that Jesus would return “soon”.
  + The Messiah would never leave them or forsake them…for these Christians God had sent His Spirit in greater form when

He took Christ up…and the Spirit does exactly what Christ said He would…the same as He does for us…The Spirit would bring to memory all that Jesus taught…by extension that means they would understand God’s own word that He chooses to reveal to them and us. So yes, they got it…!!!

* + If not an imminent return, which time seemingly showed to be the case, even for them, then the following generations began to see the 1st Century events to be the beginning (without

delay) of the great things that would come to pass when the great and terrible day of the Lord was near.

(3) How can they bring hope and comfort to us today in our present circumstances?

* Since it was a book of hope to the people then it should be a book of hope to all believing generations as well.
* It is a book for today…A book that helps define for all who can see what is going on and where we are going.
* Since loneliness causes despair and there is so much …at least, perceived loneliness…this book reminds us that we are not

alone and that God is continuing to do that which He has promised from the beginning and that He is bringing to a consummation…SOON!

* It has been a book of hope in times of distress in the Church and a book of great consternation among scholars when the Church has been seemingly at peace. I say, seemingly, because the peace within the Church is a lie…for when we are fighting among ourselves it is the worst.
* We need to see things differently than we do.
  + We need to see this world, and our lives in this

world,

through the perspective of heaven.

* + We sometimes foolishly assume we have all of the

data we

need to evaluate what is happening in our world. But we don’t. Our perspectives are limited by our humanity and our earthly vantage point.

* + In the book of Revelation, we find that a curtain

was

pulled back for John so that he could see beyond the time and space of this earthly life into the heart of ultimate reality. ◼ God enabled him to see the world as it really is, not from the perspective of this earth, but from the perspective of heaven. As we take in what he saw, we find that we are better able to see the true nature of things. Rather than view this world’s offerings as attractive, from heaven’s perspective we can see how ugly and unsatisfying they are. ◼ Rather than seeing the persecution of a faithful believer as a tragic defeat, we’re able to see it as a glorious victory…we will see where the martyrs are placed as we go through

this book.

The Revelation of John October

2, 2022

1. Prayer
2. Review

1. What did we say were some of the biggest challenges concerning the Book of Revelations?

b. There are NO…hear me say…NO…hidden messages that require some form of supernatural understanding to understand.

* + - 1. What hope would there be in that if the majority of the people could not see, hear, understand them for themselves…there would be no blessings to be had.
      2. II Tim. 3:16-17- “ALL (emphasis on the ALL) Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof,

for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

* + 1. The biggest challenge of this book is not in understanding it, as we have often been led to believe, but perhaps, like no other in the NT, the challenge is opening up our lives to the adjustments that this book calls for.
    2. Revelation, also, cuts to the heart of our deepest desires and questions about life and it answers them rather easily!
       1. Why are we here? …
       2. Where is our mixed-up, out of control world heading?
       3. Are we alone in the universe?
          - It reassures us that we’re NOT crazy – that something IS missing in our lives and that something is wrong with this world.
          - Things are NOT the way they should be or will be.
          - It is OK to feel dissatisfied with this world, because we were created for a better one.
          - And it reminds us that we must be “unsettled” with this life, otherwise we come to love “it” too much taking our eyes off the world to come which is far better.

e. So this book is not one that should bring us fear…but blessing for it is a book of hope to those walking in the darkness of their times.

2. For our purposes in this time what did we say was the bottom line of what Revelation is about for the believer?

* 1. Nancy Guthrie in her book BLESSED reminds us, “Revelation is actually less about when Jesus will return and more about

(1) what we are to do,

(2)who we are to be, and

(3) what we can expect to endure as we wait for Jesus to return to establish His kingdom.”

* 1. As II Peter 3: 14-18 says, speaking of these latter days, “Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by

Him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience

# of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote

to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

(3) The reality is that you must be able to understand something before you can really take it to heart, that is before it begins to affect how you live.

1. So, God sent His Son who gave His blood and the Spirit to each of us enabling us to understand those things revealed in God’s Word.
2. It does not take a seminary degree to understand God’s word for our lives. The seminary degree only helps me in shepherding God’s people.

(1) It was not written for scholars. It was written to the Church made up of Jewish and Gentile believers…ordinary folks like you and me…with the expectation that they would understand its message easily.

(2)It was not written to create confusion, conflict or fears...remember it was written so that we would be blessed.

1. Robert Mounce, who wrote a commentary of this book concludes his preface with this, “The great central truths of Revelation emerge

with tremendous force to those who prayerfully open themselves up to its pages. Evil has once again over-extended itself, persecution has come, but God who is sovereign over all will step into human history again to vindicate the faithful and forever defeat the forces of evil. To the promise, ‘Surely I am coming soon’ the church responds with confidence and anticipation, ‘Amen, Come, Lord Jesus’” (Rev.

22:20).

1. We also need to be open to all the OT imagery and allusions for the people then still knew these and used them in their understanding.
2. The best interpreter of the symbols and images will be from earlier books of the Bible. The Scriptures are their own best interpreter.
3. Many of the symbols in Revelation find understanding from the social, political, cultural and religious world of that time…1st

Century.

* + One of the chief issues with misinterpreting the Revelation of John is that interpreters (that is giving some way too much credit) forget this fact…or they simply overlook it.
  + We need not place our 21st Century sensibilities into the equation until we begin to make application for ourselves today.

1. We need to understand that numbers are very significant in the book of Revelation. They express the sovereignty of God over history.

(1)The number four (4) speaks of completeness in a universal, global, or worldwide sense.

* 1. The number six (6) refers to humanity.
  2. The number seven (7) speaks of completeness, perfection, and salvation.
     + It represents God’s sovereign plan in its perfection and completeness.
     + The number seven is especially important in Revelation

(used 53 times), so we shouldn’t be surprised that another way the book could be organized is in seven sets of seven:

* + - There is a Prologue (1: 1–3) and an Epilogue (22: 6–20)

1. Seven churches (1: 4–3: 22)

2. Seven seals (4: 1–8: 5)

3. Seven trumpets (8: 6–11: 19)

4. Seven great signs (12: 1–15: 4)

5. Seven bowls of wrath (15: 1–16: 21)

6. Seven messages of final judgment (17: 1–

18:

24) ◼

7. Seven last things (19: 1–22: 5)

(4)The number ten (10) speaks of completeness in the human experience or dimension.

(5) And the number twelve (12) speaks of completeness in terms of the community of God’s people, a unity in diversity.

1. Another important thing we need to understand about the organization of Revelation is that it retraces the same events from different angles, each with a different emphasis or focus. (I will be repeating this often especially as we go through the seals, the

trumpets and the bowls for they build the event and give more

specificity and clarity.)

* 1. As modern thinkers and readers, we tend to expect events depicted in a piece of writing to be in chronological order.
  2. In fact, many interpreters attempt to force the events depicted in the book of Revelation into chronological order…and that only adds to confusion.
  3. John repeats Himself because God wants to make sure that His people get the whole picture from heavens perspective so that they can in turn be hopeful that God is and will keep His promise.

1. One last thing we need to keep in mind: Revelation was written to strengthen…to fortify Christians… then and today…to live in the world, enduring its harshness with a firm confidence that God has everything under control…no matter how chaotic it feels.

(4) What is one thing you have gleaned from this overview about the book of

Revelation?

1. “If you fear this book it will be hard to receive the promised blessing.”
2. “I will be able to understand it!”
3. “This is not just an “end times” book…it is a book that further reveals who Jesus is…. And what we are to be doing during these last days.”

C. The 7 Beatitudes of the book of Revelation or Seven “Blessed” Statements in the Book of Revelation- I can almost imagine a scenario where as they read the first

“blessed” statement that they may have sought out more since the first one was so grand and encouraging.

1. Revelation 1: 3- *“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it,*  *for the time*

*is near.”*

1. Revelation 14: 13- *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this:*  *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!’”*

1. Revelation 16: 15- *“(Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be*

*seen exposed!)”*

1. Revelation 19: 9- *“And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true words of God.’”*

1. Revelation 20: 6- *“Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.”*

1. Revelation 22: 7- *“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

1. Revelation 22: 14- *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.”*

1. What do you suppose that these passages communicated to the people then?
2. “A summation of hope.”
3. “they are encouraging words to a people who are being sorely oppressed.”
4. (These words communicate a living relationship with the

Godhead- Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”--- They are not alone.

1. They would have heard that the Scriptures are actually their greatest defense and offense against the world that seems to be closing in on them.
2. They would have heard, reiterated, of their need to not only depend on the written word but also that they are to apply/keep it correctly…based on the Scriptures own interpretation.
3. The idea of keep the Word is repeated for emphasis.
4. Keeping it equals:
   * Having it affect their whole life and the life of the culture around them…
   * Starting with their immediate family…then to their church family and then to their greater community.
5. When we stop doing this as we are prone to do we begin to fear the world and what it says.
6. Keep it was a truth that the children of God have been commanded since the beginning.

g. They would have heard that the time is near for the end…so they can endure anything till then.

Pretty specific in 1:3.

In Chapter 16 He says, “Behold, I am coming like a thief!” emphasizing His near and sudden approach…to be ready!

Chapter 19 emphasizes the meal of the Lamb is near as well.

Chapter 22:7 says, “behold, I am coming soon.”

Even Rev. 22:14 has a sense of this occurring soon in context.

* + - 1. Rather than fearing death they would have heard, Death brings the soul to unchangeable rest. So death, while an enemy and result of the curse...is not in the end, something to fear for the Christian. As

Thomas Brooks says in a famous sermon given at a funeral in 1651- “A Believer’s Last Day is His Best Day.”

* + - 1. They should always be ready for His return…watching and keeping garments clean for you want to look good when the King arrives after all He has given us these clothes for the great banquet and they should look as good as they did when He gave them.
      2. They would have heard what they were to do, who they are and who they are to become, and what was expected of them so that they could endure as they await for Jesus to return to establish His kingdom.

9. We will look at each of these in context and get more specific answers; but for the moment, what are some conclusions we can draw from these that call on us to adjust our lifestyle right now?

The Revelation of John October

9, 2022

* 1. Prayer
  2. Review

1. When we looked at the 7 beatitudes or blessings of Revelation, how are they hopeful words for the church today?

God is still talking to us through His word…

God is still communicating that He is with us…

God is saying that all things are happening just as He planned and implemented them to happen…

The people then were expected to understand this book…this revelation…and they did! Look at how the Church grew under such adversity and persecution.

This book gave them great comfort to do what they were supposed to do. If they were encourage to live the way God expected under such conditions we can as well in our relative ease.

2. Some of the things I am hoping to achieve in this class:

a. That we will seek to read this book and every book of the

Bible;

* + - * 1. With great anticipation
        2. With great expectation
        3. With the excitement of can’t wait to turn the next page;

I love re-reading certain classics like… the Lord of the Rings or Narnia or even Harry Potter

When my grandboys were younger…I would pick up a book and they would almost immediately begin to back up toward my lap wanting to be read to. It doesn’t matter how many times I read the book they were tickled for me to read it…and then after a few times it became a favorite book… picking it up and bringing it to me or anyone else that would read it. This is the kind of excitement we are to have coming to God’s word.

* + - 1. We have to pray for that type of spirit because it doesn’t come naturally any more…we have too many distractions in our lives.
      2. We must be reading the Bible regularly to develop an excitement for it.
      3. We need to read it with the expectation that the Spirit of God has something to show us today so that we can be a blessing to others.

I am convinced if we began looking to the Scriptures as a way to be a blessing to others we might desire to read it more.

* 1. Revelation chapter 1:1-8
     1. Just to reiterate what we have been talking about; *According to verses 1-3, is*

*God seeking to keep anything from His children?* Not a thing that is needed to bring us blessing.

* + 1. *How do we know this for a fact?* 
       1. Once again, by using the word “revelation/apocalypse” we know that God is sending this and it is understandable…since revelation means the revealing or in the case of God “total disclosure” of that which we need to know. God believes we are on a “need to know” basis for this information.
       2. All of the biblical revelation is about Jesus Christ, who is the Word (John 1:1-4) …so all things are revealed through Him to us.
       3. It is given to “His servants= His bond slaves” …His children and as

such;

* + - * 1. He expects that we will understand it and bring us comfort and blessing so that we can live in preparation for His return.
        2. It is written to give His servants then and his servants now confidence in what He has been doing and in what He is doing so that they/we can have confidence in what He will finally do.
      1. He expects that we will “keep” what is written which also means it is understandable…otherwise it would be a set up….and God doesn’t do that.
      2. By being for His servants/saints…it is not given to some group above us…an elite group of people… it is also not given to nonbelievers …. what God wants us to know He reveals to all His children through

His Holy Spirit in us…this makes us different than the average

“Joe”.

* + 1. *We have talked about this many times and we will see these words again: What do the words “must” and “soon” indicate in verse 1?*
       1. “must” = a divine directive…nothing will stop it, it will happen just as it is declared.
       2. “soon” = without delay… at the appointed time

(1)John could easily say, “These things are happening even as I see them and will continue to happen until the Parousia…Christ’s

2nd Coming.”

(2)From the time Christ ascended until He returns these things have been …are and will take place just as God degrees!

* + 1. *We have said a lot about verse 3 already, but just as a reminder: What are some of the special blessings of vs. 3?*

# a. Blessed are all who are His…. Remember Gen. 1:28, “And the God

(Elohim) blessed them.”

1. Elohim’s basic meaning is “strong One” but it is used of God in three persons…Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It also means

Sovereign, Creator, Judge, Almighty One…over 2500 times it is used in the OT.

1. Define God. WSC- God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice goodness and truth.
2. The plural we see in Elohim and the plural references to Himself in verse 26 also communicates “fullness or completeness”. He is complete in Himself. He has no need of anything or anyone to be in relationship with.
3. He and He alone is the One who can and does bless His people. Just this knowledge reiterated here at the beginning of this last book takes us back to the original blessing placed upon His people in the garden….and these people would have seen the

connection.

b. It is a blessing to read His Word aloud…

(1)Whether read by me, the preacher or by us to ourselves or to our children or others God may bring into our midst.

(2)It used to be a standard practice in families to read books

# aloud… • many of us do this with children’s books with

our children…

• but it also was a standard practice in many Christian homes…to read the Scriptures from cover to cover together…it was seen as a blessing to have books to read…especially the Bible it was not a rare find but a coveted one.

1. It is a blessing to hear the Bible read aloud…not just supposed to be …but it is a blessing by the decree of God in this verse written in the imperative form…God decrees that these will be a blessing.
2. It is a blessing to “Keep” what is written in them…By implication then it is a blessing to study and to search the Scriptures and to apply them to life…and this again has always been true for the believer.
3. Look at Gen. 2:15- “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden to work and keep it.” We were placed in the garden to “work and keep” the garden. The words can be synonymous in some cases but they each have distinct properties.
   1. “work” signifies that we have been given a gift of a specific job/ calling to do…this is our work.
   2. “keep”- speaks of the honor we hold in doing this for God…as He would do it and have it done. Keep also has the meaning of remembering our responsibilities…keeping all this in our heart.
   3. Blessed we are truly for God actually wants us to know all of this so we can keep it.
4. It is a blessing to know that the “time” of Christ’s return is at hand.
5. For all who are His …we live in this life looking forward to the next.
6. I Peter 4:7- “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be selfcontrolled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.”
7. Again, not a new message but one they may not have heard for awhile.

g. Blessed are those whose lives are actually impacted and shaped by what this says.

1. It will change our priorities.
2. It will build up our courage.
3. It will enable us to overcome ALL that the world throws at us.
4. It leads us to worship …to do what were created to do…what a blessing.
5. It causes us to pray…to seek repentance, restoration, and renewal for the work ahead.
6. It emboldens our witness.
7. It takes away the fear of death.
8. It is exactly what we need and desire to hear…when we have ears to hear.

1. *As we come to verses 4-8, which is the beginning or Greeting section for all the letters to the church that God is having John write; what is John telling them and us in these verses?*
   * + 1. SHOCKER! God Himself wrote this to them…and us. In fact, all of Scripture is written to us…do we often think of it that way? One of the adjustments it asks us to make…this letter is NOT JUST FROM ANYBODY…it is from GOD HIMSELF TO US!!!!

* + - 1. Just as the rest of the Bible has said God has John write, here again we see “Grace and peace…” come from the same source…the only source… “…from Him who is, who

was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before the throne.”

* 1. 2 times God describes Himself this way in just 4 verses.
  2. Can you even begin to imagine …? Think of this description...is that what is in your mind when you think of God. We will see a clearer image in verses 12-16.

c. The God head is in on display for these folks…letting them know from whom this letter actually comes. Think about it, God is writing them a letter!

(1)This phrase is reminiscent of God proclaiming H is name

Yahweh to Moses… “I am that I am”

* + - * In vs. 8 He says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the

LORD, who is and who was and who is to come, the

Almighty.”

* + - * This “I am” in vs. 8= “ego emi” = I am I am” in the Greek which is the equivalent of Yahweh in the OT…God’s covenant name…communicating His pre-existence, His love, provision, perseverance, grace and mercy and His salvation …is all wrapped up in this name.

(2)The “One who is to come” or “the One who is coming” speaks of

Christ’s and His 2nd Coming.

(3) 7 spirts is the Holy Spirit described in a 7fold fullness as the note in many Bibles describe is…or

In other words, …in all His fullness.

Also, in relation to the 7 churches this 7fold Spirit or 7 Spirits indicates God’s sovereign care by the Spirit over ALL His elect peoples.

(4)The Godhead communicates through John not just that He exists but that He is in fact coming again just as He has said throughout the rest of the scriptures.

d. That is case they forgot:

(1)Christ is the faithful witness from all eternity t o the counsel of God…

(2)Christ is the first fruit of the dead…He is the only one who raised Himself by His own power from the dead…thus conquering death for all who are His and we can raise by His power.

(3) Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth...In Him they are given power and authority as he sees

fit...they can’t do anything on their own. (4)This is the good news for the Church for all is being fulfilled just as it has been promised from the beginning…Gen. 3:15.

e. They/we receive wonderful benefits:

* + 1. Assurance that He is in control…by the power of His word…He

rules

* + 1. His love is steadfast and it never ceases,
    2. freedom from our sins by His blood,
    3. being made a kingdom and making us to be priests…See also I Peter 2:9-10- “But you are a chosen race, aa royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are

God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have

received mercy.”

(5)They/we all mankind will see Him and know it is Him when

He does come.

* + - For believers think I Thess. 4:13-18- “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will

not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

* + - But even those who will be judged will see and know it is too late.

1. *What ways does these first 8 verses challenge us to readjust our thinking and our lifestyle?*
   * 1. We need this to do more than just inform us.
     2. We need this to move us off our complacency and fear.
     3. We need it to fill us with courage as we do what you have commanded us to do.
     4. We need it because it confirms who we are in Christ…when the world around us and even our own heart may be telling us differently.
     5. We need your grace and peace every hour…not just when in trouble.
     6. We need to have our perspective adjusted to your truth about what is real, worthwhile and worthy. Phil. 4:8- “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

The Revelation of John October 16,

2022

* 1. Prayer
  2. Review-Let’s look at Rev. 1:1-8 for a minute.
     + 1. What are some ways this prologue would give hope to

these people?

* + - 1. How does this prologue set the stage for all that is coming?
         1. Everything that is coming is from God to His

Church…His bride.

* + - * 1. God has delighted and He continues to delight in conversing with His people through His Word…they are not alone and never will be.
        2. His power…majesty…and authority is firmly established.
        3. And He assures them that all of this “must” take place “soon”. This is confirmed again in vs. 19- “Write therefore the things that you have

seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.”

*3.* What were some of the ways we said that this prologue challenges us to readjust our thinking and our lifestyle?

a. Of course, it begins with God changing our hearts. Rev.

1:3

(1)Deut. 31:10-13- “And Moses commanded them, ‘At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns,

that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be

careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your

God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the

Jordan to possess.’”

1. Rom. 10:17- “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”
2. From beginning to end there is the blessing and gift of faith that comes from hearing God’s word.
3. The greatest blessing of hearing there is in coming to faith as God has changed our hearts to be able to hear …that is understand and accept the Word of Christ.
4. We need this to do more than just inform us.
5. We need this to move us off our complacency and fear.
6. We need it to fill us with courage as we do what you have commanded us to do.
7. We need it because it confirms who we are in Christ…when the world around us and even our own heart may be telling us differently.
8. We need your grace and peace every hour…not just when in trouble.
9. We need to have our perspective adjusted to your truth about what is real, worthwhile and worthy. Phil. 4:8- “Finally, brothers, whatever is

true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

C. Rev. 1:9-20

1. Fun fact: There are 404 verses in the whole Book of Revelation, 278 of them contain at least one illusion to the OT. God’s Word is that important even in the vision God gives to him.

1. Author and theologian, J. B. Phillips once said*, “The most important thing about any of us is the image of God we carry in our hearts, for the quality of our lives is determined by the way we think of Him.”* What does this mean to you?

Why is a correct image of God important for us to get through life in general?

* 1. A correct image of God enables us to have a correct image of man. Which then enables us to have a correct image of man…that promotes sanctity of human life by God’s standard.
  2. This correct image enables us to trust God and to assured that He will do just as He says He will do.
  3. A correct image of God enables us to live as God commands…by faith.

3. What realities are highlighted by John in vs 9-10 concerning the church? How would you define them and are these still true for us today? Why or why not?

1. John is their brother- speaking of their unity in Christ… within His family…those who are joined to Christ by faith alone…so once again…this letter is written primarily to believers.
2. John is also a “fellow sharer” = “partner” in the highlighted realities of the churches. So he can fully appreciate what they are going through.
3. Tribulation- the suffering for and in Christ which accompanies faithfulness to God’s Word and principles-
   1. Matt. 24:9-13- “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”
   2. John 16:32-33-“ Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave

me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In

# the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have

overcome the world.”

1. Acts 14:21-22- “When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”
2. This suffering is what is required of kingdom subjects throughout time, for in this way we identify with Christ. But also extends to the full period of time between the 2 comings of Christ.
3. “Kingdom”- refers to that which has been inaugurated with

Christ’s first coming and into which all of His children will be draw into.

1. “Patient endurance”- the active endurance required of the faithful…
   1. We will see these words often in Revelation. It is in here so often, one could easily come away defining Revelation this way:

“Revelation is a call to patient endurance of tribulation as we await the coming of Christin all Hs fullness.”

* 1. A virtue that is spoken about from the beginning…waiting on

the

LORD.

* 1. Endurance is a working and keeping word.
  + Through blood, sweat and tears we must remain faithful…that is one of the reasons we hear God saying over and over again… “Be strong and very courageous”!
  + Or, “But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (4)Those who are in Christ can and must do this.

1. The importance of being open to God leading in your life… “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”…
   * 1. Some of the churches had to meet in secret and then did.
     2. The Spirit will be leading him through the revelation of

Jesus Christ…

* + 1. And Jesus speaks to him indirectly at first...from behind him…

• Spurgeon put it this way: “It is a wonderful fact that we do not even hear the voice of Jesus until the Spirit rests upon us. John says in his revelation, ‘I was in the Spirit in the day of the Lord and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.’ (Rev. 1:10) he did not hear that voice until he was in the Spirit. How many heavenly words do we miss because we do not abide in the Spirit?”

(4) He couldn’t go to church so he made sure He worshipped fully engaged with the Spirit on the Day set aside for worship no matter His situation.

* + - * + He is in exile after all! He had been banished to the Isle of Patmos…a real place still there today.
        + He was there because he wouldn’t stop preaching the truth of Christ. He probably went so far as to taught the officials with Christ is Lord …rather than Caesar is

Lord.

* + - * + John probably worked the mines in Patmos until he was too old or he died to work and history/tradition tells us that in his late 80’s or 90’s he was set free.
        + It is here in that place in that time God called on him to write the Revelation and address it to the 7

churches. After all it was God that placed him there to endure and then to write.

(5) But this was not simply a worship service we are left to also believe that this is where he is caught up in the vision much like an OT Prophet would have been…

The Revelation of John October

23, 2022

* 1. Prayer
  2. Review

4. What were some of the realities that were highlighted by John concerning the church in vs 9-10- “I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was

on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the

testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord ’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet…”?

1. John is their brother- speaking of their unity in Christ… within His family…those who are joined to Christ by faith alone…so once again…this letter is written primarily to believers.
2. John is also a “fellow sharer” = “partner” in the highlighted realities of the churches. So he can fully appreciate what they are going through.

He is this way in 3 ways: (1) “Partner in the Tribulation”-

* + - The suffering for and in Christ which accompanies faithfulness to

God’s Word and principles-

* + - This suffering is what is required of kingdom subjects throughout time, for in this way we identify with Christ.
    - But also this suffering/tribulation extends to the full period of time between the 2 comings of Christ.

1. Next he talks of “Kingdom”- which refers to that which has been inaugurated with Christ’s first coming and into which all of His children are in and will be finally drawn into.
2. “Patient endurance”- the active endurance required of the

faithful…

i. We will see these words often in Revelation. It is in here so often, one could easily come away defining Revelation this way: “Revelation is a

call to patient endurance of tribulation as we await the coming of

Christin all Hs fullness.”

1. This is a virtue that is spoken about from the beginning…waiting on the LORD.
2. Endurance is a working and keeping word.

• Through blood, sweat and tears we must remain faithful…that is one of the reasons we hear God saying over and over again… “Be strong and very courageous”!

# • Or, “But the one who endures to the end will be

saved.”

• Those who are in Christ can and must do this.

j. The importance of being open to God leading in your life… “I was in the

Spirit on the Lord’s day” …

* 1. The Church has always taken this to mean the first day of the week…our Sunday on our calendar. Nothing here for the

7th

Day Adventist…and of course this in not the only reference in the NT.

* 1. He was there because he wouldn’t stop preaching the truth

of

Christ.

(3)John probably worked the mines in Patmos and usually this would mean until he was too old or he died to work. But history/tradition tells us that in his late 80’s or 90’s he was set free and went back to the church at Ephesus.

(4) It is here in that place in that time God called on him to write the Revelation and address it to the 7 churches. After all it was God that placed him there to endure and then to write.

5. How are these still true for us today even principally?

C. John 1:10-16

1. God the Spirit gives John great detail about God the Son-Jesus in verses

1216.

Now let’s look at Based on the description before us what is Christ seeking to communicate to His Church about Himself?

a. “loud voice (vs. 10) and the voice in vs 12”-

1. This speaks to the personification of the Godhead and we will see that it is Christ Himself. With a loud voice like someone would assume someone who was yelling…
2. It is just this voice has all the authority to declare these things…not like the still voice but one so John won’t miss the declaration as huge.
3. He writes that the voice was this LOUD so the people who did not hear would also know of the intensity of this declaration/vision.
4. Again verifying that God is speaking to them.
5. Jesus is in their midst…as He is with John… “in the midst of the lampstands one like the Son of man…”
   1. This seems to be His preferred place…in the midst of His church…vs

20.

* + - This was the first thing that caught John’s attention after the loud voice, of course.
    - This would have brought them tremendous hope and encouragement as it does for us today.
    - He is in our midst as our shepherd through the Holy

Spirit...as well.

* 1. They would know they have not been abandoned by their God.

1. “one like a son of man”- he saw someone who looked human first, and foremost…this reunion had to be sweet even in a vision…to be in what was like His physical presence again. And he is still human…but no ordinary human for He is also God.
   1. Daniel 7:13- “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.
   2. The Godhead…the Creator...the Ancient of Days…the Christ.

This is probably the primary reference…. that is the divine mind.

* 1. Also, this was Christ’s preferred title used of Himself…
  2. This title recognizes His manhood as the 2nd Adam…but also recognizing the type of man…without sin.
  3. Jesus wants us to see Him as He is so He has John write just as he does.

1. “clothed in a long robe” = Greek- “a garment down to the foot”- representing the kingly and priestly robes
   1. See Isaiah 6: 1- “I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of His robe filled the temple.”
   2. Standing in the midst of His Suffering church is our King…our

High Priest

* 1. The “golden sash” adds to this image of King and priest.
     + - The people of John’s day needed to see the authority of

Jesus.

* + - * This vision of King and true High Priest would have filled them with hope in the midst of all the suffering.

1. “the hairs of His head were white like white wool, like snow…” not an expression of age entirely but more so of His wisdom and of the

respect due Him- This is Daniel’s Son of Man…the Ancient of Days whiteness symbolizes –both age, holiness/absolute purity/wisdom…as

pure as a new fallen undisturbed snow. Daniel 7:9- “As I looked,

thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His

clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure

wool;

1. “His eyes were like a flame of fire…” His penetrating and piercing oversight…inspecting eyes of His Holiness…all seeing… suggests a zeal and passion …a holy passion for His own glory… all-knowing as He walks among the lamp stands. Daniel 7:9-10- “… his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him” These two make is clear that He is Holy,

Holy, Holy!

1. “His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace…”- stability, strength, permanence and radiance …as the final product after being in a hot forge…it goes along with how He will be seen by all…the brilliance of the finished product coming out of the forge.
2. “His voice was like the roar of many waters…” – “roar” = cascading as in flood waters cascading over or through a dam.
   1. The roar is deafening. If you have ever been to Niagara Falls think of the roar of waters- of the crashing of the sea against the rock ledges in certain places in the world.
   2. Christ voice…His word…rises above every other

voice/distraction of the world. His is supreme.

* 1. He has already said in vs 10- “I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.” We know how deafening that can be if you are too close.

1. “in His right hand He held seven stars…”
   * + - 1. He holds a precious commodity---
         2. 7 stars in His right hand =the pastors- of each of the churches in His hand— see vs. 20- “As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

To be clear: “mystery or secret” in the Bible ...OT or NT…never means something that is hidden now rather it was hidden and now it is something that has been, or is, or will be revealed.

Now concerning “the angels”, some Study Bibles teach that these may have been actual angels that were assigned to the church for their care. A type of guardian angel.

Problem with that is that each letters will be addressed “to the angel of the church” …to be given to the “angel” of the church…they would have no need for the information nor would they receive anything from mere men.

Also, by this time angels did not hold the intrigue they had 2 or 3 decades back (see letter to the Hebrews), so the people now would probably have understood that this was speaking of the faithful pastors of these churches …the ones vested with carrying out God’s Word among God’s people.

(3) Holding them accountable, encouraging them…an active involvement with His church through His pastors/elders since His word commands us to put elders in every church.

* This is a symbol of His care for and His expectation of His true pastors faithfully delivering His teaching then and

today…

* While we are not the mouthpiece of God as John was… we…that is, those who seek to be faithful to the Word and actions required…we are proclaiming the very Word of God to His people.
* God has given the elders/deacons to the church as a gift of leadership but He hold the elders, especially, accountable for the spiritual condition of the people.

He is communicating to these folks, if they were wondering…that these are His men as well, so follow them.

(4) Right hand symbolizes protection and authority over

His elect or

His best actions... His sovereignty.

* 1. “from His mouth came a double edged sword…” His Word is powerful and true. One side of the blade is His grace to His people and the other is destruction for His enemies…Is. 11:4;
     1. Heb. 4:12- “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of

spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

* + 1. Is. 66:16- “For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by His sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be

many.”

* 1. “His face was like the sun shining in full strength…”
     1. Interesting...too bright for the human eye to look into is what is being communicated here. Interesting I say…given the number of people who want to see

Him face to face and think they can.

* + 1. This is the face that shone on Moses’ face so that he had to wrap his face from the people.
    2. No one can look into the sun with a naked eye for long without endangering his sight.
* When the sun is shining in its full strength we often feel the weightiness of its force…The weightiness of Christ presence…Numb. 6:25- “The LORD make His face to shine upon you…” in blessing.

We cannot see Him as He truly is in this life because of His brilliance. As He said, He is the light of the world…both physically (Before the sun and the moon existed He was there separating chaos from order…after the New heaven and the

new earth there won’t be a need for the sun and the moon for He is there) and spiritually.

(4) Interesting occurrences when we are exposed to the face of God: Matt. 17:2-7- “And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Him. And Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good that we are here.

If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.’ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Rise, and have no fear.’ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.” Sound familiar…see vs. 17

* 1. Vs. 17-18- “When I saw Him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, the living one. I died and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and

Hades.”

1. What would you say to someone who would ask, “Why can’t I see God? If He is real…I need to see Him to be sure…?”
   * + When was the last time you felt love?
     + When was the last time you received comfort from another?
     + When was the last time you thought you were going to get into an accident…and then you didn’t?
     + When was the last time your life seemed to be unraveling…and then it didn’t?

When was the last time you got an answer to prayer?

* + - Do you have a loving family? Do you have close friends?
    - When was the last time you received something you didn’t expect or deserve?
    - These are not luck, accidents or coincidence…these are God.
    - When we recognize these things we see at least the hands of God working.
    - Instead of continuing to ask…we need to Rejoice in the

“vision”

God has given us.

1. He is saying to John whom He has said do not fear in my presence though I am the One who started everything and I will be the One to finish it. Our anxieties concerning life ought to be tempered with who Jesus is.
2. He is alive…no matter what others may say…He is alive…He resurrected from the dead and ascended alive and rules alive forevermore.
3. He controls the access to death and hades…since He alone has the keys. Nothing to fear in death if we are His. He is sovereign over all.
   * Since Jesus emerged from the grave with the keys of death in His hand, and because He is alive forever the day is coming when

we will receive a glorious resurrection body, “when our

lowly bodies are transformed to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject all things to Himself.”

(Phil. 3:21)

* + Also, one day He will take those keys to death and lock the door to death… “…death will be no more.”- (Rev. 21:4)
  + Isaiah 11:3-5- “And His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what His eyes see, or decide

disputes by what His ears hear, but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His waist, and faithfulness

the belt of his loins.”

2. Why is it important for them and John to be reminded that Jesus is reigning, now? Why is that important for every successive generation?

Times are extremely hard for them…so hard that people are being brought to the edge of the faith…but with this image of Him on the throne they can be assured that He is still in charge and they can go on when there doesn’t seem to be a good reason to go on.

Because of this we need not be molded by our circumstances and situations.

Because of this we need not fear…more times than I wish to count we hear the declaration from one of the Godhead… “Do not Fear…” Since this comes from our sovereign even death should hold no terror for us for it is He who holds the power and He reigns over death and hades.

As the One who is living and reigning He is unlike all other gods…who are not living and have no powers of control or reign. The Bible throughout makes the case that God is the Living and reigning KING…in contrast to the gods/idols of this world…each generation

must be reminded of this because of our propensity to put something…anything before God.

3. Now we just looked at John’s description of Jesus in verses 1216. But He had begun this vision of Jesus actually back in v.3 when he

said that Jesus is he “…who is, who was, and is to come”, then he said the Spirit was before

“His throne” in verse 4 he had also said of Jesus that he is the “ruler of the kings on earth” in vs.5 and then the “Alpha and Omega…the LORD GOD… the Almighty” in verse 8. How might all these descriptions help us fair as we go to the polls in a few weeks?

The Revelation of John November

6, 2022

1. Prayer
2. Review- John

1:12-20

1. In terms of our own walk with Christ, what aspects of John’s description of Jesus do you long to more fully experience?

1. In what ways is an accurate vision of Jesus the foundation of all hope? How can false images of our Lord rob us of this hope?

1. Martin Luther said, *“Bad theology is the worst taskmaster of all”,* do you agree or disagree—why?

D. The letters themselves- Revelation 2 and 3 1. A qualifier we must remember:

a. Revelation is an apocalypse…

(1) It is about uncovering or unveiling what soon must take place. (2) Revelation is a book of “showing”. The verb “to see” is used 52 times in

Revelation.

(3) We are meant to see and understand this book just like those in the

1st century.

b. Revelation is a prophecy rooted in OT imagery and scripture.

(1) Some of the OT imagery it borrows:

* The tree of life
* The ancient serpent
* The plagues
* The Song of Moses
* Jezebel • Babylon, etc.
* OT allusions and parallels and Scripture fill the pages with over

500 references.

(2) It is not just steeped in the OT it is in many ways a fulfillment of OT prophecy…all roads lead to this ending.

* + - We have already referenced this book and

Daniel.

* + - We will see more from the major and minor prophets. • But also, the OT prophesies of Jesus concerning His own 2nd

Coming.

(3) Even though the book may mostly be about the future, but it will only make sense when read through the eyes of the past.

c. Revelation is also a letter.

1. The whole thing is written by John and sent to 7 real churches.
2. We see a breakdown in chapters 2-3 of these churches but from chapter 4- 22 would have been include in each letter as well.
3. Some of the churches were under attack spiritually, physically, and material, while others were deep in compromise and

worldliness and the simple message this letter seeks to convey … “Don’t give up! Don’t give in!”

1. Jesus has won the “nike” … the victory!
2. It was also a circular letter since there were other churches than these 7.
   * + These churches represented 7 postal districts of Rome in that area. There could have been multiple churches in each area …this does not portray 7 successive periods of church history.
     + We know that there were at least 10 cities with established churches at this time in this region and yet only 7 were chosen to receive letters. 7 is the number for completeness. This is how 7 is used to symbolizes all churches.
     + The number of churches is not what is as important as a full complete picture of what the Bride of Christ should look like as she lives in the world but is not of the world.
3. This would have been read in one setting and then talked about.

Now, if I read the whole thing for the weeks it took to expound it many if not most would get weary.

* + But it was real to them for they were living it right then. We can’t know their world as well as they did.
  + Since most were illiterate learning by hearing was the greatest blessing…and this book answered so many of their questions personally in some cases as at least 7 of the letters were addressed to specific churches.
  + They didn’t have dinner cooking at home.
    - 1. All of this is to say with a little work and study in the

Bible we can also understand the meaning of what it is showing us…today.

* + - 1. Also, let us remember, this was a real letter written to real people.

It was written for and with the 1st Century audience in mind…but since much of it has yet to take place it is also written for the church today…at least until Christ returns.

So we must seek to understand the way they understood it even if we are not being persecuted and oppressed as they were.

There are somethings that are always true…false teachers in our midst, the temptation to compromise, the work of service to our own and the community around us…all built upon the truth that there is victory in Christ so these can be overcome just as He overcame.

It also reminds us that God’s people will always suffer some form of temptation or trouble from ourselves, the world and Satan. The battle is always with us but the victory the true “nike” is in

Christ alone.

2. Introduction to all the letters.

1. These are basically a report card for each church and at the same time while speaking to those people John is telling each of the other churches as well as the church through the ages how to act and what to watch out for.
2. Of course, these letters, we must remember, do not come from John but from Jesus Himself, the One who is, who was and who is to come.

1. The people will hear firsthand what it means that Jesus is in the midst of the lampstands, which tells them He sees everything…something they and we all too often forget for He sees the good, the bad, and the ugly.

1. Of all people, He alone knows what needs to be commended and what needs to be condemned. 2. Jesus obviously, loves us too much to only tell us what we want to hear but also what we need to hear…if we have ears to hear.

This was John’s church and it is the closest church to the island of Patmos.

Jesus repeats His main point, “I know…” He knows all that they are and do personally and intimately all the way down to their heart’s motivations and attitudes.

Jesus will use the same images or similar enough to the ones

used in

Chapter 1:1-20 so the people will know beyond a shadow of doubt who it is who is speaking.

At the end of each letter Jesus will say something along the lines of “to the one who conquerors…” What do you think he means by this?

1. These are the faithful servants who have endured and by God’s grace conquered over the sinful darkness in which God has placed

us. Not that they/we will be perfect in this life…but in the end as we have persevered, we are among those who have conquered. 2. This will be a hard and arduous task with continuous temptations to seek to get us to fail…and constant afflictions from God to keep us close to Himself.

1. Conquered over the world ...overcomes the world in Christ…like Smyrna and

Philadelphia.

1. Conquerors are those who are in Christ whom He will never let go of. No one the

Father has given Him will ever be lost.

3.The Letter to Ephesus 2:1-7- “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

‘The words of Him who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’”

1. Ephesus which means *desirable* was the capital of Asia Minor*,* the region of the other churches, a center of land and sea trade. Along with Alexandria and Antioch in Syria, it was one of the most influential cities in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. The temple of Diana/Artemus, one of the 8 wonders of the then known world was at the cities center. The major industry of the city was the manufacturing of idols for this goddess.

1. Information about the Christians at Ephesus.
2. In the first century AD, Ephesus was a pagan town, dominated by the

Temple of Artemis- Greek goddess of the hunt and the moon or, Diana-

Roman goddess of the hunt and the moon and protector of childbirth.

* + The priests of the temple maintained a perpetual fire there in worship to the false deities.
  + Fire was, of course, a basic necessity of life for the people because it allowed for cooking, cleaning, and warmth. If the fire went out in a home, the residents were in big trouble. The only solution was to go to the temple with a ceramic bowl to get hot coals from the temple priests.
  + The priests, of course," required a payment for tribute to appease the pagan gods and maintain the temple. The firekeepers of this ancient temple were ancient Ephesus’s equivalent of the power, water, sewer, and gas companies all rolled into one. And they were a monopoly. To get fire from another source, the priests taught, was an affront to the gods and risked their wrath.
  + Archaeology has unearthed how the Christians in Ephesus lived differently in that ancient city.
  + When Christians noticed a home without fire, they would take hot coals to that family from their own fires in their own “fire bowls.” This simple act of love of neighbor made a powerful statement.
    - * First, it provided lifesaving fire to a person who may

have been too poor to pay a tribute at the temple.

* + - * Second, it deprived the pagan temple of an important means of financial support.
      * Third, it proclaimed to the world that the Christians in Ephesus were not afraid of the pagan gods.

1. Paul spent 3 ½ years there …once on his 2nd missionary journey and then again on his third when he spent the most time there saying that after he left wolves would come in.
   * + While Paul and the church was very vital the market for idols bottomed out.
     + Then came Aquila and Priscilla and Apollos.
     + Timothy and lastly John around 66 AD until he was exiled. So, this church had been well taught in the doctrines of the gospel to be sure.
     + The temple to Diana burned in 262 Ad and it was never built again because that religion was all but gone.
2. How would verses 1-3 encourage the churches and at the same time might make then nervous?
   * + - 1. The Greek word for “holds” is emphatic and communicates that He absolutely holds these churches securely for they are precious to Him. The Church belongs to Jesus ..not to the leaders or the people…they are His and He alone holds them!

* + - * 1. Knowing them so well...this word for “know” is crucial for all the letters. “I know”, Jesus tells John to write…this is an intimate knowledge…nothing is hidden…nothing is unseen by the LORD of Glory…this would make people nervous because none of us like our secrets exposed.
        2. Also, Jesus walking among them holding their pastors in His love and holding them accountable personally.
        3. This may have also been said this way in contrast to the false teachers in their midst. (5) Then there is the encouraging them in the midst of everything.

The Revelation of John November 13, 2022

* + 1. Prayer
    2. Review
       1. Martin Luther said, *“Bad theology is the worst taskmaster of all”,* do you agree or disagree—why?

* + - 1. With all the other ways we have defined Revelation how does thinking of it as a letter aid in our understanding and acceptance?

D. The Letter to Ephesus 2:1-7- “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

‘The words of Him who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the

Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the

Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’”

(2) We talked about this last time but, what good things characterize this church?

a. Working hard, *(1)* It was said that the church was extremely active in community service and service to one

another, nursing the sick, taking in orphans, caring for the widows, teaching the young…

*(2)* It seems that every member was doing something for Christ…their toil for Christ was extremely well known by all in the city at that time.

b. Exhibited in the life’s patient endurance… (1) Remember 1:9, John said he shared with them in “patient endurance” which equals in the Greek steadfast endurance.

(2) While they were known for their acts of charity, they were

not followers of Diana and that “treason” would have been dealt with by some less tolerant pagans in Ephesus.

* + - * History tells us that there seems to have been some local opposition.
      * Since Ephesus was also a meeting place for many pagan religions, paganism was THE established religion and even though they were probably helping the city they were still seen as a threat by some so they would have had to patiently endure such opposition.

(3) But with all of this they were bearing up well for Jesus’ name and they have continued to do the work before them not becoming weary by the opposition.

c. Resisting sin/ seeking purity…

* 1. The church in Ephesus steadfastly refused to tolerate sin in its members.
  2. This was not easy in a city noted for all types of immorality associated with goddess worship…in our own day it is popular to be open-minded about such sins…calling them personal choices or alternate lifestyles…saying that they are not hurting anyone else.

1. Critically examining false apostles…. This made Jesus’ heart glad.
   1. Their doctrinal teaching led to a deep understanding of Scripture.
   2. This fact enabled them to see right through false doctrine and practices like that taught by the Nicolaitans (possibly a sect like

Qumran…trying to join together the teachings of Judaism and

Christianity) vs. 6

* 1. They were adhering to the warning Paul had given them when he left. Acts 20: 28-31- “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all

the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one

with tears.”

1. Because of these things it was a lampstand for all in the area as a light in the midst of darkness…an example to the church is the area.

3. But then comes vs 4.

1. What do you think they would think when they heard these next words,

“But, I have this against you…” or “nevertheless, I have this against you…”

* 1. In the Greek this word “nevertheless” here is saying, all the good in the Ephesian church does not cancel out the bad that Jesus is about to describe.
  2. Jesus has something against us? (3) What could it be…after He has said such great things about us?

1. So, what IS the weakness that Christ points out?
   1. They have abandoned…not lost… but abandoned their First love.
      * The difference between leaving and losing is important.
      * Something can be lost by accident…but abandoning/leaving is a deliberate act.
      * Also, when we lose something, we often don’t know where to find it…but when we abandon something or leave something, we know where to find it.
      * First love= Love of the Lord with all that they are so they can correctly love their neighbor the way God says to.
   2. What is their motivation for what and why they do what they do?
   3. What does this mean given all the good stuff they were doing?
      * They started out well…doing everything out of their love for Jesus, and their love for one another, and their love for the people of Ephesus, especially the poor, needy, and orphaned.

* + - But their love now is vain, for they had abandoned it.
      * Like a husband that is faithful and works hard but because his love is lessened the passion for his spouse is just not there…but he would never think of breaking up.
      * His sense of duty keeps him home. …or in the case of the church…tradition and community perception keeps them doping “things” but it is no longer based in love for their neighbor…which shows they don’t really love the

Lord the way they did.

* + - * Similarly, we can all get tired and start going through the motions of our faith…outwardly everything looks right but inwardly …not so much.
        + The church in Ephesus is too busy for Jesus, rather than treasuring communion with and in Christ above all things.
        + They are going through the motions and becoming indignant that they are not being recognized for their humanitarian ways by the city and others within the Church.
        + Maybe they are so technical in their doctrine that they have become pharisaical. They loved being right more than their love being a conduit for grace.
        + Just so we are clear here: This is NOT some observation based in opinion by some evaluator of the church…But this is Christ who knows them better than they know themselves. They might argue these points with even a John…but this is the truth because Jesus says it is the truth about them.

1. Just a little side trip: go to I Cor. 13: 1-13. (Someone read that) How important IS “love” in our work, our doctrine, our seeking purity, our endurance?
   1. This text is NOT about marriage…but the context speaks to how we are to treat one another.
   2. Good works and pure doctrine are not adequate substitutes for a rich relationship of mutual love shared by persons who have experienced God’s redemptive love, who desire to do good works and have pure doctrine because that brings God glory and edifies the Body.
   3. I Cor. 13:13- “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” So how important is love according to this?
      1. Everything we do is to be done in these three in this life with love being the definer… John 13: 34-35- “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you

also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

* + 1. Jesus doesn’t tell us that we need good theology…even though we do…He doesn’t tell us we need to be obedient …though we do…He is

clear…Love is to lead in all that we are, think, say and do.

* + 1. One more thing that this text tells us …
       - Love is the only thing that will last into the new earth. That is the biggest reason that love is the greatest of the three.
       - For we won’t need faith or hope in the new earth.

1. Looking at vs.5- What does Jesus’ command to fix the problem that He points out here?
2. “Remember therefore from where you have fallen…” (1) They must compare their present with their former state, when they first responded to the Lord in faith…consider how much better it was then than now…the zeal had Him in mind all the time… (2) They are so caught up in working for Christ… “doing” that have forgotten at best…or stopped “being” in Christ…they mouth the words that this is for Christ…but they are seeking credit in some way… The Social gospel of the 50’s and 60’s.

(3) A note concerning the word “remember” here. This is a present imperative in the Greek.

* + A command to remember the loving relationship you once enjoyed and to make a clean break from the present way of living.
  + He does not urge the Ephesians to “feel bad” about their sins. For it is not what they or we feel about them that matters…they are sins according to Jesus and they must deal with them immediately according to His command.
  + Just like us, when we are made aware…internally by the Spirit of God or externally by those we love and

respect…which is also the work of the Spirit…we are to immediately seek to repent…change and return to living “in

Christ.”

1. “Repent and do the works you did at first…”
   1. Another command. A command to change direction…to go a different way than they are currently going.
   2. They must repent of their sin of forsaking God.
   3. They must again be seeking God in prayer in all that they do…recognizing that suffering is part of the calling not an excuse

to do more with the hope that people will come to see you differently.

1. “If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.” What does He mean specifically when He says He will remove the lamp stand from them if they do not adhere to His warnings?

(1) “He will unchurch them”, as Matthew Henry says. If they don’t reassess. Why do we do the things we do?

* + - This is worse than being “unfriend” as we do today! ◼ ◼
    - This does not mean they will lose their salvation…just their church and whatever witness they had as a church.
    - He will remove their pastor…
    - He will remove the Word and the sacraments
    1. They will simply be another human institution destined to

die

off…

* + 1. Twice in the verse he commands them to repent…emphasizing the immediacy expected.

6. Verse 7 begins what will be a familiar refrain in these letters. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches…” a.

What is significant about this?

1. “churches” = all the churches…each of these were for all

those known at the time and throughout the generations.

1. He is speaking directly to those who are still striving to be faithful.
2. He is also speaking to those who are struggling to be faithful.
3. Christ is in the midst of His Church through the indwelling of the Spirit.

b. Then he says, “To the one who conquers (overcomes) I will grant

to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” What is

the significance about this passage? (1) It is a promise...

* + a promise that guarantees them life to the one who fights continually against sin for the sake of Christ’s honor.
  + The one who fights continually to overcome the coldness of heart maybe that they have and are experiencing.
  + This is an ongoing battle to which we are to be constantly adapting and overcoming as the enemy changes.

(2) A promise, for those who overcome the ways of the world and of their own sinful natures, that they will eat of the tree of Life in the New Earth…eternal life is on the menu.

* + This is far greater than the foods offered and eaten at the altars of the idols.
  + This will be granted to all who overcome to the end. This promise was given to help stoke the flames of the love they once had …reminding them of what had already been granted to them in their salvation…

(3) Those who have ears to hear are the true believers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and who were granted eternal life from the first.

1. What might be some lessons we are to learn from this church that we should implement into today?
   * 1. Never neglect Christ commandments to love: Love for God and for people is the two greatest commandments. Matthew 22:34-

40-“But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all

the Law and the Prophets.”

* + 1. It’s what gives value, purpose and success to everything else, it is the distinctive characteristic of the sons of God and it even covers a multitude of sins. John 13:34-35- “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Without this love, we cannot be God’s representatives.
    2. We must always be evaluating our motives in light of this love. It seems they got so busy “doing” the work they believed God had called them to that they “forgot” to “be” in Christ and make sure they were doing what Christ wanted them to do.
       1. This is one of the potential problems with programs…we do them for so long never evaluating their effectiveness along

the way…often because they become some one’s personal possession.

* + - 1. Even ministry can become a place where we seek to find selfworth. But our job is to always be discovering what it is that God wants us to do at the time and pursuing that.
         * We all too often search for our passion and pursue that and when we do life will be filled with disappointment and discontentment.
         * How we honor God where we are in what He wants …is

where we find true contentment, peace and joy in the

Lord.

1. Did they listen to the warning?

a. As I said, it appears for a time that they did listen and turn…

Bishop Ignatius of Antioch of the 2nd Cent. speaking of this church said, “You all live according to truth, and no heresy has a home among you; indeed, you do not so

much as listen

to anyone if they speak of anything except concerning Jesus

Christ in truth.”

Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History records for us that Ephesus changed and followed their first love at least for a while after this time…Reason?

• Upon his return until he died under Trajan’s rule he was known to encourage the church with the simple words,

# “Little children. Love one another.”

* Domitian reigned from 81-96 AD. It was Domitian’s decree that sent him to Patmos.
* This is supported by 3 separate letters from Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and a Bishop from Ephesus… it appears that

John came home to Ephesus after the death of Emperor

Domitian in AD 96…

(3) We also have writings of Polycrates, the Bishop of Ephesus from around 196 found in Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History written in the 3rd and 4th Centuries.

b. But later it appears to lapse again, and by the

Middle Ages its Christian testimony was all but gone.

* + - 1. In fact, Archbishop Trench (19th century) says in a letter written in the mid-1800’s to other priests… “I found only 3 Christians there, and these were sunken in such ignorance and apathy as scarcely to have

heard the names of St. Paul

or St. John.”

* + - 1. The church if it is the church is in ruins today. National

Geographic found what appears to be a Christian church or the ruins of one dating to just before the Middle Ages.

The Revelation of John November

20, 2022

* 1. Prayer
  2. Review

2. With all the good things Jesus said about the church at Ephesus, what IS THE weakness that Christ points out?

a. They had abandoned…not lost… but abandoned their

First love.

1. The difference between leaving and losing is important.
2. Something can be lost by accident…but abandoning/leaving is a deliberate act.
3. Also, when we lose something we often don’t know where to find it…but when we abandon something or leave something, we know where to find it.
4. First love= Love of the Lord with all that they are so they can correctly love their neighbor the way God says to.
   1. Jesus said…they started out well…doing everything out of their love for Jesus, and their love for one another, and their love for the people of Ephesus, especially the poor, needy, and orphaned. But their love now is vain, for they had abandoned it.
   2. The church in Ephesus is too busy for Jesus, rather than treasuring communion with and in Christ above all things.
   3. Or, they are going through the motions and becoming indignant that they are not being recognized for their humanitarian ways by the city and others within the

Church.

* 1. Or, they are so technical in their doctrine that they have become pharisaical. They loved being right more than their love being a conduit for grace.
  2. Just so we are clear here: This is NOT some observation based in opinion by some evaluator of the church…But ths is Christ who knows them better than they know themselves. They might argue these points with even a John…but this is the truth because Jesus says it is the truth about them.

3. Verse 7 which begins with what will be a familiar refrain in these letters. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” goes onto say something I think we need

to spend a little more time on since we will see it in all the letters,

# “To the one who conquers (overcomes…the one who is victorious) I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the

paradise of God.” What is significant about this passage? (Jeremy covered this a bit but time was running short.)

1. Conquerors/Victors/Overcomers are what we are called here and in Rom. 8:37- “…in all these things we are more than conquerors

through Him who loved us.” …Only because of Him who loved us conquered first.

* 1. We are conquerors…we are victorious in

Christ…but in this life we must continue to battle

and to win…The word is a present particle active tense…so we are to continue to be victorious in

Christ throughout this life up until the end of our life or

Christ’s return.

* 1. Conquering and re-conquering our sins…theirs was a loss of love for God and their neighbor and a cold heart.
  2. Conquerors don’t merely engage but they pursue until the enemy is conquered. We are to never yield the field to sin and when we do…we get back up and fight with all we are.

1. It is also a promise...
2. A promise that guarantees them life to the one who fights continually against sin for the sake of Christ’s honor.
3. The one who fights continually to overcome the coldness of heart maybe that they have and are experiencing.
4. This is an ongoing battle to which we are to be constantly adapting and overcoming as the enemy changes.

c. A promise, for those who overcome the ways of the world and of their own sinful natures, that they will eat of the tree of Life in the New Earth…eternal life is on the menu.

1. This is far greater than the foods offered and eaten at the altars of the idols.
2. This will be granted to all who overcome to the end.
3. This promise was given to help stoke the flames of the love they once had …reminding them of what had already been granted to them in their salvation…

d. Those who have ears to hear are the true believers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and who were granted eternal life from the first.

1. Jeremy wondered out loud last week this question: Which language has the most words for love?
   1. Sanskrit- 96 words
   2. Ancient Persian- 80
   3. Greek proper- 3- with multiple of words to describe affection many related directly to the 3 uses of love.
   4. English- 1- with multiple words that describe the type of affection which are hardly ever used. It is used to describe so many things that it has lost its significance. So when we talk of God’s love…it is almost meaningless to us. Maybe why the Scriptures use such strong expressions to describe God’s love…like steadfast love that endures forever…and agape’ love which speaks of sacrifice over selfishness.
   5. This over use of the word “love” in our culture reveals the poverty of awareness or lack of understanding we have with the truth or maybe both.

(4) Jeremy and I have emphasized what they people might be thinking from all of this. Why is it important for us to take the time to consider these folks and their culture and how they would have revealed their faith and been comforted and chastised by these words?

C. Letter to the Church in Smyrna, Rev. 2:8-11- “And to the angel of the church in

Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of

those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’” 1. Smyrna or Izmir in modern day Turkey was about 35 miles north of Ephesus. This proud people minted their own coins, which bore the phrase “First in Asia in beauty and size.” It was probably around 200,000 strong by this time. Known as a “politically correct city” (patriotic loyalty to Rome), Smyrna had a long history of emperor worship. In 195 BC the citizen built a temple to Dea Roma, Rome itself becomes a goddess, and in AD 25 Rome chose the city for the site of a temple to honor Emperor Tiberius. The cult of Empire and Emperor, of the city of Rome and Rome’s Caesar were a matter of great pride in this city. Later this emperor worship became compulsory upon citizen to the point of death if they refused. The Jews because of the PAX ROMANA were the only group exempt from this worship…and they were often at the forefront of turning in Christians to the Roman authorities for not bowing the knee to Caesar or Rome. We do not know when the church in Smyrna was founded for it is not mentioned in the NT other than in this book of the Revelation. Tradition states that the Paul visited the town on his way to Ephesus at the beginning of his 3rd missionary tour.

* + 1. John Stott says: *“If the first mark of a true and living church is love, the second is suffering. The one is naturally consequent on the other. A willingness to suffer proves the genuineness of*

*our love.”*

* + 1. This letter opens with Christ’s words about Himself again… *“The words of the first and last, who died and came to life.”* What is he communicating with these words that would have added to their comfort and hope? a. That Caesar is NOT God but Jesus is.
    2. Jesus is the One who had the first say and He will have the last.
    3. This is Jesus for sure since He is the Only One that can say this.
    4. He accomplished what He said He would accomplish…die and rise again by His own power.
    5. This Jesus is sending them a personal letter.

1. Once again, why would it be encouraging for Christ to tell these folks, *“I know your tribulation…”*?
2. As one who has suffered, died and rose again…He understood their trials and affliction…
   1. Heb. 4:14-16- “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us

then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

* 1. His way offers the best way through such suffering.
     1. It was a dangerous thing to be a Christian in Smyrna, but they were there none the less. They more than likely refused to burn incense to the Emperor and were severely persecuted because of it.
     2. Their refusal to conform was seen as treason… a disgraceful lack of patriotism.
     3. It is interesting how governments turn a blind eye to some troubles and make up others… as with Christians…
        1. The Jews didn’t have to burn incense or bow to the Emperor because they were a recognized religion but the Jews supported terrorism against the Romans.
        2. Just like in our own country and in Canada and the UK (1st world countries) …pastors are being pressured to turn over their sermons and biblical doctrine is being hailed as hate speech when we have mosques in areas raising up homegrown terrorists in America that are not being scrutinized in the least.
        3. Political correctness run amok against the group that is often (not always for there are extremes that tend to undermine God’s truth as they declare they are standing for God’s truth) the most patriotic in and faithful to a society.

5. What forms of persecution are highlighted in these verses that these people have and must endure?

a. Poverty- Vs. 9- “‘I know your tribulation and your poverty

(but you are rich) …’” Why do you suppose that they might be the poorest of all the citizens of this otherwise rich city?

* + 1. How can they be both rich and poor? See Heb. 10:34- “For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.”
    2. One take on this issue… *“I would rather eat crumbs with bums*

*than*

*steak with snakes!”*

1. Slander and persecution/ prison-Vs. 9-10“…and the slander of

those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”How is this a form of persecution? Do people really have the right to say whatever they want about others?

(1) Something specific connects verses 9 and 10 and that is the reference to the devil.

* In verse 9 Jesus refers to "a synagogue of Satan" who are slandering the Christians.
* In verse 10 He refers to the devil throwing some Christians in prison.
* The natural understanding is that the way the devil is throwing Christians in jail is by stirring up the slander against them through those whom Jesus calls a "synagogue

of Satan."

* II Cor. 4:1-4- “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, jwho is the image of God.”
* The reason he calls them a "synagogue of Satan" is because they are under the influence of Satan and they are doing his work of slandering the Christians so effectively that the Roman authorities think them a real threat to the empire and arrest them.
* They are a "synagogue of Satan" because they follow Satan's temptation to lie and destroy… slandering and deceiving like Satan.
* Jesus calls them a "synagogue of Satan."
* They are not Jews…in the sense of being God’s children anymore… for those Jews would actually be seeking to follow the faith of Abraham but instead they follow the

devil and their own fallen nature- John 8:39-41- “They answered him, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did.”

* He means that they have allowed themselves to be deceived by Satan and were being used by him to get his destroying work done against Christians.
* John 8:42-47"Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but He sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God. You are of your father the devil; and you want to do the desires of your father"
* He is calling these folks blasphemers ...the very thing that their fellow Jews had called Jesus in His days on earth.

• As a "synagogue of Satan." They would go the way of Satan and all who choose to follow him so there will be an end to their influence and the pain they are choosing to inflict.

•

The Jewish synagogue, also often, linked up with the local Roman authorities, coming against the Christian church with official sanctions that are about to put some Christians in prison and put some to death. • This didn’t change even as the church grew in strength, power, and influence.

•

This was nothing new at this time to the apostles and others.

The prison cells in many Roman cities had been

• sanctified by the tears of Christians throughout the

Empire.

(2) Death-

•

Christ exhortation to these believers was to be faithful even to the point of death for His sake.

•

Opposition to the gospel was so fierce from the

Jews and the locals that martyrdom was always in sight for this church.

•

By the middle of the 2nd cent. Bishop Polycarp was martyred here. It was the Jews who yelled the loudest just like at the time before Pilate. And when the order came to burn Polycarp alive it was the Jews who gave fuel for the fire.

6. Could this happen here? How?

1. When Christianity goes really public in a pagan world (instead of remaining in our safe, isolated, comfortable sanctuaries) the opposition labels us not as mistaken, but as evil and dangerous.
2. The ironic and tragic response of many Christians in that atmosphere of conflict is to simply disappear…go silent.
3. That is not the way the Christians in Smyrna responded. Jesus said in verse 10 that some would soon be cast into prison and that they would be tested to the point of death—all brought on by slander—by people who stood up and called them names. Jesus' counsel to them was not to lay low and disappear. His counsel was (v. 10b), "Be

faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life."

1. Compromise in the churches with the culture…get along so they can get along.

The Revelation of John November

27, 2022

1. Prayer
2. Review

1. Again, what was the weakness Christ points out concerning the Church in

Ephesus?

1. They had abandoned…not lost… but abandoned their First love.

(1)The difference between leaving and losing is important.

(2)Something can be lost by accident…but abandoning/leaving is a deliberate act. (3) Also, when we

lose something we often don’t know where to find it…but when we abandon something or leave something, we know where to find it.

1. Jesus said…they started out well…doing everything out of their love for

Jesus, and their love for one another, and their love for the people of

Ephesus, especially the poor, needy, and orphaned. But their love now is vain, for they had abandoned it.

2. So with this in mind what would we say is the chief characteristic that the church is to be known by? a. Love.

* 1. Matt. 22:36-40- “‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This

is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’”

* 1. So what is this to look like in our day to day so we don’t turn out like the church at Ephesus?

C. Letter to Smyrna- Rev. 2:8-11

1. What things stand out from last week that would bring them hope in vs 8- “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.’”?

1. Jesus tells them that death is not the end.
2. Jesus tells them that he is the “First Citizen”…He is greater than

Caesar.

1. Jesus tells they that they are not abandoned that He is in their midst even in the suffering that that have and will endure. Ps. 23:4- “Even

# though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will

fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

1. A call to Suffer. John Stott says: “If the first mark of a true and living church is love, the second is suffering. The one is naturally consequent on the other. A willingness to suffer proves the genuineness of our love.”
2. Of all people, Jesus can even relate to their suffering/ the tribulation…they we have been commanded to walk in His steps,
3. His way offers the best way through such suffering.
4. I Peter 2:20-21- “For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”

2. What forms of suffering/ persecution did Jesus say that they were, are and will suffer?

b. Poverty- vs. 9- “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)…” … for they were ostracized, and persecuted, and left to fend for themselves.

1. But they didn’t see their poverty as a hindrance …
2. They suffered for Christ’s sake and still loved and served the Lord because they knew they … “had a better possession and an abiding one.” Heb. 10:34
3. Slander and persecution and prison vs.10- “…and the slander (the blasphemy) of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation.” (1)

At the hand of the Jews. The Jews…those who claimed to be the children of Abraham but were not even that…kept turning them into the Roman authorities.

* 1. Their father is the devil…the same way Jesus looked at the leaders and many of the people in His discourse in John chapter 8.

1. Death- vs. 10- “Be faithful unto death…” (1) Christ exhortation to these believers was to be faithful even to the point of death for His sake.
   1. Opposition to the gospel was so fierce from the Jews and the locals that martyrdom was always in sight for this church. (3) By the middle of the 2nd cent. Bishop Polycarp was martyred here. It was the Jews who yelled the loudest just like at the time before Pilate. And when the order came to burn Polycarp alive it was the Jews who gave fuel for the fire.

3. What does this passage teach us about the nature of suffering? “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (vs. 10)

1. This is God’s will whatever comes…even suffering and/or death…is not something to fear. “Do not fear what you are about to suffer.”
2. 2 Commands for us to consider her: Do not fear…which we are always being told…and be faithful unto death.
3. That it will happen to all God’s children.
4. Jesus told us what to expect.
5. Matt. 24:3-25-“As He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ And Jesus answered them, ‘See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom swill be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. So, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in

the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.’”

* 1. That it won’t be as long as it may “feel”. (10 days) This too shall pass.
  2. God’s promises are true…He WILL give us a crown of life and we will not be hurt by the 2nd death.
  3. Matt. 5:10-12- “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in

heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

* 1. John 15:18-20- “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”
  2. James 1:12- “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.
  3. What does it teach us about the power of Satan?

4. What were Christ’s words of promise to this church?

1. Faith and fear are opposites in the Christian life. Faith drives out fear.
2. He is the First and the Last...He died and came to life again…I will give the crown of life…
3. “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.”- Vs.

10-11

1. James 1:12- “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.”
2. A sobering command calling for great faith and endurance on the part of the saints even unto death...
3. Being faithful to the end brings with it eternal life.
4. “The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.” This happens to be a prominent theme in Revelation.
   1. This is the promise that we will escape the eternal judgment that must come upon the unsaved world.
   2. The second death refers to the lake of fire. Rev. 21:8- “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”
      * This is obviously for non-believers where they will spend eternity and is NOT a place for believers to fear. Rev.

20:14-15. “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the

lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

* + - It is called second because it comes after physical death.

1. This church seems to have stayed in existence into the 1920’s. And there may still remain a remnant though they would more than likely be underground.

5. How would knowing all of this a head of time possibly be a comfort to them?

a. It would have been a source of strength and comfort because He had told them what was going to happen…

1. He knew what had been happening …and He, Himself, the Savior was commissioning them to suffer…the mission at hand was to suffer for Christ.
2. There is a “special place” under the throne of God…nearest to God… for His martyrs. This would be made clear in Rev. 6:9-11- “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they

themselves had been.”

1. They would have seen themselves as God’s elites…chosen for a special mission for the sake of Christ…to suffer for Christ was a badge of honor…one that we no longer look for or to…in fact, we often call all suffering as a sign of God’s displeasure just like the

Jews of old.

1. Consider Paul’s words in Romans 8:16-18- “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to

be revealed to us.”

1. They personally lived through some of this…so the prophesy the calling came true …with that knowledge they would have trusted in the rest… “I will give you the crown of life.”

b. Example of this: The death of Polycarp, who may have been the pastor that this letter was written to, may speak of the death that Jesus was talking about here. Polycarp is believed to have been born around 69 AD was a friend of the Apostle John. Tradition has it that John

ordained him as Bishop of Smyrna before John’s death. Polycarp died as a martyr for the faith around 155 AD. This s a great story:

1. In fact, He may have been speaking directly to Polycarp at this point. We don’t know for sure.
2. Anyway, the Bishop was urged by his congregation to flee which he did not do.
3. According to Irenaeus, Polycarp formed a bridge between the apostles and the post-apostolic church. Further, we know that he lived at least to age 86 after serving as a faithful, godly pastor for decades. He became well known not only among the Christians but also among the pagans. The latter group resented him for, in their view, luring people away from the Roman polytheistic pantheon to Christianity. They resented the loss of business. They resented the refusal of Polycarp and the Christians to conform to the

Roman status quo. They had a state-religion and to defy the statereligion was to defy the state, to defy the culture, and to become, in their view, a “hater of humanity,” as one critic put it.

1. We have one letter from Polycarp to the church at Philippi (presumably the same congregation to which Paul wrote). Depending on how one answers some questions, it is either one document or two and it dates to about AD 125–35. In any reading,

it is quite early and a clear, orthodox articulation of the Christian faith. Unlike a number of Christians today, Polycarp, who almost certainly knew the Apostle John, knew that he was not an apostle. He knew what the good news was and what ought to be the outcome in the life of the church of being given new life and true faith in Jesus. It is a warm, gracious, but firm instruction in the faith and it addresses wisely and well some serious problems that had cropped up in the congregation.

1. For his part, Polycarp knew he was going to die as a martyr. He managed to avoid arrest for a while but eventually the cops found him in a house outside of town. Apparently, someone in his retinue gave him away. The Roman authorities tortured one of his servants to get information. The decision had come down from a higher authority that it was time to make Polycarp recant like Quintus or to silence him permanently. When the cops found this threat to social order, what they found surprised them. He was an old man. He was so kind he fed and entertained his captors for the better part of the day and then asked if he could go and pray for a while which they consented to.
2. He prayed for 2 hours then they took him away on a donkey and brought him into the city. The city guard plead with him to recant…they knew him to be an honorable man. “What would it hurt, what harm can it do to sacrifice to the emperor?” they are said to have asked. Polycarp could not bow down to any man in anyway.
3. Then they took him to the stadium, to the crowd, and to proconsul. When the crowd and the Jews got word that the troops had arrested Polycarp a great cheer went up. They wanted his

blood. The proconsul followed Roman procedure by getting Polycarp’s name and again tried to persuade him to say the right words, to have respect for his age. They were, in effect, begging him to let them off the hook. They were used to dealing with criminals and they had no wish to put to death a harmless old man, but he refused. The proconsul called him to swear by the genius of Caesar; repent; say ‘Away with the atheists!’ 1As he stood before the Roman proconsul it is said this was the conversation went something like this- “Respect your

# years!...Swear by Caesar…swear, and I will release you; revile

Christ!”

1. So Polycarp, solemnly looked at the whole crowd of lawless heathens and unbelieving Jews who were in the stadium, motioned to them with his hand, and then (groaning as he looked up to heaven) said, ‘Away with the atheists! But when the magistrate persisted and said, ‘Swear the oath, and I will release

you; revile Christ,’

1. Polycarp responded, “For 86 years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my king who

saved me?”

1. The proconsul continued to demand that Polycarp “swear by the genius of Caesar,” but he refused. He finally replied, “If you

vainly suppose that I will swear by the Genius of Caesar, as you request, and pretend not to know who I am, listen carefully: I am a Christian. Now if you want to learn the doctrine of

Christianity, name a day and give me a hearing.”

1. Those words, of course, sealed his earthly fate. The words “I am a Christian” (Χριστιανός εἰμι) were a fatal confession.
2. But the proconsul insisted, “swear by the genius of Caesar…I have wild beasts; if you will not change your mind, I will throw you to them…” Polycarp said, “Call them.”
3. With that the proconsul said, “Since you make light of the beasts, I will have you destroyed by fire, unless you change

your attitude.”

1. Still, the proconsul gave him an out: “Persuade the people.” But Polycarp said: ‘You I might have considered worthy of a reply, for we have been taught to pay proper respect to rulers and authorities appointed by God, as long as it does us no harm; but as for these, I do not think they are worthy, that I should have to defend myself before them.’
2. The proconsul not only broke protocol that day, by offering him so many opportunity to save himself…he was also willing for Polycarp to preach Christ to the people…and should the crowd be persuaded he would let him go,… the proconsul could argue that he was giving the people what they demanded as Pilate did with Barabbas. What an opportunity. The people were a captive

audience and all Polycarp had to do was to open his mouth, preach the gospel, and win the lost to Christ.

1. Polycarp, however, was having none of it. Why not? Why did not seize the day for Christ? It was because Polycarp knew a verse that we mostly overlook: “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you” (Matt 7:6; ESV). For our Lord and for Polycarp, there are those who are not fit to hear the Good News (the pearls), who are in that sense “swine.”
2. I do not think that this is a judgment that we should make casually or often but it is a biblical judgment. Polycarp had every incentive to preach to the mob. Who knows whom the Lord might have brought to faith? Every moment he preached was a moment he was not being attacked by wild animals or set on fire.
3. Still, he refused. He valued the gospel. He knew that they were not willing to hear, that they were only filled with blood lust. We do know, however, that Polycarp refused to deny his Lord, who had loved him, who had given himself for him, and whom he had served all his 86 years. He knew that when he died, it would be a change for the better He feared God more than the beasts and the fire.
4. And at that last refusal, an angry mob of Jews gathered wood for the pile. Polycarp stood by the stake asking not to be attached to it and then prayed in a loud voice, “O LORD, Almighty God, the Father of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, through whom we

# have come to know you...I thank you for counting me worthy

this day and hour of sharing the cup of Christ among the

number of your martyrs.”

1. The fire was lit but the wind blew the fire away from him so that he had to endure the heat and prolong his suffering, at which time one of the soldiers who brought him put an end to his suffering with his sword.
2. So, we remember Polycarp, the faithful but discriminating witness.

6. What lessons can we take away from this letter for our use today?

* + 1. Be prepared to face intense persecution without losing faith. It iis not a matter of “if” but

“when”…maybe not in our lifetime…but then again...maybe.

* + 1. We can do this by keeping one’s eyes on the eternal blessings which far surpass any temporal suffering.

The Revelation of John December

4, 2022

* 1. Prayer
  2. Review

2. Things to remember:

* 1. The portrait of Christ painted in the first chapter.
  2. These are His children and He is walking among them as Lord to commend their faith and to expose and discipline them for their faults, but they are always

His children.

* 1. These letters are His particular warning and counsel to the church for all time as these churches represent all churches of all time.
  2. Each letter highlights a particular characteristic the

Church is to exhibit as it lives in the world and brings glory to God.

3. What are the two characteristics of the Church Jesus has pointed out so far? a. Love b.

Suffering

c. John Stott says: “If the first mark of a true and living church is love, the second is suffering. The one is naturally consequent on the other.

A willingness to suffer proves the genuineness of our love.”

4. What were Christ’s words of promise to these two churches? And how do they apply to us?

* + 1. To the church of Ephesus- “To the one who conquerors, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is the paradise of God.”-2:7- eternal life in the

New Earth.

* + 1. To the church of Smyrna, He actually gives many words of promise:

1. The first and the last knows intimately what is going on in their lives- they are “seen” by Him…they are not alone …the God of their

salvation is with them in their troubles.

1. They don’t need to fear the hour of their suffering…this is a command but as they trust

in Him they will be able to endure not matter what comes.

1. Because they are of God’s children their suffering will be shortened…oh, they will suffer, but not for as long as they could…for

God is in control.

* He IS the first and the last. When His children suffer/afflicted He is the first there …for He is the one who ordained it but He will be the last as in completing it.
* Octavius Winslow puts it this way,

“Christ is the Alpha and Omega of all our afflictions. He begins our discipline of sorrow in infinite wisdom, righteousness, and love; and so great a blessing will His sanctifying grace

make it to us, that it shall end in His own eternal glory and praise. Oh to see Jesus in the first gush of our grief, in the first shading of our cloud, in the first taste of the cup our Father gives us to drink. He but designs by the trial our closer acquaintance with Himself, and our more perfect assimilation to His image. Think not, O afflicted one! that some strange and condemning thing has happened to you; that God is angry,

that Christ is withdrawn, that you are not a child of God, and that your hope is perished from the Lord.

Oh, no! far from this! God is now dealing with you as a Father- considerately, faithfully, lovingly; and He would have you in return deal with Him as a child- trustfully, obediently, submissively. A child you are, though you may have been a foolish, wayward, rebellious child, still a child, and God still a Father. As Christ was the Alpha of your affliction, so He will be the Omega; and as He is the first in this adversity that has befallen you, in this blow that seemingly crushes you, in this sorrow that wrings your heart, so he will be the last, the guide, the comforter, the sympathizer, all through this dark hour of affliction, of bereavement, and of tribulation, by which so skillfully, gently, and safely He is leading you home to Himself, where His own dear hand will wipe every tear from your eye.”

(4) Then He says,

• *“*Be faithful unto death, and I will give

# you the crown of life.” - 2: 10 • “The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.” 2:11-

Therefore there is no condemnation!

c. These promises are true for us who have ears to hear the words of the Spirit and who end up conquering because Christ has conquered!

C. The Church in Pergamum Rev. 2:12-17

1. Pergamum was about 55 miles from Smyrna. Pergamum was perhaps the strongest center for paganism in all of Asia Minor… even though the people of Smyrna would dispute that claim. It seems that there wasn’t a shortage of pride in any of these cities where God’s church existed to be sure. It was the first city to get permission to erect a Temple to a living emperor… the Temple of the

Divine Augustus and the goddess Roma (29BC). It also has the Temple of

Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117). Thus, the imperial cult had its center at Pergamum. It was a central seat of government in the region…like a capital city or a county seat in our day and age. It is said that no traveler could not but be impressed with its altars and temples. It tried to fashion itself the Athens of the East. The acropolis of Pergamum crowned a steep hill that rose 1000 feet above the city. Near the summit stood an enormous altar to Zeus and a short distance away stood the temple to Athena. Then around the city was scattered a plethora of other smaller temples and altars to lesser gods many of the ruins that still exist today. One of these temples was to Asclepius, the GrecoRoman god of healing, which featured the serpent entwined staff that we see today associated with our doctors. Pergamum was also a famous seat of medicine and training in the Near East. Our English word for parchment comes from this cities name because writing materials as we know them today were invented there. It was also a city with a large library…some estimates put it at over 200,000 volumes possibly rivalling the library of Alexandria. A tremendous accomplishment for that time.

1. What do you think you would be thinking if you were there when these words were read, “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum, ‘The words of

Him who has the sharp double-edged sword.’”

1. They might have been initially shocked with this reference to judgment…the one who wields the sword has all the power.
2. They would remember the image of the ascended and exalted Christ in chapter 1…the image that John had had…that he already had made known to them since chapter 1 was a preamble to each of the

letters…but specifically 1:16 where he is described as “In His right hand He held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and this face was like the sun shining in full strength.”

1. One irony to see here is that the proconsul/government was granted the “right of the sword”, the power to execute at will, so this picture of Christ with a double-edged sword would remind them of the ultimate power He has over life and death…Him being the one true

King of Kings!

1. In Scripture the “double-edged sword” refers primarily to the Word of God and the power within it to judge and to get to the heart and renew it. Interestingly enough the battle of Armageddon will be

fought with this sword, Rev. 19:15- “From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations…” Not with tanks and planes but by the same Word that created all that there is.

1. So on one hand they might be concerned that His next word may have judgment like the ones from Ephesus or that He is going to give them good news about how He will make life a bit easier for them in Satan’s city.

3. After the initial shock, then these words come, “I know where you live, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast (remain true in) my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.” Vs. 13 a.

# “Phew…we are good!...We did something right!” b. Again, Jesus says,

“I Know”

1. He intimately knows where they live…He knows where we live…He knows in what environment they live…He is with them as He was with Smyrna…nothing gets past Him.
2. He put them and us where we are…He knows they are surrounded by a hostile non-Christian society and He knows they are exposed on all side by pressures to conform to the world around them.
3. He also knows they are amongst enemies…the paganism that surrounds them completely.
4. He knows how they stood firm together even when a faithful witness from their midst was put to death.

* By using the term “faithful witness” we know that this one most likely boldly (with no fear) proclaimed the truth about Christ’s kingdom over Zeus’ kingdom or Rome.
* He may have even spoke out against all the other gods and the relics that came with them…enough to irritate the locals to have him martyred with the hopes of keeping the church there quiet.
* The pagans probably didn’t care how they worshiped or who they worshiped…they just didn’t want them saying that theirs was the only true God and that the pagan served no gods.
* Jesus refers to Himself this way in this book. 1:5; 3:14. So that says a lot in and of itself… Jesus the “faithful witness” …did His Father’s will at the cost of His life.
* It is here that the word for “witness” in the Greek becomes the word for martyr. “Witness” defines the word martyr
* As with Polycarp,
  + Antipas would have been brought before the Roman proconsul, the chief priest of the imperial cult, and told to swear by Caesar or his genius. Simply say “Caesar is Lord” and you can go back to your life.
  + Because he wouldn’t do this Antipas joined “the noble army of martyrs” who are faithful witnesses sealing their testimony with their blood they way Christ did.
* Hence Jesus gives him the title that is most precious to God… “faithful witness/martyr”.

c. But Jesus sees their faithfulness to Him and His Word…His truth… and He publicly proclaims that! Just like He did to the church of Ephesus. He didn’t hesitate to point out their past work.

4. What does Christ mean by these references to His name and His faith?

a. “my” is the actual Greek word here used with name and faith. Why is it important that we understand that He possesses both? (1) It enables us to recognize where all “good” things come from.

(2) We cannot take credit for our new life or our new faith.

1. His name represents who He is and what He has done and He only gives that name and that faith to those whom He chooses. Those whom had been predetermined before the foundations of the earth.
2. Jesus Christ is the rock upon which the foundation of Christianity exists and is able to stand firm. To be a Christian is to accept Jesus as God and Savior and to act on this fact in our daily lives.
3. Holding fast to the truth that He is Lord and Savior.
   1. This statement lets us know that simple intellectual assent to His lordship is not enough but we also must truly trust and believe this fact by holding fast to it in such a way that it becomes a conviction not simply a preference that can change.
   2. So it is about holding fast and exercising this faith that He is speaking of here.
4. What is the difference between a conviction and a preference? (1) A conviction, for the Christian is based on God’s standard of truth…what is right and wrong…and is new changeable since God’s standard, His truth does not and cannot change…
5. A preference is based on what we define as true based on our wants and desires and it is changeable.
6. Interesting our Supreme Court has also weighed in on these two words:
   * A preference is a strong belief, held with great strength...but it can and may change over time and the right circumstance…if it ever changes, says the Supremes…it was a preference.
   * A conviction is a belief that never changes, because they are based on God’s Word or some system of unchanging faith or philosophy. A conviction is not something you discover, it is something that is purposed in your heart…and convictions of the heart always show up on the outside in our actions…in

our lifestyle. To violate these convictions is to violate who we are at our core.

* + The courts make judgments based on paper trail or today our internet footprint and what we say and do speaks volumes as to whether our life is based on preference or conviction.

1. We are to uphold His Name and His faith…both are things that He takes from Himself and gives to us…they are His first.
   * We need to treat His “things” with honor.
   * We are to endure and be good stewards of what God has entrusted us with.
2. He wants to make sure that we love Him with all that we are, and that we should suffer bravely for Him unto death, but also that we should believe in His name ...believe totally in Him and hold fast to His truth which is the absolute truth about Him.
3. These fundamental truths…doctrines…cannot be compromised… any denial of this doctrine means clearly that the one denying

this truth is NOT a brother or sister in Christ. Now this is not me speculating… What do we see happening in the Bible to those who choose not to follow God’s truth?

1. How important to Christ is the truth? Why?
   1. Truth is Him… John 14… “The Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
   2. His truth is His Word…
   3. His truth is all there is…
   4. It is His gift that He gives to His own…
   5. It gives and preserves life…
   6. It is power over the influences of the world.
   7. He told Pontius Pilate that He came into the world to bear witness to the truth!

1. We have seen two marks of a true church up to this point: Love and Suffering. Now we see the next one; truth. Some Christians in our culture today are trying to make “love” so paramount that they have forgotten the absolute importance of the truth. What is wrong with only emphasizing love? a. We have a wrong definition of love…based in feelings…
   * 1. Love is not a fixed concept in our culture
     2. God is love…according to the Scriptures and how does
     3. God show His love for His elect by before the foundation of the earth the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit covenanted to

redeem the people of His choice…

* + 1. So based on God’s Word and His own definition love is best

defined as “a choice.”

* + - 1. Without God’s truth there is no true love, or there is no true suffering that brings Him glory. Without the truth there is no standard for these other 2.
      2. Some are mistaken as well in their pursuit of truth without love denying Christian suffering saying that any suffering shows a lack of faith.
      3. Love becomes sentimental if it is not strengthened by truth…and truth becomes hard and uncaring if not softened by love…and love and truth enable us to make the sacrifices necessary as we suffer for Christ and for one another.
      4. We need to preserve the balance we find in the Bible which tells us to hold the truth in love, to love others in the truth, and to grow not only in love but in discernment (Eph. 4:15; Phil. 1:9; III John 1).

1. How then can any true follower be indifferent to the truth?
   * + 1. Since Christ speaks the truth, loves the truth, and is the truth…it leaves you wondering why so many within the Church seem to be so indifferent to it…like saying doctrine doesn’t matter…or that the Bible is a set of suggestions that are bound in time and space in the cultures in which they were written…
       2. 75-80% of all Christian will state they believe the Bible to be God’s Word and even a fairly strong number 60% or so say they believe in the inerrancy of the Word, but over 50% of the same people will also say that absolute truth does not exist…which is an absolute truth that they are professing… so go figure!

1. Rev. 2: 14-16-“ But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a

# stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If

not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of

my mouth.” Christ seemed pleased with the church in vs. 13, but what has happened? What are the issues that need correction?

1. Just like in vs. 13 where Jesus says, “I know where you dwell” He knows what is in the midst of the church that will ruin it. He sees everything.
2. They need to quit straying and get back on the path of truth.
3. Now this was a similar call to the Church in Ephesus…so what was different?
   * In Ephesus they were doing everything they were supposed to do but for the wrong reasons…
   * Here they were giving into the culture and allowing the culture to dictate what they do and how they act toward those with differing beliefs…even those who claim some form of Christianity but were followers of heresies.
   * Tolerance for other beliefs within their midst
4. It doesn’t appear that all its members were weak in their faith….

hence the commendation by Christ,

* + - * but they were OBVIOUSLY tolerating the few in their midst that practiced the errors spoken of here.
      * Sometimes we see this happen in churches of today when family members get into these errors and the church chooses not to say anything.
      * Most churches today do not conceive of a need to even do church discipline as the Scriptures clearly command.
      * This makes one need to ask if these churches are even true churches…for historically the church has seen 3 things as defining the true church.

The true proclamation of the Word of God…His full counsel.

The correct administration of the Sacraments.

Church discipline…based on the lack of repentance someone exhibits.

b. Church Discipline is essential to the health of the church. Example: When Jonathan Edwards took over the church from his father, he began looking closely at the sins of even the elders of the church and at one point he denied access to the Lord’s Table because an elder’s son was unrepentant. The upshot was that he lost his church even after

the 1st Great Awakening had begun at his church months before by him.

9. Who is Christ addressing with these concerns?

a. First and foremost, He was addressing the pastor/bishop and elders of this church and any other churches in this area.

* + - 1. They, the first line of defense for the people of the church, were allowing this to occur by not protecting God’s people…not shepherding them effectively…they would be held accountable first by God.
      2. As the leaders they have a responsibility and Jesus calls them out on their rejection of His Word on this subject.

The minority practicing the errors.

The majority who are allowing them to occur.

To those who believe… He is essentially asking these questions, “Do you not care that the truth is being challenged in your midst? Does it mean nothing to you that there are those within your midst who are dishonoring Christ’s name and denying His faith?”

Jesus reminds us that we cannot tolerate error under the guise of being open-minded and fair. We are to be and can be gracious and still be diligent for the word.

The Revelation of John December

11, 2022

1. Prayer
2. Review
   1. What are the two characteristics of the Church Jesus has pointed out so far with the first 2 churches?
      1. Love
      2. Suffering- in fact,
         1. Just as He says here to these faithful believers He has said before to all believers that we must expect suffering. “In this life there will be tribulation…”
         2. Paul reminds his readers of the same when he speaks to us about expecting persecution.
         3. Peter as well…tells us we will suffer as Jesus did for the truth…because we are commended to walk in His steps.
         4. But the reality is we don’t want to suffer and blame everyone else when we do. God’s affliction is a “good thing” for His children.

* 1. Read again Rev. 2:12-17. Who is Christ addressing with these concerns?

a. First and foremost, He was addressing the pastor/bishop and elders of this church and any other churches in this area.

* + - 1. They, the first line of defense for the people of the church, were allowing this to occur by not protecting God’s people…not shepherding them effectively…they would be held accountable first by God.
      2. As the leaders they have a responsibility and Jesus calls them out on their rejection of His Word on this subject.
  1. The minority practicing the errors.
  2. The majority who are allowing them to occur.
  3. To those who believe… He is essentially asking these questions, “Do you not care that the truth is being challenged in your midst? Does

it mean nothing to you that there are those within your midst who

# are dishonoring Christ’s name and denying His faith?”

e. Jesus reminds us that we cannot tolerate error under the guise of being open-minded and fair. We are to be and can be gracious and still be diligent for the word.

3. Let’s look specifically at vs. 13 as we remember some of the things we talked about last time- “I know where you live, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you

hold fast (remain true in) my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed

among you, where Satan dwells.” What does Christ mean by these references to His name and His faith? “my” is the actual Greek word here used with name and faith…. revealing possession.

a. Why is it important that we understand that He possesses both? (1) It enables us to recognize where all “good” things come from.

1. We cannot take credit for our new life or our new faith.

1. His name represents who He is and what He has done and He only gives that name and that faith to those whom He chooses. Those whom had been predetermined before the foundations of the earth.
2. Jesus Christ is the rock upon which the foundation of

Christianity exists and is able to stand firm. To be a Christian is to accept Jesus as God and Savior and to act on this fact in our daily lives.

1. Holding fast to the truth that He is Lord and Savior.
   * This statement lets us know that simple intellectual assent to His lordship is not enough but we also must truly trust and believe this fact by holding fast to it in such a way that it becomes a conviction not simply a preference that can change.
   * So, it is about holding fast and exercising this faith that He is speaking of here.

C. Continuing on in this section: Rev. 2: 14-16-“But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they

might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also,

you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore

repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the

sword of my mouth.”

1. Christ seemed pleased with the church in vs.13, but what has happened here is vs. 14-16? What are the issues that need correction?

1. Just like in vs. 13 where Jesus says, “I know where you dwell”

…Christ KNOWS what is in the midst of the church that will ruin it. He sees everything.

1. They need to quit straying and get back on the path of truth.

(1)Now this was a similar call to the Church in Ephesus…so what was different?

* + - * Here it was tolerance for other beliefs within their midst which required compromise of God’s truth.
      * The punishment is more severe…or maybe, of difference severity. This church would cease to exist …whereas Pergamum might wish they had died as a church by the time God got through with them.

(2)As we saw before it doesn’t appear that all its members were weak in their faith…. hence the commendation by Christ,

* + - * but they were OBVIOUSLY tolerating the few in their midst that practiced the errors spoken of here.
      * Sometimes we see this happen in churches of today when family members get into these errors and the church chooses not to say anything.
      * Most churches today do not conceive of a need to even do church discipline as the Scriptures clearly command.
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1. Church Discipline is essential to the health of the church. Example: When Jonathan Edwards took over the church from his father, he began looking closely at the sins of even the elders of the church and at one point he denied access to the Lord’s Table because an elder’s son was unrepentant. The upshot was that he lost his church even after

the 1st Great Awakening had begun at his church months before by him.

1. Just for fun…What is the sin of Balaam and why is it pertinent?

* + - * 1. Setting himself up as a spokesman/prophet of God. Numbers

22-24.

* + - * 1. Preferred fame and fortune over God’s truth.
        2. Leading the people to sin by starting them in small sins first then helping them move on into larger ones.

(1) Number 31:16- “Behold, these (the commanders of the army), on Balaam’s advice (Numbers 25), caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the

plague came among the congregation of the LORD.” (2) Some in the church had either been drawn into the practices of idol worship or

never left so Jesus points to the exact same sin perpetrated by Balaam against God’s people.

(3) Some seems to have thought syncretism was the answer to getting along in this city…syncretism equals compromise which equals God’s wrath/punishment upon those who seek to do this and lead others astray.

* 1. The travesty of the truth is to change the grace of God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus speaks against such behavior.
  2. Nicolaitans like the “Jezebelians”, like the Balaamitians…an off shoot of Baal worship…were all about pagan hedonism…pleasure for the sake of pleasure which fit in well with the culture around them.
     + - 1. These folks like the ones above sought cultural accommodation.
         2. The thinking may have been whatever it takes to get them in the door so they can hear the Word…we will work on their sinful patterns of life later...make them members and perhaps they will change…all wrong ideas that are still with us today.
         3. We are at liberty to sin if it will get us what we want…Hedonism at its worst.

1. It seems that the main problem here plaguing this church is that so many are forsaking biblical truth/doctrine causing them to compromise for the sake of getting along hence not doing church discipline because that makes us look bad.

* 1. So, what does all of this mean for our church…here …in Victoria…in 21st Century tolerant America?

* 1. Once again Jesus calls on one of His churches to repent. What is He asking of them? Vs. 16- “Therefore repent.”
  2. Repentance is a rather easy word to understand- turning completely around and going in a different direction…the way in which the Word of truth directs us to walk in.
  3. This repentance also carries with it the command concerning the direction they are to go…Get rid of among you who do not belong…or I will!
  4. Not ASKING…COMMANDING them to repent of their tolerance and straying from the faith first and foremost!

1. No asking by the LORD.
2. REPENTANCE of our sin of complicity…or our outright sin of involvement.
3. Many within the church want Him to ask nicely… or redefine what He says and does so that it is more palatable to those within and without.
4. To deal with these heresies…this would mean disciplining these members to seek to restore them to the faith…but if not excommunicating them for the sake of the Church and for the sake of God’s glory.

* This would be a big deal…living in a pagan culture… the minute they would seek to do something about these heresies they would

be seen as even more dangerous which in their minds might probably bring upon them even more persecution.

* You have to love what Jesus says here to leaders and people…
  1. Vs. 16- “If you won’t do this, I will come to you soon and war against THEM with the sword of my mouth.” While He may

be only

warring against THEM…the whole church will suffer from the destruction of the witness and the impact that it would have on individual families in the church.

* 1. After all He describes Himself as He “who has the sharp doubleedged sword”.
* Jesus promises His complete wrath against those who refuse to repent. The God of the universe against you…no question who wins that confrontation! He will excise this infection…this gangrene… from among them if they do not.
* The Word lays bare all our sin and need and enables us to fight off false truth.
  1. You don’t want me to have to deal with this matter…for I will… but you will be dealt with as well for not doing what you were supposed to do.
  2. Balaam was killed by the sword…many of the false believers would catch the reference pretty quickly… “I will come to you soon and

war against them with the sword of my mouth.”

d. One of 2 results…

1. People would admire them for their choices to uphold their faith and Christ’s teachings or…
2. They would receive more persecution…we are called to suffer…we are called to uphold the truth…so we have no choice but to do what is right.

4. Why is He so concerned with a church that is tainted with such sin? In other words, what is the big deal?

* + - * 1. What kind of witness for Him would that be?
        2. How would it appear if He condemns all the pagans and not His own folks who are acting like pagans and refusing to live as He commands?
        3. What parent doesn’t discipline their children. Without discipline they are not loved…without the love of a parent children grow up and become destructive.

(5) What are the ways to victory for these people once again and for us, for that matter, when we get caught up in sin? Vs. 16-17-“

Therefore repent…He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who

receives it.”

* + - * 1. Repentance and submission to His will…His truth once again.

“Therefore repent.”

* + - * 1. Then we can once again listen to the truth. “He who has an ear to hear what the Spirit says…”
        2. Then we can live by the truth… “To the one who conquers…”

(6) What do you suppose the image of the manna and the white stone communicates to all of us who overcome? “To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a

new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”

a. Reward… But each reward speaks to what we receive in the end so the fullness of this reward will be fully appreciated in heaven…to the heavenly feast?!?!

(1) First, we must remember this is emphatic… Jesus says, “I will give…” twice:

* + - * + “I will give some of the hidden manna”
        + “I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”

(2) Hidden manna

Practically Jesus may be saying that He will provide for their actual daily bread…as they are faithful and suffering for it.

Christ is the bread of life= manna…which was “hidden” in the golden jars and placed in the ark of the covenant.

We are to depend upon it and be nourished by His Word…

This phrase also recognizes the on-going bread of life… GRACE… we receive in Christ in this life.

Just as Christ’s people were fed by manna in the wilderness our spiritual hunger is fed by Christ in our modern-day wilderness.

(3) White stone- (helpful insight courtesy of Richard Phillips’ Revelation:

Reformed expository Commentary on the New

Testament)

• A White ceremonial stone in the ancient world was called a

“tessera” and it had a number of different meanings to these people.

Champions in athletic games were given a white stone…like a trophy. So the stone Jesus speaks of could be given in recognition of overcoming and having victory in Christ.

They were also given as “tokens” for admission in a pagan feast or festival. So while they wouldn’t be welcomed at the pagan feasts, they could be assured of a place at the table…the LORD’s Table at the wedding feast of the Lamb when the Lord receives from us the “white stones”, the One who actually knows what is written on it.

They were also used in courts of law as jurors voted for the acquittal …a black stone was used for conviction. So while, like Antipas they may be convicted in the courts

in Pergamum of treason against the gods, they were assured of their acquittal in the courts of heaven.

• The white stone inscribed with the new name- probably represents another symbol that represents the crown of glory/life.

(7) So, as we have read 2:12-17, what characteristic would you say comes from this letter to the church as a whole? A Church characterized by the Truth of God.

* + 1. Living out the truth…
    2. Preserving the truth…
    3. Spreading the truth
    4. It is all about the truth!

(8) Also again, what are the 3 characteristics that the church is to exhibit that we have seen thus far from these 3 letters? Why are these significant?

The Revelation of John January

22, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Review

1. What are the 4 characteristics that the church is supposed to exhibit that we have considered so far?

* + - 1. Church at Ephesus= Love….whole-hearted toward God and our neighbor!
      2. Church at Smyrna= We are called as a church to suffering even unto death, without fear since we will not suffer the sting of the second death.
      3. Church at Pergamum= Truth…the Church should always be about the truth…God’s truth…the only true truth!
      4. Church at Thyatira= Holiness is our radical commitment to live out the implications of what it means to be the bride of Christ as told to us in His Word.

* 1. These are all well and good so far…but so what? What difference does this teaching make in our lives daily when we must walk through the valley?

* 1. We were talking about Jesus’ 2nd statement to this church as our time came to a close, “I know your works. You have a reputation of

being alive, but you

are dead.”

a. What did we say the point of this rebuke was?

1. “Uh Oh…he is not happy with us”…NO, nothing so benign…there would have been fear in their hearts. What is God going to do with us? They knew the history of what happens to God’s people.
2. The shame to have the LORD call you out like this.
3. Because by definition a church is supposed to be a place where God dwells with and in His people.
4. They may have thought they were alive...and maybe the churches around them did to but:
   * Her reputation was without reality.
   * Her creed without Christ.
   * Her religion was just that religion with no real relationship to the Lord.

(5) Nothing wrong with a “good reputation” But evidently they were fooled by their own good reputation…or in their busyness. Like

those in Matthew 7: 21-23-“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

b. Maybe the first example of “nominal Christianity”.

1. The Church at Sardis had acquired a name because of its activity.
   * So many programs.
   * So many different ministries.
   * So much teaching.
2. It had a reputation as progressive and was well known for its size and apparent vitality by all the churches in the area.
3. People would speak of how alive it seemed with all its flurry of activity… but as Jesus says…she is dead on the inside.
4. There is no discussion of false doctrines like the last couple of churches, because everything they did was just for show.
   * 1. The distinction between reputation and reality, between what people see and what God sees, is of great importance.
     2. These people had a complete lack of grasp on reality…they were not watchful of their witness…it was more important to look good than to be doctrinally healthy.
     3. The reality was in Sardis that there was a spiritual deadness in the church. They were eaten up with spiritual cancer that was killing them, if you will, and they didn’t know it.
     4. “but you are dead.” – Despite their reputation…Jesus saw the truth. No spiritual character. Jesus’ pronouncement is clear they are dead!
        1. This church wasn’t losing the battle with sin…they are dead...and had lost the battle.
        2. In this letter Jesus didn’t encourage the Christians in Sardis to stand strong against persecution or false doctrine, probably because there simply wasn’t a significant threat to these things in Sardis. Being dead they presented no significant threat to Satan’s domain, so it isn’t worth attacking.
        3. The church of Sardis was at peace…but it was the peace of the dead.

1. How does a church fall into such a lamentable condition? Do we have anything like it today?

1. Next Jesus says, “Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.

Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.” What is He saying to a church that He just pronounced dead?

a. “Wake up”… “Be watchful”… “Behold” …they are not dead yet, just asleep at the wheel!

* + - 1. Just like the culture of the city…they knew that invading armies might come they just weren’t watchful and didn’t prepare. They wee apathetic.
      2. This first instruction told them get out of their slumber…quit being lazy and observe, examine, and know what is going and take measure to protect and strengthen what they have.
  + They went through the motions but were not taking anything in.
  + By commanding them to wake up and take notice Jesus is almost talking to them about getting into shape spiritually…strength training is His approach…rigorously remembering, and rehearsing foundational doctrines as if weight training.
  + Taking this “bull by the horns” and turning away from spiritual laziness.
  + There really is no indication that they ever were “vital” hence the need to wake up and work …exercise their faith…a faith that they have …but not a lifestyle commensurate with their

faith. “Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.”

(3) The things that remain tells us that the church is not yet hopeless…there were still things that could be strengthened.

b. Their works at that moment were dead to Him because they weren’t complete… They were doing nothing to fulfill the purposes of God.

1. “Works” play a big role in these letters…good or bad…alive or dead…He knows them all and grants blessing and judgment accordingly.
2. They performed duties of all kinds, but never completely…like beginning something and not bringing it to a proper end.
3. If they would only keep what they have heard and repent…they would be saved.
   * + They had been taught the Word by the

Apostles and their ministers.

* + - They had received the faith entrusted to the saints… at least some of them had.

(4) They must not have really kept what they had been taught ever…never been vital… in contrast to Ephesus who was told to

# “repent and do the works you did at first.”

(5) He is calling them to repent…remember these are His people…at least some of them. This is God’s grace to

His children.

1. As I said , they were doing a lot of things that looked good in the eyes of the men around them…but not in the sight of God…as men pleaser’s they were out of touch with God. This distinction between reputation and reality, between what man sees and what God sees , is of great importance to every age and place. Although we are responsible to and for one another we are primarily accountable to God. A church sins when it forgets this.
2. These are His children and He is walking among them as Lord to commend and to expose and discipline them for their faults. These letters are His particular counsel and warning to the church for all time as these churches represent all churches of all time.

1. Most of us hate alarm clocks in the morning…so think of it this way: “It’s 6:00am and this is your wake up call.” Jesus says the time is short, here is your wake up call. What 5 commands does He give in verses 2-3 that points to what is expected of those who claim the name of Christ?
   1. Wake Up! – or “show yourself to be watchful!” Be Diligent with the things of God,
   2. Strengthen what remains. –nurture/disciple the church.
   3. Remember what you have seen and heard!
      1. “Remember” means that they had purposefully forgotten what they were to remember…you have to know something before you can be held accountable to remember.
      2. Everyone…especially God’s chosen… have God’s law written on their hearts…but also the churches teaching had been prevalent

…and as believers they have the Spirit that they had been rejecting.

* + 1. Or as non-believers all they had was the general revelation of God and the believers in their midst.
    2. Keep it or Obey it!- they knew what they were to obey and how they were to obey but had been ignoring it.
    3. Repent! This is a command …like a too loud alarm in the early morning hours. Within this worldly congregation a godly remnant obviously remains. (vs. 4). Remnant theology is big in the Scriptures…and it is the only reason why this lamp stand has not been removed.

1. What does Christ say will happen if they don’t repent? And how will it happen? Why do you think He would word it this way?

1. What does Jesus mean when He says that some have not soiled their garments? What does that mean for those who have? “Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments”
   1. Some have not succumbed to the sins of the day. In this church perhaps, spiritual slumber and deadness...or compromise… unauthentic in its life.
   2. A few have remained faithful, awake and alive.
   3. Or there are some in their midst who would be willing to repent and thereby overcome their drifting away from the faith.
   4. Jesus has a promise for them that we will look at in a minute.
   5. The Greek historian Herodotus said that the inhabitants of Sardis were among the peoples of the lowest moral standards. Perhaps the church had fallen into this by not stopping those in their membership who had no problem with living together or doing other things

opposed to God’s standard…like participating in the temple ceremonies.

* 1. Garments are a reference to a person’s character… “you are what you wear” kind of thinking…as it used to be.

(1) So there were some in which their character had not yet been spoiled. (See Jude 22-23- “And have mercy on those who doubt; save

# others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy

with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.”)

(2) But for those whose garments are “soiled” there is a day of reckoning coming. A day when they will not know He is

coming…THAT DAY… probably…when Christ returns…

d. For it seems they are some of the one’s that Jesus spoke in Matthew 7:212123. “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

1. What three-fold promise does Jesus make to those who overcome? “Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not spoiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I

will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my

Father and before his angels.”- vs. 4-5

* 1. Arrayed in white garments…which symbolizes purity…unsoiled clothing/garments.

(1)“Walking with me in white” …is reference to their walk in this life where the righteousness of Christ given to us at our new birth will become a greater reality throughout their/our life.

(2) This will be fully realized on the day we are in His presence when we who conquer “will be clothed thus in white garments”...fully… not partially as now.

* 1. When the day comes when we are fully clothed, the book of life will be opened and their names will not be blotted out of the book of life. In fact, this is confirmation to those who conquer that their/our names will be read from the book the God compiled before the foundations of the earth.
  2. Christ will confess our names before God and the angels.
     1. This was an amazing promise.
     2. It simply makes sense that we should be willing to confess the name of Jesus, but it is amazing that He would not be ashamed to confess us.
     3. While it is important to respond to Christ’s call but it is more important to know that Jesus accepts us and this statement does.

d. Obviously many in the Sardis church were not believers but it was still Christ’s church because there was a remnant of the Spirits people there who are being admonished to become watchful and do as God commands.

1. The church seems to have been at its height during the 2nd and 3rd Century.
   * 1. The church was of great influence…by the 2nd Century the Bishop of Sardis, Melito, was said to have been one of great authority, and he held a place of respect and honor among Bishops in Asia in history.
     2. This church may have existed in one form or another until the 13th Century…as seen in Byzantine Church histories and the archeological Explorations of Sardis through the years.

1. Soooo…what is the characteristic(s) highlighted in this church that we need to be mindful of today?
   * 1. Watchfulness and Authenticity…Be aware…Be alert and live as God says to live not as the community expects.
     2. Living in God’s reality then is another essential mark of God’s church. A church should not only have a reputation of being alive but also be one the reveals and reflects the life.
     3. The Bible has devoted much space to the difference between outward appearances and the inward reality of faith.
     4. To be given a reputation for life is insufficient.
     5. We must possess an inward reality and purity which are known and pleasing to God.

The Revelation of John Feb.

5, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Review- Rev. 2-3:6
   1. What are the 5 characteristics that the church is supposed to exhibit that we have considered so far?
      * 1. Church at Ephesus= Love….whole-hearted toward God and our neighbor!
        2. Church at Smyrna= Suffering- We are called as a church to suffering even unto death, without fear since we will not suffer the sting of the second death.
        3. Church at Pergamum= Truth…the Church should always be about the truth…God’s truth…the only true truth!
        4. Church at Thyatira= Holiness is our radical commitment to live out the implications of what it means to be the bride of Christ as told to us in His Word.
        5. Church at Sardis= Watchfulness and Authenticity…Be aware…Be alert and live as God says to live not as the community expects.

* 1. Let’s look for a moment at Rev. 3:4-5, “Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not spoiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his “Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not spoiled their garments, and angels.”- What three-fold promise does Jesus make to those who overcome in Sardis?

a. Arrayed in white garments…which symbolizes purity…unsoiled clothing/garments.

(1)“Walking with me in white” …is reference to their walk in this life where the righteousness of Christ given to us at our new birth will become a greater reality throughout their/our life.

(2) This will be fully realized on the day we are in His presence when we who conquer “will be clothed thus in white garments”...fully… not partially as now.

* + - * 1. Their names will not be blotted out of the book of life when the day comes when we are fully clothed in these garments. In fact, this is confirmation to those who conquer that their/our names will be read from the book the God compiled before the foundations of the earth.
        2. Christ will confess our names before God and the angels.
        3. This was an amazing promise.
        4. It simply makes sense that we should be willing to confess the name of Jesus, but it is amazing that He would not be ashamed to confess us. He has stood/hung in our place and now He vouches for us before the Father continuously.
        5. Obviously many in the Sardis church were not believers but it was still Christ’s church because there was a remnant of the Spirit’s people there who are being admonished to become watchful and do as God commands.
        6. Also, it is a far better thing to be pulled up sharply by God before things get too out of hand…than to be left alone in our sin. God disciplines those whom He loves…and judges those severely that he doesn’t. But all along, even to His own…His simple message it

“Repent!”

1. The Church of Philadelphia- “the city of brotherly love”- Rev. 3:7-13

1. Philadelphia was about 30 miles SE from Sardis. The city was founded by citizens from Pergamum and was built on the “frontier” in a deep, well-traveled valley as a gateway to the central Asia Minor plains. Historians called it “the gateway/door way to the East”. Philadelphia’s purpose at first was to keep barbarians out but was an open- door to the Greek culture and language. The area where the city existed was volcanic in nature. Historians call it “a city of

earthquakes”. Sounds like San Francisco. Tremors were frequent and had

caused many to move out through the years. The same earthquake that almost

completely destroyed Sardis in AD 17 almost completely wiped out

Philadelphia as well. This city still exists today and its name is *Alasehir* in Turkey. Interesting change in administrations (or Emperors that is)…Sardis was rebuilt after a 5 year tax cut. Philadelphia remained in ruins for years until Emperor’s Claudius and Nero gave an imperial subsidy…can you say stimulus package??? It took 60 plus years longer to rebuild Philadelphia than Sardis. (stimulus packages didn’t work back then either…giving “away” money seems to bring out the worst in people. It was completed by the 90’s after which it was known as “the little Athens”. “After the rebuild was complete it was said, *“To walk through the temple scatted streets was to remind one of Athens, the center of worship for the Olympian gods.”* And within this rebuilt city existed a Christian church. This Church seems to have been given an opportunity by Christ. It stood at crossroads with so many passing through so it was given the opportunity to proclaim the gospel to the world…the then known world. There is in the history of this city mention of the persecution of Christians that this letter alludes to as well. But this persecution did not come from the pagans but again from the Jews within and without the city.

2. The people in each of these seven churches lived under the rule of the world power in their day—Rome. Of course, many of those who gathered in these 7 churches were citizens of another kingdom, a kingdom at odds with the kingdom of the world, a kingdom that might look weak to the world but is, in fact, growing and spreading and will one day extend to every corner of the earth. Jesus introduced His message to the church at Philadelphia as being the words of the one who holds the keys to that kingdom: “The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.” Do these words sound familiar? If so why? Do you know why it is familiar? See Matthew 16:19-“I will give you

the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” How do these go together?

1. Christ said them…
2. Christ said them to His disciples for the expressed reason of the ministry of discipline…lovingly holding the church accountable… instructing them in sound doctrine…teaching them to become disciples who make disciples of others. Building the church through time by God’s grace and through His power.
3. There are two Greek words for the word “true”.
   1. One means true and not false.
   2. The other means true not fake.
   3. The word used here is the second...true and not fake…Jesus is the Truth…He is the real God all others are fake.

4. What is the “key of David” what is the door that it opens, that no one can shut?

* 1. We begin to see a pattern with this letter in that a lot of the text foundation and illusion comes from Isaiah’s prophecy and Jesus’ own prophecies concerning the end that is surely coming…so we see the Scriptures are one in meaning and intent.
  2. This speaks of Jesus being from the lineage of David…the chosen

One...the Messiah…the long awaited One…the King of kings.

* 1. Is. 22:19-25- “I will thrust you (Shebna steward of King Hezekiah and a scribe) from your office, and you will be pulled down from your station. In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, (Both men were servants of Hezekiah but only one was the servant of God) and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash

# on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall

be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of

Judah. And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honor to his father’s house. And they will hang on him the whole honor of his father’s house, the offspring and issue, every small vessel, from the cups to all the flagons.”

1. Eliakim becomes a type of Christ…because Jesus uses this passage and language to describe Himself here in Revelation.
2. Jesus is the one with the keys of Hades and death. Rev. 1:18- “I have the keys of Death and Hades.”
3. According to Jesus in Matt. 16:19 which we looked at briefly above…as the one who is the keeper of the key(s) He is the one who delegates the authority with this key(s).
4. Matt. 23:13- “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you

neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go

in.”

1. This is Christ’s authority, as the Son of David, with the key(s) of the kingdom.
2. Christ is the One who holds this key and does with it as He pleases, even delegating appropriately to His apostles and His people.
3. He has thrown open the door to every, nation, tongue and tribe to come in and nothing can or will stop it.
4. But He will shut the door at the point when all His people are “in”.
   1. It will be closed…once it is closed…no one can open it…no second chances…judgment is certain.
   2. And in one since the door is closed already…for God’s elect were chosen from before the foundations of the world…
   3. But one the other hand…it is still open to His elect from every nation and of every generation until He Returns shall come in…only His elect will enter.

5. Then we come to verse 8, “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my

name.” If the door in verse 7 is talking about the way into the kingdom that Jesus has unlocked, what is meant by the mentioning of this door here is context?

1. The first of course deals with the door that will not be shut to His own …the door into the kingdom. Rev. 4:1- “After this I looked, and

behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’”

1. A second aspect of this door spoken of in verse 8 deals with opportunity. Opportunity for service.
   1. The reason this door is open before the church is that the key is in the hand of Christ and He has opened it for the Church to be the means of bringing in the elect from all time and he expected the Church to walk through to complete the mission granted to it by Christ.
      * Is. 60:11- “Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in

procession.”

* + - Rev. 21:24-26-“By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of

the nations.”

* 1. Jesus is pointing this church, hence the church as a whole, toward the open door and promising to use them and us to extend His kingdom to every nation. This small body of believers is called to go through a great door of opportunity. Like Gideon’s small army…a little army with a big and faithful

God.

* 1. They may be weak in numbers but they have not and should not let that slow them down….look at what they have done already.
  + Having gone into the kingdom through the door of salvation the people wish to and Jesus is encouraging them to hurry out through the door of service…word and deed compelling others to

come in. Col. 4:3-4- “At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of

Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.”

* + The opportunity is there don’t let your size or place God has placed you deter you… Is. 49:6- “He says: It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a

light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

* 1. Not just the pastor or the elders but every man woman and child of the congregation. All are given the opportunity and now the marching orders to proclaim the gospel.
  2. John Stott says probably to the chagrin of many in the church, “It was before the whole church of Philadelphia the He opened a door of opportunity. Evangelism is not the prerogative of pastors or other professionals. It is not the hobby of a few fanatics. It is the duty resting upon the whole congregation and upon every member of it. Not only is every individual Christian called to be a witness but every local Christian community is called to mobilize its membership for mission.”
  3. The key, of course, is Christ, but He has given to us, as we are in Him, to be the means that this work is accomplished.

1. There is no criticism of Philadelphia, but He does point out that this young church has “but little power” .
   * + - 1. They possibly were not influential and didn’t have influencers in their church.
         2. They possibly weren’t a large church with very few programs.
         3. Yet they clearly had been faithful with what they had…

“yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”

* + - * + Jesus clearly speaks to what He is intending to do with them because of their faithfulness with what they had and it didn’t have anything to do with THEIR strength.
        + Of course we know He prefers it that way… II Cor. 12:9- “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” In other words, they were weak enough in themselves to be strong in the Lord.

The Revelation of John Feb.

12, 2023

Prayer

Review- Rev. 2-3:6

* 1. What are the 5 characteristics that the church is supposed to exhibit that we have considered so far?
     + 1. Church at Ephesus= Love….whole-hearted toward God and our neighbor!
       2. Church at Smyrna= Suffering- We are called as a church to suffering even unto death, without fear since we will not suffer the sting of the second death.
       3. Church at Pergamum= Truth…the Church should always be about the truth…God’s truth…the only true truth!
       4. Church at Thyatira= Holiness is our radical commitment to live out the implications of what it means to be the bride of Christ as told to us in His Word.
       5. Church at Sardis= Watchfulness and Authenticity…Be aware…Be alert and live as God says to live not as the community expects.
     1. Jesus calls us to be watchful as we await his return. What are some of the things that keep you from watchfulness in your life?
     2. What can we do to become more watchful in this life?

2. What were some of the things that Jesus said and meant about the key of David and that He has set before them an open door as a church?

1. This is the same key that Jesus refers to in Chapter 1:17-18- “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have(hold) the keys of Death and Hades.”

(and everything else)!

* 1. This was “good news” to them at a time when it looked like peace, hope, and the future looked mostly bleak. But the key of history is firmly in His hand and He gives it/them to His true

Church.

* 1. He controls the access to death and hades, hence eternal life and eternal death…since He alone has the keys. There is nothing to fear in death if we are His. He is sovereign over all.
  2. Since Jesus emerged from the grave with the keys of death in His hand, and because He is alive forever the day is coming when we will receive a glorious resurrection body, “when our lowly bodies are transformed to be like His glorious body,

by the power that enables Him to subject all things to

Himself.” (Phil. 3:21)

* 1. Also, one day He will take those keys to death and lock the door to death… “…death will be no more.”- (Rev. 21:4)
  2. He has the keys, because He is the key…the source, substance, sum, sustainer and savior of all His people.

1. An opportunity. Opportunity for service…namely evangelism and discipleship.
   1. As Philadelphia was a “gate-way city” in the culture and many people came through .
   2. So the church shouldn’t miss the opportunity to minister to these folks in word and deed so that they then can take the

Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. Acts 1:8- “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and

Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

* 1. The reason this door is open before the church is that the key is in the hand of Christ and He has opened it for the Church to be the means of bringing in the elect from all time and he expected the Church to walk through to complete the mission granted to it by

Christ.

* 1. Jesus is pointing this church, hence the church as a whole, toward the open door and promising to use them and us to extend His kingdom to every nation.
  2. The opportunity is there don’t let your size God has given you deter you… Is. 49:6- “He says: It is too light a thing that you should be my

servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the

# preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

C. Revelation 3:9-13- “Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

1. This seems to almost be a call to arms for this church and the rest of us who claim His name. What all is He saying here to these that

He delights in?

a. The persecution, especially from the Jews will continue …BUT…There will also be fruit that would only happen in their weakness…that is in their total submission to Christ.

(1) The fruit of their going through the door of opportunity that Jesus has opened up for them would be that some of the Jews who have been persecuting them will come and bow down before them and recognize the community that Christ really loves…

* perhaps begging their forgiveness for the life they had lived before the One with the key of salvation opened their hearts.
* But now Christ is rewarding their faithfulness by lifting the persecution so that many can come in. This refers back to verses 8&9 to be sure. They had kept Christ’s Word and they had lifted up His name and now He is saying keep it up while I open the door to more opportunities.

(2) Isaiah 49:23-“Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the

# LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.”

(3) Isaiah 60:14- “The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet;

they shall call you the City of the LORD, the

# Zion of the

Holy One of Israel.”

b. They also understand the prize that God is speaking of

hear…

1. A prize that He has promised throughout to those who delight in obeying His commands and do His will. Matthew 24:21-22- “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will

be cut short.”

1. Daniel 12:1-“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.”
2. This is also what He means when He says, “I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world,”

* First of all “the hour of trial” talked about here seems to be the last hour on THAT Day of Christ’s return since it is clear that they have already been enduring persecution…the results of the tribulation period between Christ’s comings.
* And it is also the final judgment that He speaks of we Christians are exempt from since Christ died and cleansed us with His blood. We are exempt from the negative aspects of this judgment since we have already been judged and saved as the ones who were chosen before the foundation of the earth…His elect.
* So the Church will go through the tribulation as those who have kept “His word of patient endurance”… this is our sanctification as we are prepared for the new heaven and the new earth.

c. Throughout the book we hear Him saying, “I am coming soon. Hold fast to what you have so that no one can seize your crown.” In this context what is he communicating to the church then and the Church today?

1. They /we must be prepared always for His return.
2. This is often translated “I am coming quickly” to seek to make clear the meaning of soon…sudden, seems unexpected, but not necessarily immediate.
3. Not losing salvation but that their lampstand may be given to another if they don’t remain faithful.
4. Seized here refers to what would appear as a violent taking of their place among the churches and giving that to another.
5. Given all the positives that Jesus spoke of concerning these folks why such a harsh warning?

d. Then He talks of the rewards in vs. 12.

* 1. Pillars-The Pillars of the temple were named Jachin= “He will establish”…and Boaz= “In His is strength.”
  2. Being “tattooed” with the name of God and the name of the city of God…confirms that He owns us and we are a special people. Writing by God is permanent.
     + Tattooing was another form of showing who you are bound to as a slave…
     + sometimes it was done to secure a place in your owners household out of loyalty…others times like making a huge hole in the ear of the slave showed absolute possession…with no freedoms and no rights…bound to the authority over you.
  3. Pillars are a picture of the guaranteed place we have with God in the New Heavens and New Earth…among God’s people…the new

Jerusalem…not a city but His people in His presence.

* 1. If the promises are the same and the reward is the same then why would we give up?

* 1. What kind of excuses do we use not involve ourselves in the opportunity God gives to us to stand up for the truth?

* 1. Why are non-Christians seen as the enemy rather than an opportunity for us to share Christ? Jesus is a friend of sinners…are we?

* 1. How should this passage encourage our church today?
     + - 1. We need to prioritize this as an opportunity that we have been afforded by God …a gift with wonderful side benefits.
         2. We are obviously to be watchful for those opportunities to share the truth of the gospel no matter the cost.
         3. We need to see ministry as the overflow of hearts filled with the grace of the gospel.
         4. Jesus is expecting to use His people to do things they cannot do in their own power.
         5. We are to all that He would has us do with a sense of urgency… “I am coming soon!”

The Revelation of John Feb.

19, 2023

* + - 1. Prayer
      2. Review- Rev. 2-3:6
    1. What are the 5 characteristics that the church is supposed to exhibit that we have considered so far?
       - 1. Church at Ephesus= Love….whole-hearted toward God and our neighbor!
         2. Church at Smyrna= Suffering- We are called as a church to suffering even unto death, without fear since we will not suffer the sting of the second death.
         3. Church at Pergamum= Truth…the Church should always be about the truth…God’s truth…the only true truth!
         4. Church at Thyatira= Holiness is our radical commitment to live out the implications of what it means to be the bride of Christ as told to us in His

Word.

* + - * 1. Church at Sardis= Watchfulness and Authenticity…Be aware…Be alert and live as God says to live not as the community expects. Jesus calls us to be watchful as we await his return.
        2. Church at Philadelphia= Opportunity...seizing the ones

God put before us.

* + 1. What kind of excuses do we use to not involve ourselves in the opportunities God gives to us to stand up for the truth?

* + 1. Jesus is a friend to sinners…are we? Why are non-Christians seen as the enemy rather than an opportunity for us to share

Christ?

* + 1. How should this passage encourage our church today?
       - 1. We need to prioritize this as an opportunity that we have been afforded by God …a gift with wonderful side benefits.
         2. We are obviously to be watchful for those opportunities to share the truth of the gospel no matter the cost.
         3. We need to see ministry as the overflow of hearts filled with the grace of the gospel.
         4. Jesus is expecting to use His people to do things they cannot do in their own power.
         5. We are to all that He would has us do with a sense of urgency… “I am coming soon!”

D. Revelation 3:14-22- The Letter to the Church in Laodicea 2. I’m wondering something.

* + - 1. Have you gone back and re-read these letters at all since we started down the path?
      2. If so, how would you describe them?
      3. How would they have made you “feel” if you were the church they were addressed to?
      4. Do we realize they are all addressed to us today? How do you feel about that?

3. 40 miles SE of Philadelphia 3 famous cities clustered in the Lycus river valley…Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossae. Laodicea was the most southerly of the 7 churches and it was the principle city in its region. It was a banking town and a medical town which produced a popular salve for the eyes called “Phrygian powder”. It was a center for Caesar worship and they worshiped the healing god Asclepius. This was a very rich and prideful city. When it was all but destroyed in AD 61 by a powerful earthquake it refused financial assistance from Rome and rebuilt its city from its own treasury. It has been

said that Laodicea was too rich to accept help from anyone. They made it

clear that they didn’t need outside help, they weren’t going to ask for any and they didn’t want any. Tacitus, the Roman historian said, *“Laodicea arose from*  *the ruins by strength of her own resources, and with no help from us.”* While it liked the freedom of being Roman they did not want to accept Roman money so that they could control the amount of influence Rome placed on its city. (Sound familiar?) There was a lucrative sheep industry as well. They also raised a sheep whose wool was deep black and glossy and because of its uniqueness it was in high demand around the known world. So Laodecians prided themselves in 3

things; their wealth, their textile industry and their medicinal salve. The city’s one major secular weakness was its lack of a convenient source of drinkable water.

It made them vulnerable to attack through siege, because the water could be cut off at any time. So the city government was extremely accommodating to

outsiders choosing compromise and negotiation instead of fighting. They had to bring in the water via aqueduct that was drinkable and tasty from the hot springs

of Hierapolis because the water in their area was sulfuric in taste. Thankfully, by the time it got to the city it had cooled down but unfortunately it was still

lukewarm. It has also been suggested that they sought water from Colossae but even if they had, the distance was still so great that it would have been lukewarm as it traveled by open aqueduct. The church probably was an off shoot of the

church in Ephesus…founded perhaps by Epaphras (Col. 4:13) a disciple of Paul.

There is no evidence that Paul visited the church but he did write them a letter which seems to have been lost (Col. 4:16). This 7th letter is addressed to the church at Laodicea and it combines a fierce denunciation of their complacency with a tender appeal for a wholeheartedness.

1. As we begin…based on the little information that I have just given you…how would you describe the people of this city...and the cities culture? In other words, what things that we have just discussed standout about their worldview?
   1. Very prideful in the wealth.
   2. Very prideful in their autonomy…part of Roman culture and under

Roman rule and yet highly independent because of their wealth and influence of their products.

* 1. Prideful in their abilities and their commerce...they have things no one else can supply.
  2. Willing to compromise their worldview to make sure they are not treated poorly by those outside.
  3. Their one source of shame was perhaps the terrible water and the smell that came with that...but everything else outweighed this.

1. Now let’s go slow through this last letter, for there are some interesting things here to be sure. What is Christ communicating to this church and the Church at large about

Himself with His opening line of verse 14? “And to the angel of

# the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and

true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.”

a. “Amen” as a title is unique…it is also an acknowledgement that what was said is valid and binding by the only One who knows what He is talking about and can judge accordingly.

(1)“The words of the One who says it and it is…like at the beginning”!

(2) Jesus tells the truth, in other words, and sometimes the truth hurts…but for those who have ears to hear, the truth will also heal.

1. The next phrase “the faithful and true witness” was probably added to explain the title “Amen” to non-Hebrew- speaking peoples. What He says is faithful and true for He is faithful and true.
2. “…the beginning of God’s creation.”… probably refers to John 1:12 as well as the multiple other texts that places Him at the beginning with God in the creation of the cosmos. He refers to Himself as this beginning because as the passages make it clear that none of it would have happened without Him.
3. Heb. 1:1-2-“ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.”
4. Col. 1:15-19- “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He

might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell”

d. He is essentially declaring His absolute authority to do and to say the things He is preparing to say through John to this church.

6. With this in mind then what are some of the implications of verses 15 and 16?

a. Once again we see this phrase, “I know your works”.

* 1. They may have been anticipating a commendation like every other church with the exception of Sardis…but what are the odds when all the other churches have been commended at least before an admonishment.
  2. History tells us that this church saw itself as a standout church that really didn’t need anything...possibly a wealthy church like the rest of the city. Can you say mega-church?

(Rev. 3:17)

* 1. But no commendation…!

1. Instead Jesus says, “you are neither cold nor hot” These are positive words in the Greek in most cases.

(1)“Cold” in the Greek in this context usually means “ice cold” refreshing, satisfying

* 1. “Hot” usually means “boiling/scalding hot” medicinal and cleansing.
  2. But they are neither…they too do not realize their great need.
  3. As Christians we are to be refreshing and hospitable bring the word of the Great Physician to those who need it.

1. Note: some have said that He is saying “cold” in the sense of being openly opposed to the gospel. That these are opposites which reflect clarity in a person. Better to openly opposed to the gospel or to be on fire for the gospel then to be lukewarm and useless. I don’t necessarily agree with this statement….for it seems that He is pointing out positive things that we are to be and do contrasting with what this church had become.
2. “lukewarm, neither cold or hot, I will spit you out of my mouth.” compromise…and compromise in His people always nauseates Him…if you will.
   1. Christ would rather we were one or the other or both in contrast to being lukewarm which is useless. Can’t cook in lukewarm water…and you don’t want to drink it…not at all helpful…useless to spreading the gospel.
   2. Lukewarmness represents the person who says one thing and does another.
      * This maybe someone who is truly blind to his true condition (See Matt. 7: 21-23).
      * Or…someone who is so enculturated that they do not do what they were taught to do.
      * This person is not wholeheartedly for the Lord and His work…which has been noted in generations past that if you do not have a heart desire for God and His will then you are not to be considered a believer from man’s limited ability to know…no fruit, no heart.
      * Basically, it wasn’t false teaching, immorality, idolatry or their lack of courage in the face of persecution that earned this rebuke.
      * Jesus was disgusted by the fast that they seem to have no sense of their desperate need for Him. It seems that they may have seen Jesus as a nice addition in their life.

“I believe in Jesus” as if that is enough. Like a piece of jewelry.

(3)“… I will spit you out of my mouth.” - the water is so bad that it will cause Him to vomit…which is the real word here ...not spit…! They are that sickening to Him. Lukewarm liquids cause nausea.

6. Just so we are clear what is Jesus saying to this church at the end of verse

16…what is the judgment He proclaims and what does it mean for the church historically?

a. Archbishop Trent (late 1800’s) wrote, “All has perished now. He who

# removed the candlestick, has rejected Laodicea out of His mouth.”

(2)

1. The fragments of aqueducts and theatres spread over a vast extent of country tell us of the former magnificence of this city; but of this once famous church nothing survives.
2. Not that the believers there lost their salvation if they ever had salvation but that they lost their candlestick…they lost their church.

b. History tells us that:

1. These are people with just enough heat to feel comfortable in

church,

1. Just enough fear NOT to hurl themselves into gross immorality,
2. Just enough guilt to open the Bible every once in a while,
3. Just enough need to pray on especially hard days.
4. They don’t give up on Jesus, but they don’t give Him much of themselves either.
5. They attempt to stay Christian enough to avoid hell, but spend most of their time, money and attention trying to find some heaven here on earth.

The Revelation of John March 5,

2023

* 1. Prayer
  2. Review Revelation 3:20-22

1. Just so we are clear, who is Jesus talking to when He says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” a. In other words, who is the “anyone”?

b. Why can’t it be non-believers who choose Jesus as much of the church says?

* + 1. He has just told us who He is talking to “Those whom I love”. So the anyone is those in the church who can hear…who will hear…who will listen and repent.
    2. Since the Bible is clear about our spiritual condition prior to salvation, if Jesus was standing outside my heart waiting for me to open the door…the dead heart, brain, arms and legs will not ever open the door. If He is waiting for a non-believer …that door will never open.
    3. Only those whose hearts have been renewed…by the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy

Spirit (the broader context) can hear His voice.

(4)It has been obvious that throughout these letters He has been talking to His elect…those who already believers.

* These are the only ones who can hear when He calls and follow

Him,

* The only ones who can seek after God,
* The only ones who will receive these teachings and do as He commands and then.

c. How does vs. 21- “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne.” , add to the argument against nonbelievers? In fact, how

does all of this add to the argument against non-believers being expected to

be able to choose their salvation by opening the door to let Christ in?

1. Believers are the only ones who will receive the rewards He promises to all who endure to the end because we are the only ones who can conquer as we are in Him.
2. Look at what He grants to those who wake up, repent and turn and walk in His ways…the same thing He has been promising to His children throughout the Scriptures.
3. Only a true believer would open the door, because only a true believer would come to realize that Jesus isn’t there…and a true believer wants Jesus where he is.
4. This is His bride: See Song of Solomon 5:2- “A sound! My beloved is knocking. ‘Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect

one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.”

d. Sooo…Context, Context, Context. Is always crucial.

(1)Most Bible scholars who don’t have a dispensational bent or think that this is an evangelistic call…just teach this matter-of-factly as it was intended.

* + - * + This teaching applies directly to believers…not un-believers .
        + To any church that is apathetic like this church.
        + Jesus is not unwilling to restore them to a better state, but they, as believers, do need to demonstrate their willingness to obey God.

(2) There is no need for explanation as God is speaking to His children with the hope that they will desire and anticipate His call and open the door to dine with Him…to experience the joy of His presence… a presence that only God’s children can experience.

2. How would the command of vs. 22. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” be comforting to them? To us?

* 1. Christ is speaking to them…comforting them that their Savior sent them a message…even one like this.
  2. The consistency and structure that comes with this being repeated in each letter…knowing the God doesn’t change when everything around them changes all the time would comfort us to know that nothing changes with God toward His people.
  3. Because it confirms that as His child…we CAN DO IT!!!! I /WE HAVE EARS…God has given them to us…so we need not fear the world and we can do as He commands…and we will do as He commands.
  4. The Church should never forget why it exists…to glorify God and enjoy Him forever with our actions.

3. Seven times now Jesus has ended the letters the same way vs. 22. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the

Spirit says to the churches.” What is

He

communicating to them by repeating this phrase so many times? To us? a. “He who has an ear (TO HEAR)”- Again He is speaking to the believers within the Church, then and today…for His sheep…His elect children… are the only ones who can hear His voice and follow Him- b. “Let him hear…”

(1)The word “Let” designates this as a command.

(2) We must all hear and do what the Spirit says.

* This similar to the proverbs command, “Hear, my son…”
* This is a command to listen, but also a command to consider/meditate…and lastly a command to implement what we have been taught into our hearts…
* This is to be a continuous 24/7 thing for the believer.

c. “What the Spirit says to the churches.”-

1. We hear what the Spirit says to all the Churches…not just one church.
2. Each letter teaches us what we are to listen to, consider/meditate upon and make apart of our lives, as God’s Church, so that we can glorify God.
3. We all like the good stuff...but, like them, we don’t like the bad…possibly even react against it…though this is obviously the truth since Jesus…The Word…is the One talking.
4. The Spirit often tells us things about ourselves that we don’t want to hear through the Word. Paul does quite a “nice” job of pointing out our flaws…read sins…

The Revelation of John March

12, 2023

* + 1. Prayer
    2. Review of Rev. 2:3:22 1. I’m wondering something, again.
    3. Have you gone back and re-read these letters at all since we started down the path?
    4. With another look, what has stood out to you about the significance of these churches, the person of Christ, the sins of believers, or the promises to us that you didn’t realize before?
    5. Do we realize they are all addressed to us today? How do you feel about that?
       - 1. Overwhelmed? Is Jesus really worth all the effort and pain and sacrifice it will take to overcome the pull of the world around us to seek His kingdom and His righteousness?
         2. Hopeful? Reminding us of what Jesus is preparing His people for…patient endurance as we look forward to eternal life in the New earth.

2. What are the 7 characteristics that the church is supposed to be exhibiting that have been highlighted in these 7 churches? What was the main problem with each?

a. Church at Ephesus= Love….whole-hearted toward God and our neighbor!

* + - 1. Forgot their first love of Christ.
      2. They had had it but got caught up in the culture.

b. Church at Smyrna= Suffering- We are called as a church to suffering even unto death, without fear since we will not suffer the sting of the second death.-

No problems here …

Their righteousness is seen through a willingness to suffer for Christ…even unto death.

1. Church at Pergamum= Truth…the Church should always be about the truth…God’s truth…the only true truth!
   1. They had compromised the truth.
   2. They had allowed false teaching to infiltrate the church.
2. Church at Thyatira= Holiness
3. Holiness is our radical commitment to live out the implications of what it means to be the bride of Christ as told to us in His

Word.

* + The elect are called to holiness through the Spirit’s sanctifying work.
  + Peter says that sinful, depraved people cannot enter into the presence of a holy God and live a holy life unless God, through His Spirit, sanctifies them.
  + The Spirit does this work of sanctification or holiness in those whom the Father has elected.

* + In the original Greek, 1 Peter 1: 2 indicates that holiness is an ongoing process rather than a completed act. That means the elect are called to pursue holiness in dependence on the Spirit.
  + So Peter says to believers later in this chapter, “As He who has called you is holy, you also be holy in all manner of conduct”

(1 Peter 1: 15).

* + When contemplating the great work of the Holy Spirit in our redemption, one of the great Puritans, Thomas Goodwin, exclaimed, “What a special purpose! To be conformed to the

image of His Son!”

* + The Holy Spirit ministers to us in all our circumstances— grace, suffering, and glory—as we become more like Christ in every way, a pattern of His life to glorify God, and encourage others to do so.
  + God will make His elect holy, for He has elected us to be conformed to the image of His, and we must do the work necessary toward this goal.
  + Calvin reminds his opponents that election has as its goal holiness of life; “therefore, it ought to arouse us to eagerly set our mind upon it than to serve as a pretext for doing nothing.”

1. They have been made impure by compromise with the false teaching of a Jezebel in their midst…
2. She is calling the people to fall back upon and combine their old pagan practices with the teachings of the church.
3. Not just diluting the message…but actually corrupting the truth.
4. Because of this there will be a major culling of the people in the church.
   1. Church at Sardis= Watchfulness and Authenticity…Be aware…Be alert and live as God says to live not as the community expects. Jesus calls us to be watchful as we await his return.
      1. They had a reputation of being alive…giving into the culture who gave them said reputation.
      2. But the One who truly knows …knows that all their works are dead works…only seeking to add to their reputation in the area.
   2. Church at Philadelphia= Opportunity...seizing the ones God put before us.
      1. Nothing wrong here.
      2. Seeking them to continue with the opportunities that the Lord has given to them as a “gateway church” the door is open to them.
   3. Church at Laodicea- Wholeheartedness to Christ- they have given up their relationship with Christ…not even knowing that he is not in their midst.
      * 1. Nothing good here.
        2. They believe they have it all figured out. They are very prideful, self-reliant, self-assured and over confident.

1. As I was going over these the other day a thought came to my mind and I don’t know if y’all had the same thought or not. But have you thought about the lists that the Word gives us? 
   1. Days of Creation
   2. Genealogies / Census
   3. The 10 Commandments ---twice!
   4. The 9 Beatitudes in Matthews gospel listed in order for us.. there are literally dozens of these but they are not put in a list form like this .
   5. The armor of God- Eph. 6:13-18
   6. Lists of Sins- Rom. 1;Gal. 2; Col.3
   7. The fruit of the Spirit- Gal. 5:22-23
   8. The 7 Letters of Revelation
   9. There are more…
   10. What would you say is the significance of such lists?
   11. Do you often give them the credence they deserve? Why or why not?

1. We often remember the warning to the churches as we should, but what were the blessings/promises given to the believers in each and to us today when we overcome? What do you find interesting, especially with the worst churches?
   * 1. Ephesus- “To the one who conquers/overcomes I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is the paradise of God.”
     2. Smyrna- “The one who conquers/overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.”
     3. Pergamum- “To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white robe, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except to one who receives

it.”

* + 1. Thyatira- “The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my

Father.

And I will give him the morning star.”

* + 1. Sardis- “The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.”
    2. Philadelphia- “The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.”
    3. Laodicea- “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on

His throne.”

* + - 1. Even in Laodicea , arguably perhaps the worst church of the 7, and yet the believers there seemingly receive the most eminent of promises.
      2. This is showing that even the worst Christian may repent and finally conquer and attain the promises of God.

1. A. W. Pink sent out this warning to the Church almost 100 years ago. “When the early Christians were told that the love of the world and the things of the world meant they did not love God (I John 2:15-17), they did not hold discussions on what “the world” meant or how far they could go and still please God. They got out of the world; they separated themselves completely from everything that had the world’s spirit. The result was that they brought down the world’s fury on their heads. The world that existed then still exists today. The great God Almighty either now or later will confirm the truth of it, but the world is no different than it was when they crucified Jesus and martyred the first Christians. It is the same world. Adam is always Adam wherever you find him, and he never changes. The reason we get along with the world so well is that we have compromised our position and allowed it to dictate to us while we in turn are permitted to dictate very little to the world. The result is that very few of us are in any way embarrassed by the world. What the Church needs to be concerned about is becoming accepted in the community.”

1. Why is it just as important to understand the problems as it is to understand the character traits the Church is to exhibit to the world around us? In other words, what will it look like for us to hear and keep what we have heard the Spirit say to us through these letters to the 7 churches? The following are questions posed to us by Nancy Guthrie for us to consider from her book Blessed: Experiencing the Promise of the Book of Revelation.
2. The letter to the church in Ephesus might cause us to ask this question:

Has there been a time in my life when my love for Christ, His gospel and

His people was greater than it is now? And if so, what am I willing to do to rekindle that love?

1. The letter to the church at Smyrna might cause us to ask: What am I willing to suffer for, because that reveals the true object of all my affections? Do I need to readjust my expectations of the Christian life away from expecting Jesus to protect me from suffering, toward expecting Him to preserve me through the suffering that is inevitable for a Christian?
2. The Letter to the church at Pergamum invites us to ask ourselves: What might Jesus point to in my life as an area in which compromise threatens my witness for Him and my relationship to

Him?

1. The letter to the church of Thyatira seeks to get us to ask ourselves: Have I been seduced by voices inside the church that twist scripture to justify or minimize sexual sin or idolatry? What teaching am ii tolerating, in the church or in the media I consume, that is destructive to Christ’s Bride and will not prepare her for patient endurance?
2. The letter to the church of Sardis expects us to ask ourselves: Do people around me assume that I am more devoted to Jesus than I really am? What needs to change in order for the reality of my relationship to Jesus to line up with my reputation? What needs to change so that ii can be fully awake, fully strengthened, for patient endurance?
3. The letter to Philadelphia begs the question: Am I walking through the doors that Jesus has opened for me to share the Gospel? If not, why not?
4. The letter to Laodicea moves us to ask ourselves: Has material prosperity and comfort kept me from coming to terms with my true spiritual condition?
5. As you consider these questions and meditate on your answer and the strategy needed remember be honest before Christ.
   1. He knows us just like them, for He said to these churches He says to us, “I know your works.”
   2. He knows the good the bad and the ugly of our lives. And He knows what He is preparing us for.
   3. So since He knows it anyway we can be honest with Him and with others about our failures.

7. Some have speculated that these 7 churches represent the church through the ages: (too much time on their hands…)

1. Ephesus- a.d. 70-170- The backslidden church
2. Smyrna- a.d. 170-312- the persecuted church
3. Pergamum- 312-606- the licentious church
4. Thyatira- a.d. 606-1520- The lax church-age of the papacy
5. Sardis- a.d. 1520-1750- the dead church that woke up… the

Reformation was flourishing in the midst of the decline of the Roman Catholic church

1. Philadelphia- a.d.1750-1900- the favored church- missionary age
2. Laodicea- a.d. 1900-to the consummation- a lukewarm church- age of apostasy.
3. What would you say might be some of the inherent problems with approaching these 7 letters as prophecy aligned with certain ages of the Church?
4. The Scriptures don’t even give hint to this being the case…so once again adding to Scripture and missing the point...majoring on the minors things..
5. Every age has had some parts of each. Though certain historical periods are marked by some of the specific conditions spoken of in these letters we can never say that a specific letter applies to us in a specific age.
6. Many within the Church that included the Roman Catholic Church and eastern Orthodox are not schismatic or evil…but the sins that we see in these churches are correct for all believers and all churches at any given time in history.
7. In other words, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

The Revelation of John March

19, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Chapter 4 1. In Chapter 4-5, through John’s written account of his vision, you and I get to see into the heart of ultimate reality…God’s heavenly court. (Try to capture how many times the word throne is used.)
   * 1. We get to see into heaven as it has been and is since the resurrection and ascension of Jesus to the Father’s right hand. In these two chapters we’re invited to see the celebration that is taking place right now in heaven.
     2. We get to see what is at the center of heaven around which everything revolves. We see the scroll in heaven on which all of God’s plans for history are written, and we hear the song being sung in heaven, a song we want to know the words to, a song we want to sing now and into eternity.

* 1. Let’s read Chapter 4:1-11. Generally speaking what are some of the themes you see being communicated here in the chapter? a. God’s sovereignty; b. God’s presence;

c. God’s power

* 1. But before we begin…turn back to Chapter 1:19- “Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As we begin this chapter we begin a new section of this letter. The section breaks…break down like this:
     1. “the things you have seen”- The person of Christ standing between the lampstands reminding the Church of his presence and power.
     2. “those that are”- This is talking about the letters that Jesus was having John write to the 7 churches…the things of the present day that will have meaning for the Church until the consummation.
     3. “those that are to take place after this”- this is where we are now…the things that are going to take place after the things of the 7 churches…the last days.
     4. But having made this distinction we cannot get rigid about this outline since we will be jumping back in forth in time before the 7 churches and the time after… specifically the end times…for John’s vision from Christ will include some of what has gotten us here.

* 1. The reason that I have said these things is because chapter 4 opens with the words, “After this I looked, and behold…” which is a direct tie back to

1:19…in fact, it will be said twice in this one chapter…So…this begs the question… *“After what?”*

* + 1. After he has seen the first great vision of Christ walking among the golden lampstands with all of His majestic greatness.
    2. After he has taken His message written down and sent to the ministers for the churches according to His command.
    3. After this, he is given yet another vision in the midst of this one revelation. This is the 2nd vision that will run from now until chapter

16.

* 1. Also in verse 1, John looks and sees “a door standing open in heaven!” When would you say the door to heaven was opened? (Speculation time…won’t get to many of these.)
     1. After the fall and God’s covenant of grace comes into to play.
     2. At Christ’s death when the curtain is rent in two…or before? Covenant of Grace?
     3. At Christ’s resurrection when He pushed back the stone from the inside out?
     4. After He ascends, leaving the door open?
     5. At His incarnation…when He leaves the throne room?
     6. The opening of heaven is a characteristic apocalyptic phenomenon, preparing us for the giving of new (or perhaps forgotten) revelation. How much the church needs to heed it! There is a reality which transcends that which we can see with our physical eyes.
     7. Or is it just the same Lord who opens a door of opportunity for believers in Philadelphia now opens the door for him and us that allows this glimpse into heaven!
        1. The grammar leads us to believe that the door has been opened from the inside…so what is the point?
        2. This is not about the door of salvation so much as it a door to the inner sanctum of God…once again John and us is given an image of the throne room...just like from Chapter 1.
        3. He wants us to experience the throne room letting us know that we have access to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son and coregent.
        4. We can’t open the door to heaven but it must be opened for us…but that is okay because it stands open for all His children to come in.

h. When I grew up an open door at a family or friend’s house meant

“come on in…” Just like in the “old days” church doors were always open for people to come in and pray.

* 1. Where does John end up in this vision?

a. The throne room… “After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must

take place after this.’” John is invited to come up into heaven and to come in

the open door.

(1) Heaven is an interesting word in the Bible. Biblical cosmology and the church defines heaven this way:

* + - The 1st heaven is the heaven that immediately surrounds the earth…the atmosphere and extends about 20 miles above the earth…Psalm 147:8 says that God “…covers the heavens with

clouds.”

* + - The 2nd heaven is the outer galaxy where the planets revolve around the sun… “outer space”. Gen 1:17 speaks of God placing the sun, moon and stars in “…the expanse of the heavens.”
    - The 3rd heaven is the same place that Paul was invited into II Cor. 12:2- “caught up in the third heaven”…which is the place where God dwells…in the throne room.

1. Through John’s vision we get to see into heaven and the heavenly court…
   * We get to see what is in the center of heaven around which everything revolves. Vs. 2- “At once I was in the Spirit, and

behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.’’

* + We get to see a throne…but not just a throne…but an occupied throne.
  + Think about what John is showing us…the one thing that ultimately matters:
    - The one thing that the Christians then needed to see and experience
    - The one thing Christians in every era need to see and believe
    - Our God is on the throne of the universe overseeing and directing all of His glorious will.

1. As Emperor Domitian sat on the throne in Rome requiring his subjects to address him as god and lord… John’s vision gave and gives hope to all who are oppressed that there is One who sits over all other rulers on this world.
   * This Ones reign will bring terror to those predestined to who reject Him and His word.
   * Bu this One on the throne gives “grace upon grace” to all who are His and are willing to come under His authority.
   * His is not a throne to hide from but a throne to be drawn near to.

7. In this verse we see the words “must take place” just like in verses 1 of

Chapter

1. What did we say that the word “must” meant when written like this?

a. Divine directive-

All things written about

All things seen…

All things spoken of…

* + - * 1. HAVE taken place and WILL take place just as has been shown by God’s divine directive.
        2. God’s will is going to be accomplished on earth, even as it is in heaven! We have His continuous promise reiterated here.

* + - 1. What seems to be the most repeated word in this chapter?

Throne….at least 14 times…40 times in all of Revelation.

Why? a. The main thing in this whole book?

* + 1. This is amazing bit what is more amazing is that this throne is occupied.
    2. God’s throne is the seat of all His power and it reveals that He is real, ruling and overall.
    3. The throne of the 24 elders symbolizes a central governmental structure…which represents stability and security and consistency…God’s theocracy.

* + - 1. How would an occupied throne bring the people comfort? And to us today?
    1. God is in session. The throne is not empty.
    2. The real throne is in God’s realm not in Rome. Domitian was emperor

at

this time and persecution of Christians was at its height…so the Roman throne was seen as a source of fear and anxiety…

* + 1. God is the rightful ruler and He reigns and judges by His standard.
    2. At the center of things sits God’s throne. First thing he sees when he comes up into the throne room. See Is. 6:1-“In the year that King

Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and

the train of His robe filled the temple.”

* + 1. Being the center piece of the vision it tells us the same things it communicates to these…God is well and doing all that He says.
    2. The bottom line of atheism is that there is no throne…no seat of authority or power that the universe is to answer to.
    3. The bottom line for humanism is that there is a throne but man sits on it.

10. What is the point of describing the One on the throne using created things? Vs.

3-

“And He who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.”

a. The Church through the ages has declared that the precious stones describes God siting on His throne radiating from His being:

* + 1. The splendor of His holiness,
    2. The beauty of His character,
    3. The magnificence of His Mercy,
    4. The brilliance of His plans and purposes, (5) The Majesty of His sovereign reign.

b. The rainbow...

* + - 1. A reminder of the covenant promise to Noah Gen. 9:14-17- “When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth. God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”
      2. God’s covenantal promise …His covenantal faithfulness…is always before Him for His memory and His application.
      3. A full circle around the throne of God which represents God’s faithfulness in it unending completeness.
      4. It “encircles the throne”…not your typical half circle of the rainbows we see when it rains…It is a complete circle which also indicates the all-encompassing mercies of the Lord.
      5. Green or emerald is a universal color indicating life.

c. These images are wonder full and amazing but what makes this throne magnificent is the ONE who occupies the seat of sovereignty.

* + - 1. As I said before God is sitting in the heart of the universe…in the place of ultimate reality on His throne ruling all things as He has decreed it before the foundations of the earth.
      2. Just like the rumbling from Mt. Sinai the thunder and lightning reminds us of His wonderful covenant love for His own showing us in living brilliant color that He will be and is faithful to us.
      3. But also, all of this power display the fact that He has the right to judge His enemies as He has decreed as well.
      4. Being consistent with Jewish tradition and biblical teaching, John does not attempt to tell us what God looks like, for fear of even the slightest misrepresentation.
      5. And it is the fact that John is “in the Spirit” and that this is a vision… that he can see and comprehend what he is seeing.

The Revelation of John March

26, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Review Revelation 4:1-11

1. What is the most comforting image in this chapter for these people?

1. God occupying the throne with Jesus there with Him.
2. This means that He is in charge even when everything around them seemed chaotic and lost…but it is not…For our God reigns!

2. How should this same image influence our day to day?

a. Our God is not One of “might’s” or “maybe’s” but of “must’s”…not possibilities but certainty.

(1) Divine directive-

* All things written about
* All things seen… • All things spoken of…

1. HAVE taken place and WILL take place just as has been shown by God’s divine directive.
2. God’s will is going to be accomplished on earth, even as it is in heaven! We have His continuous promise reiterated here.
3. Revelation 1:1- “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants[a] the things that must soon take place.”
4. Revelation 4:1- “After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

b. The knowledge of what is in front of us means that we don’t have to fear the unknown. For our God makes known to us all that we need. Deut. 29:29- “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

1. Continuing on in Rev. 4:1-11

1. John moves from his focus on the centerpiece of heaven to the circles surrounding the throne of God. We have already seen the rainbow. What are some practical things that these circles represent? a. God is at the center of everything.

Everything revolves around Him…He misses nothing. An interesting image when you consider it.

The next circle is the enthroned 24 elders, vs. 4-“Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on

the thrones were twentyfour elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.” Who are these 24 elders?

* + - * 1. Interesting that before John saw the elders He first saw there were 24 thrones surrounding the THRONE of God.
        2. 12 patriarchs and the 12 apostles…representing all of redeemed humanity from both before Christ and after Christ.
        3. What unites them is their garments and crowns…

They are all dressed in the righteousness of Christ given to them when they responded in repentance and faith ...

Garments and a crown that have been promised to all who are faithful unto death- Rev. 2:10 and 3:5- “Do not fear what you are

about to suffer. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life… The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.”

* + - * 1. To be joined to Christ is to be given the ability and calling to reign with Him as a kingdom of priest and then in the New earth as well. So these elders have crowns and are seated on thrones themselves…lesser thrones to be sure.

We are joint heirs with Christ Rom. 8:17-“and if

children, then heirs-heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” And we will reign with Him II Tim. 2:12- “if we endure, we will also reign with Him…”

* + - * 1. The highest positions of honor and authority in the universe are positions of service. Remember from Wednesday night:
* “Diakonos”- speaks of the servant that serves at the side of the Master. Like His Valet, if this were Downton Abbey or the Lady’s maid...these servants were trusted and close.
* This was also in most cases is the most honored position of the servants in the master’s household.

2. Never far from John’s attention…we are immediately brought back to the throne in verse 5-6a-“From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of

fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.” What are these images supposed to communicate to them and to us?

* + 1. Sinai perhaps. Consistency with God’s word again…except this time there is no need to fear but at the same time no opportunity to be comfortable in His presence as well.
    2. This picture of Heaven reveals that heaven is not exactly like many of us may have pictured it and it is not like the picture of the many who have claimed to have died, visited heaven, and come back to describe what they say they saw. But it is similar to other biblical accounts of people like Daniel- (Dan. 7:9-12- “As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.”) , Ezekiel-( Ezek.1:25-28) and Isaiah- (Is. 6:1-5)
    3. After all we have been invited into the throne room…where before we were not to touch the mountain. Fire ,lightning, and thunder play a huge part in the heavenly picture as it has throughout the Scriptures.
    4. Also we see the 7 spirits of God again displayed at the throne as 7 torches of fire….the Holy Spirit …3rd person of the Godhead…they are all

here...the 3 persons of the Godhead are always with one another…they are never at odds.

* + 1. The sea of glass may be nothing more than further enhancement of this image that brings peace…
       1. A crystal sea would give off the impression of peace for one looking at it…so clear and calm… would invoke the thought of calmness in the midst of the struggles of these churches…
       2. But also a sign of God’s peace even in the midst or because of His great power and judgment.
       3. Also for the Jew…the laver’s in the tabernacle and (crystal sea—“the sea of cast metal” II Chronicles 4:2ff…this great basin stood between the temple and the altar for the cleansing of the priests) of Solomon’s

Temple…an image of great comfort for them…because it would remind them of God’s great provision to cleanse His people before Him.

* + - 1. Symbolizes once again God’s holiness and the bowl keeps it contained for us.
      2. And this sea of glass/crystal perfectly mirrors His glory back to Him.

d. The fact that John keeps coming back to the throne tells us that God is to be the center of our universe.

* + - 1. You and I think to often that the earth is the center of the universe…the Church too not that long ago.
      2. But really, what we think is that our own private worlds are the center of the universe…operating as if everything revolves around us and our needs and wants…or it should.
      3. But that is not the focus of the Bible…the Bible focuses on God…God is the center of the universe.

3. But then he returns to the circles, vs. 6b-8, “And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"What are some things they would have taken away from this as well as us?

1. It’s a bit noisy around the throne.
2. We encounter the “4 living creatures” showing us that our God hangs out with some rather interesting critters as well as us! They are mentioned 14 times in Revelation.
3. It is also interesting where they are …the Greek seems to indicate that these 4 are standing between the throne of God and the 24 elders.
4. The 4 living creatures are the guardians of the throne.
   * + - 1. Much like in Ezekiel 1 and 10 they are perhaps cherubim and/or the seraphim of Isaiah 6.

* + - * 1. And being the guardians and bearers for the King they would also be His primary heralds announcing His greatness to all as they do

here,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" Doing their job and the job of all creation glorifying the Father continually.

* + - * 1. This first hymn of heaven that we are introduced to reminds us that God is altogether “other” in His essential being.

3 times communicates that He is altogether pure even as He is absolutely sovereign. It is the only attribute of God that is tripled for us in the Bible for effect. He is completely holy…holy, holy, holy is He…nothing is Holy as he is holy…nothing.

He is holy and altogether absolutely sovereign Lord

God…Yahweh Elohim in the OT language… “Kyrie Theos” in the Greek speaking of His absolute sovereignty and control as the One Living and true God...the Only!

So important is this word ‘holy’ that we find an interesting fact in the Bible: God’s ‘name’ is qualified by the adjective holy more often than all the other qualifiers put together.

He is holy and He is timeless…who was and who is and who is to come...holy! He has no boundaries or limitations…nor any lack or need.

The first and the last songs of the Bible exalt God’s holiness. Moses, thinking of what God had done in the

crossing of the Red Sea and the deliverance of Israel, sang: “Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you —majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?’” (Exod.

15:11).

And we shall find in Revelation 15 that those who had been victorious over the beast sing a similar song:

# “Who will not fear

you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy.” (Rev. 15:4).

1. He is altogether complete within His triune existence…He is absolute Perfection.
2. The focus of heavenly worship is the holiness of God e. Some have speculated that these 4 represent the faithful ministers/pastors of God’s Word standing in the gap and they are represented as fewer in number because faithful ministers are few in number compared to others. And God’s faithful ministers display these characteristics:
3. Courage like the lion.
4. Hard work, diligence and submission to the Master like the ox.
5. The humble face and temperament of the man of God’s choosing- see

I Tim. 3.

1. The eyes of the eagle in flight…not missing much in the way of glorifying God and edifying the flock of God.
2. All of them are full of eyes to vigilantly watch over the world as God’s agents.

f. Others have said with perhaps some reason, that the four faces are important because they represent all of animate creation, in its utmost excellence.

1. The lion is the mightiest of wild animals,
2. the ox strongest of domesticated animals, (3) the eagle king of all birds, and (4) man is highest of all creation.
   1. “In Shemoth Rabba, sec. 23, fol. 122, 4, Rabbi Abin says: ‘There are four which have principality in this world: among intellectual creatures, man; among birds, the eagle; among cattle, the ox; and among wild beasts, the lion: each of these has a kingdom and a certain magnificence, and they are placed under the throne of glory, Ezekiel 1:10, to show that no creature is to exalt itself in this world, and that the kingdom of God is over all.’
   2. These creatures may be considered the representatives of the whole creation.”

The Revelation of John April

2, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Review

Rev. 4:1-11- What do all the images of the throne, the elders, the rainbow, the jewels, the 24 elders and the pretty cool critters that we see in verses 1-8 communicate to us as they did to them?

Let’s take a moment and consider something, how is God’s name used in the world around us all too often?

Always/usually it is taken in vain some how and in some way

profanity and blasphemy and hypocrisy and insincerity…

3. Now let’s consider how this picture of heaven here in these verses reveals to us how we should use and see God’s name?

As hallowed, honored, praised exalted and glorified by us. Always used to praise His name.

John tells us, “They never ceased to say, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God

Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

Stop another moment and think

* + - 1. “What is it we never cease to say”? How would others answer that question about us?
      2. If people close to you were to finish this sentence about you, “Day and night, he or she never stops saying or talking about….” how would that sentence end?

She is too busy.

He says, Why doesn’t anyone help me like they do others?

They say, if only I had more money…more time…another child.

4. With these images in mind what do verses 9-11- communicate to us? “And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who is seated on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.’"

a. When the twenty four elders join in the worship of God, they fall down before Him, expressing awe and submissiveness.

* + - 1. All God’s people ought to enter into worship before God with the same attitude.
      2. For God is incomprehensible. His ways are not our ways; His thoughts, not our thoughts (Isa. 55:8).
      3. The crowns they cast are the ones given to all believers…crowns of victory… for overcoming!
      4. And by all of them casting their crowns together we see that there are no divided opinions, no sects, or separate groups...oneness is finally achieved in perfect harmony with the Godhead’s decree.
      5. This oneness is finally achieved before the throne.
    1. Augustine was once asked the question, “What was God doing before He created the world?” And his answer was, “Making hell for people who ask questions like that,". Blunt, but effective! There is a mystery about the nature of God that should make us fear Him in a spirit of reverence and humility. (Jonathan Edwards reminded a questioner of this answer in his time as well.)
    2. “Worthy are you, our Lord and God…” Why is He worthy according to this text? Is that all? Would that be enough?
       1. The Bible word “glory” in 4:11 expresses weight and significance.
       2. There is a consideration to be given to God that exceeds that which we give of anyone or anything else.
       3. No one is of greater significance than God.
       4. God’s glory is His nature and power shown forth.
       5. When God is said to receive glory, it indicates God being worshiped as God; He is being given the honor that is due to Him.

d. Worship is to be taken up with the assurance that something of the very being of God has been revealed to us.

5. As we bring this chapter to a close; what do these songs and these passages tell us about our worship?

* + 1. Unity is crucial…like-mindedness…oneness…as when the elders through all their crowns before the thrown in submission and worship. As fellow Christians, let us get rid of everything that would divide us from each other, or separate us from our Lord. They were unanimous in worshiping God.
    2. It is not about us. It is not to provide us with an experience. The word

“I” is not used much. We are to bring our worship to the LORD of Glory.

* + 1. It is the outlet of praise to our God and King, as he has prescribed…and He commands and desires our worship!
    2. It is required of all His creation.
    3. Worship is all about our response to God. It is giving Him the praise and adoration that is due to His name. The more we know of God, the more childlike our faith will become.
    4. They teach us to worship! The worship of heaven is the worship of Yahweh, Israel’s Covenant LORD. He will be identified as Jesus in the chapter 5, as He has been already (1:8).
    5. This is the staggering claim of New Testament revelation:
       - 1. "Jesus Christ is LORD (Yahweh, or Jehovah)" (Phil 2:11).
         2. He is given glory (4:9), and worshiped (4:10) much to the chagrin of those who would say otherwise.
    6. Casting their crowns before the throne is a sign of submission from these leaders who realize their reign is derivative and their rewards are tokens to be returned to the One who gave them in the first place for His own glory and honor.
    7. Everything that comes after this flows from this vision of the throne room.
    8. Without this image of an occupied throne many come to this book in fear rather than with the assurance of hope in their faith. Martin Luther said,

“Bad theology is the worst taskmaster of all.”

* + 1. "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." The words remind us of Nebuchadnezzar’s words in

Daniel 4:35-37.

* + 1. God’s creative and upholding sovereignty is the basis for worship.
    2. The will of God is ultimate. Not man’s will, not the church’s will; but the will of God alone. He creates and upholds to fulfill His own purpose. Appreciating this reduces us to size.
    3. "To God alone be the glory… “Soli Deo Gloria” was one of the watchwords of the Reformation, because they had understood that God is sovereign and holy. Heaven will eternally reflect this perspective and earthly worship seeks to conform to it.
    4. Worship is not ours to do with as we please. Throughout scripture God has shown us the pattern, the focus, the purpose of worship and He expects that we will keep it as He has determined.
    5. Worship is to be as natural as breathing to us as it seems to be to the rest of creation…and yet what is the one thing that often divides the church but our personal preferences in worship! We are more interested in doing as we please…than the theology of worship…doing it as God prescribes.
    6. It should also lead us to have open hearts and open doors to all God’s people. It should grieve us, as Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “The

# most segregated and provincial hour of the week is on Sunday when we gather to worship the Head of the whole Church.”

r. Going forward in this book worship will be presented as a way of life, not just a one day a week thing, just as it has been portrayed throughout the scriptures.

6. Why is God’s sovereignty so important to the believer…and why is it so important to our ability and desire to worship?

1. Without a correct vision of God our worship will be shallow at best…and non-existent at worse.
2. As times get worse it is important that we know beyond the shadow of a doubt who is on the throne…who is overseeing all that occurs…for His own glory and our good.

The Revelation of John April

9, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Rev. 5:1-14
   1. In this chapter, God the Father and God the Son appear in all their majesty. God the Spirit is in there as well reminding us of the Trinitarian nature of worship. Their true identities are revealed. And the response of all living creatures is to fall down and worship in reverence, awe and submission. Worship of the Lamb/Lion is the defining reality of God’s people from here on. Worship is presented as a way of life…not just something that occurs one day a week.

* 1. What does verse 1 tell us about the place of the Word of God in God’s eyes? “Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.”

b. “A scroll”

* + - 1. The scroll seems to represent the decrees of God concerning the unfolding plans for judgment and salvation.
      2. Plans that were established before the foundations of the earth. Plans that were set in motion and overseen throughout time.
      3. It has been said that these are all sacred history, especially from the cross to the new creation.

From the beginning we have seen the authority that has been given to the Word of God…the power in the Word of God…and not unlike in John’s Gospel we will see the Person who is the Word of God.

God’s providence is fixed toward His Church…it is written down on both sides of the paper and made a matter of record as to how the Godhead has worked, is working and will work.

It is the picture of being comprehensive and extensive…and perhaps even precise.

The future of this world is determined by God’s decrees not by fate or chance.

History is simply the unfolding predetermined plan of

God.

When the seal of in the hands of God is unsealed, the unfolding of the end of history, the final triumph and consummation of God’s kingdom begins.

From chapter 6 on we will see one seal after another is opened to more and more revelation of the coming judgment.

e. This book is shut up and sealed…it’s content is known to none except Himself, till He allows it to be opened. See Daniel 12:4-“But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

* 1. It is sealed with 7 seals …perfectly locked up, impenetrable by our eyes,

secret until the time He has chosen to reveal its contents to us…and even then something will remain His secret will. Deut. 29:29-

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of

this law.”

* 1. John shows us the importance, when he said this is being “held in the

right hand of the One seated on the throne”…

* + 1. It is much to the detriment of the Church that we like the people of Old do not hold God’s Word in such high esteem.
    2. This scene clearly reveals what God is doing and with that, that we can trust that His plans for this world and for our lives are just as precise and complete.
    3. We don’t have to live with a sense of regret about past failures and mistakes, wondering what great plan pf God we may have missed out on.
    4. We don’t have to fear that the evils of some fatal disease or natural disaster or worldwide terrorism or war are going to somehow derail His plans…since each are part of His overall plan.
    5. We can rest assured that a sovereign God is seated on the throne, holding in His right hand the sealed scroll that is and will be opened in His way and in His time by the Only One able to open them.
       - Since we are in Christ, we can be confident that His plans for us are good even when they hurt.
       - Since we are in Christ, we know He is in absolute control and has loving plans for our future firmly in His grasp.

2.

1. What is this mighty angel...(in contrast...to the earthly angels referred to in previous chapters- His earthly ministers) doing here in vs.2-“And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’”, and why is this significant?
   1. For this “mighty angel” seems to be challenging any and all to step up if they think they are up to the task.
   2. That there is no one who is worthy and can open the scroll and break the seals …no one that is on earth…or in heaven.
      1. What defines worthy to open the scroll?
      2. Why can’t God just do it Himself from the throne?
         * The Godhead is One…but each has their own function just like in creation.
         * The opening of the Scroll and breaking the seals is given to only One of the Godhead to do…Jesus!
         * For there needs to be a mediator/protector.
         * The scroll pours out God’s wrath needs One who can save those who are not to be judged or no one would escape God’s wrath.
      3. So “Who IS worthy?”

1. What was John’s response to no one stepping up to open the scroll and break the seals in verse 3-4? “And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because

no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.” Why?

a. For a time…no one was found

Making it clear once again that none of God’s creation, man included, has the authority or ability except that which is granted to him by God to know what is inside His plan and His secret will.

This is in contrast to how we see ourselves. You got to love it…

The fact that no one does says it all.

And John/we are left with a “moment” of silence as to the answer to the question… “Who is worthy?”

b. He wept loudly…as if all was lost.

* + - * 1. Evidently, for the plans that are written in the scroll to be fulfilled, the seals had to be broken and the scroll opened. Vs. 2
        2. He knew this scroll was significant and that the Church needs what is in it…and yet it seemed unattainable at the moment.
        3. If no one is found worthy to open the scroll, then there would be no end to the suffering of this world.
        4. There would be no confidence in good triumphing over evil.
        5. There would be no assurance of justice.
        6. And there would be no ultimate victory for God’s people.
      1. As an exiled pastor …he loved and missed his flock…and he wished beyond all wishes to be able to communicate what was in the scroll for he knew it would be beneficial to his flock and it didn’t look as if he was going to get that opportunity.
      2. Also, he had seen so much from the One on the throne and he desired to see and hear more and once again it seemed as that would not happen. “Who is worthy?”

1. So according to vs. 5 who is it that is worthy to open the scroll? “And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals.”
   * 1. Finally someone is found who is worthy! Jesus our Redeemer.
     2. All of the images in the OT from Genesis to Malachi would have come pouring into his head with this description of His Lord and Savior.
     3. Who is it that told John, the good news? (1) One of the elders who represent the elect. Why did an elder tell him?

(2) Why not the one of the 4 living creatures or the mighty angel?

* + - A contemporary of his.
    - Reveals the authority of elders to know even in heaven and to teach and inform just like on earth.
    - Was it himself, since he is one of the 24 elders, reminding him of the obvious answer?

1. And why is the fact that someone is found… significant? Through Jesus,

God did in fact, reveal somethings…

* 1. Not all the details…
  2. But the Church knows who their Redeemer is and the Church knows who is worthy to open the scroll and break the seals…one at a time.

1. Why didn’t John know?
   1. Given that “he” is one of the 24 elders in his vision…(visions are like dreams can’t be subject to the same objectivity as real world thing.
   2. Another elder had the information.
   3. Overwhelmed with everything going on around him…still left with a feeling of despair because it was this elder’s job to announce this answer to the challenge put forth by Gabriel.
2. What are some interesting descriptors of the Christ, that we see here in this announcement?

(1)Gen. 49:9 -11- “Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to Him; and to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples. Binding His foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and His teeth whiter than milk.”

* 1. He was a Lion before He was the Lamb, and then He is the Lion. As

Lion of Judah, Jesus is the true king who had been prophesied over all.

* 1. In Isaiah 11:1- “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.” But here He is referred to as the Root of Jesse.
  2. He who came after King David was also before King David. See Isaiah 11:10-“ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.” (5) It is He alone who is worthy to open the scroll and it 7 seals!

1. Just for grins and for 100 points: When did this announcement take place?

6. John looks up expecting to see a Lion and instead sees a Lamb. Describe the Lamb John sees and the actions the Lamb takes in verses 6-7. “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And He went and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne.”

* + - 1. The Lion of Judah had become the Lamb of sacrifice.
      2. Put yourself in John’s place and try to put your mind around that. The biblical imagery squares with doctrine but seeing it! Talk about blowing your mind.
      3. Not an ordinary sacrificial Lamb…
         1. This one was up and alive but looked as though it had been slain. John was looking at His crucified and resurrected Lord.
         2. He could see the scars on His brow, His wrists and in his side and yet He was whole and alive….and has conquered at great cost!
         3. He was active in the decision concerning His death and then He was active also in His resurrection. He is a strong, determined, and resolute in being our substitutionary atonement. He has been faithful in His calling to do His father’s will as the One Lamb of God.
         4. He really was a perfect sacrifice…nothing in this life is perfect…so He had to come and lay down His life for His children.
         5. The 7 horns speak of absolute authority and power...so a powerful Lamb.
         6. This lamb had 7 eyes, which are the 7 spirits of God…all-knowing, all wise, all seeing by the work of His Spirit out and in all His people in every nation, tongue and tribe in all the earth. He is “perfect in power”…”perfect in vision”…and “perfect in wisdom and perfect in

Spirit!”

* + - * 1. He is standing closest to God the Father, for He has risen and is seated at His right hand because He was slain and by His blood paid the ransom for the Elect, making Him the only One worthy to open the scroll…so

He goes to His Father and takes the scroll from Him as was His assigned task.

The Revelation of John April

16, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Review
   1. What are some significant things that we learned in verses 1-5? “Then I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, ‘Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.’”

* 1. What do these first 5 verses say to us about how we are to live in this world today?

1. Revelation 5:6-14

(1) John looks up expecting to see a Lion and instead sees a Lamb. Describe the Lamb John sees and the actions the Lamb takes in verses 6-7. “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And He went and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne.” a. The Lion of Judah had become the Lamb of sacrifice.

* + 1. Put yourself in John’s place and try to put your mind around that. The biblical imagery squares with doctrine but seeing it! Talk about blowing your mind.
    2. Not an ordinary sacrificial Lamb…
       1. This one was up and alive but looked as though it had been slain. John was looking at His crucified and resurrected Lord.
       2. He could see the scars on His brow, His wrists and in his side and yet He was whole and alive….and has conquered at great cost!
       3. He was active in the decision concerning His death and then He was active also in His resurrection. He is a strong, determined, and resolute in being our substitutionary atonement. He has been faithful in His calling to do His father’s will as the One Lamb of God.
       4. He really was a perfect sacrifice…nothing in this life is perfect…so He had to come and lay down His life for His children.
       5. The 7 horns speak of absolute authority and power...so a powerful Lamb.
       6. This lamb had 7 eyes, which are the 7 spirits of God…allknowing, all wise, all seeing by the work of His

Spirit out and in all His people in every nation, tongue and tribe in all the earth.

* + He is “perfect in power”… “perfect in vision”…and “perfect in wisdom and perfect in Spirit!”
  + See Isaiah 11:1-3- “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and (Spirit of) understanding, the Spirit of counsel and (the Spirit of) might, the Spirit of knowledge and the (Spirit of the) fear of the Lord. And His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.”

(7) He is standing closest to God the Father, for He has risen and is seated at His right hand because He was slain and by His blood paid the ransom for the Elect, making Him the only One worthy to open the scroll…so He goes to His Father and takes the scroll from Him as was His assigned task.

2.What happens when Jesus takes the scroll in verses 8-14? “And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’ And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ and the elders fell down and worshiped.”

1. Worship breaks out in heaven because the One who is worthy has taken the scroll. Now the end of time is at hand.
2. What might have been comforting to the people then by these words? Vs. 8- “And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”
3. What 3 reasons does this song give for Jesus to be praised? vs. 8-9- “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’” (1) “You were slain…”
   * Jesus’ sacrificial death is the purest expression of His steadfast love for His elect.
   * His worth is expressly seen, felt and known in His being slain for sinners.
   * For that reason all people and creation will praise Him for the glory of His mercy.
   * Christ came to do His work, which was to be slain.

(2) “…by your blood you ransomed or purchased a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation…”- Jesus did not merely make redemption possible…He actually secured redemption for His own from every people group in the world.

# (3) “…you have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God..”

Through Jesus our lives have purpose and meaning…an identity, not just in eternity but now right where we are.

1. By calling us priests here (vs. 10), what is He communicating to us that our primary action/work is to be in this life? To worship together…all His people in solidarity and unity which we be a lifelong pursuit because it won’t finally happen until Christ returns…
2. Then what is it that makes Jesus worthy? (in your own words.)
   1. He is fully God and fully man.
   2. He is the only One who can open the scroll and bring about the end of the history of redemption.
   3. He is worthy because of the magnitude of His love demonstrated in sacrifice.
   4. He is worthy because He takes the unworthy…you and me…and makes us worthy in Himself…to be a part of the new heavens and new earth…to be in the presence of the Father…worthy to sit on thrones to rule and reign with Him in the new earth.
3. Extra points: What does this phrase, “…by your blood you ransomed or purchased a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation…” communicate?
   1. Fulfillment of an early prophesy. Here we see a couple of ways that Gen. 12:1-3 is fulfilled…
      * people from every tribe language and nation will be blessed because of our faith…
      * That He purchased people from …not all people… every tribe, language people and nation …securing salvation for His elect from every nation.
   2. Redemption has been accomplished and has been applied to all the elect everywhere…no one will be Left Behind…all who are God’s will be brought in before Christ returns.
   3. Rev. 5:9-10- speaks of ethnic solidary between all Christians- Jews and Gentiles, black and white…all Christians all of God’s elect children are one in Christ… we must show no partiality.
      * We must begin where Jesus began…realizing that His kingdom has no exclusivity when it comes to earthly constructs…
      * It’s exclusivity is that only believers are in…believers from every tribe, language, people and nations.
        + 1. The terms: “tribe”, “language”, “people”, “nation” in this context equals all cultures and people groups…these 4 words capture the whole range of ethnic diversity in the world that will be in His church.

* + - * 1. This will be reiterated throughout this book but a clear one concerning the diversity that is talked about with these terms is found in Rev. 21:3-“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people,(plural) and God Himself will be with them as their

God.’”

* + - * You will see in your notes on this verses that “some manuscripts have “peoples”…actually the more trusted manuscripts have “peoples”.
      * Thus when the Godhead says this He is saying that there will be ethnic diversity in the new heavens and the new earth, this

term “peoples” speaks of those from every nation, people, tribe and language.

* + - * God willed this ethnic diversity from the beginning and it doesn’t appear to change in the new earth.

(6) This book is not a book of possibilities, it is a declaration to them and to us that Jesus has come and has triumphed over sin and death as answer to the covenant promise of God.

* + - * 1. What is “new” about these songs?

“new” means fresh, special, fulfilled.

Obviously not doctrine or the Word itself.

Maybe a “new” occasion? Never sung before.

* + - * 1. For extra credit: In what ways are the songs of Revelation different from the songs of the Psalms? In what way are they similar?

These songs speak of redemption accomplished and applied…the Psalms are mostly looking forward to it still in a future time.

Both are written to encourage us…in our daily lives and in our eternity.

* + - * 1. Couple of extras:

a. Myriads and myriads of angels- (1) 10,000 times

10,000 from Dan.7:10

* + - * 1. Heavenly host from Luke 2
        2. Jewish tradition teaches that the number is 960,000,000
        3. And they sing in a “loud voice”= a loud chorus…one voice in harmony. This also speaks of intensity...so it was loud in the fullest sense of the word…but never out of tune!

“To receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” These 7 are observed in Him by all creation…they are ascribed to Him because He is these.

The praise that had begun in the inner circles pans out to include all creation on that Day.

* + - * 1. What do these two chapters communicate to them and to us about God’s presence in the midst of this fallen world?

* + - * 1. What do these 2 chapters testify to as to the central task of the Christian is? WORSHIP!

God commands it.

God defines and describes what is acceptable.

God made it the delight of our hearts.

God expects it of us.

God enables us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

* + - * 1. How do these two chapters guide us in appropriate worship this side of heaven?

We need to remember that God the Father seeks worshipers…John 4:23. It should humble us and encourage us that the Creator God longs for and delights in the worship of His people.

Obviously, not just any type of worship will do…true worship that is in spirit and truth is the type we see before us…unhindered…a part of life…grounded in

His truth and lead by what he has prescribed there in.

In other words, there need to be some correspondence in the way we worship now and the way the way the Godhead is worshiped in heaven.

Attending worship is one thing.

But being fully engaged in worship as all of these seem to indicate…a whole-heart experience…is what it ultimately means when it says “in spirit and in truth.”

* + - * 1. John has given us entry into heaven where we have seen Jesus, the Father and the Spirit at the heart of ultimate reality, surrounded by a great celebration. And questions plagues me as I work through this:

Does this scene awaken anything in me more than a desire to give y’all a good experience in Sunday School?

Does it really instill in me a yearning to sing these songs?

OR…does it just make for one more thing to get finished so I can get to the next task?

If the last one is really where I/we are at, then that begs the next question: What is it in my life that is getting the passion that belongs to Jesus?

There is a promised blessing for all who hear and keep what is written in the book. So what will it mean for us to hear and Keep Revelation 4&5?

We must want and desire to be a part of this great celebration.

This picture here ought to capture us and redefine for us beauty, what is compelling, what is worth celebrating, what is worth longing for and what is really heartbreaking. In other words, it ought to clarify the important over the urgent.

f. Nancy Guthrie bring us another way we hear and keep this word that I would have never considered:

We are to direct our desire for glory toward the source of the only glory that lasts.

She says, the human heart has a longing for glory.

So we attached ourselves vicariously to sports figures or celebrities.

Yet these are merely glimpses or tastes of the glory for which we were made, the glory we will one day share and live out forever.

1. God through John, in these 2 chapters, wants us to lift our eyes UP from the attraction/distractions of the world so that we will want live lives that revolve around the One who is on the throne in ultimate reality.
   * 1. Jesus is worthy of our worship.
     2. Jesus is worthy of our trust.
     3. Jesus is worthy of our love and desire.
     4. Jesus is worthy…period! As all those in heaven surrounding the throne remind us.

1. What things in the current worship practices of the church-at-large today might better to be de-emphasized?
   1. What “we” like and dislike for starters.
   2. Worshiping worship.

1. Why is a correct image of God important for us to get through life in general? J.B. Phillips once said, “The most important thing about any of us is the image of God we carry in our hearts, for the quality of our lives is determined by the way we think of Him.”

The Revelation of John

April 23, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Review
   1. How do chapters 4 & 5 guide us in appropriate worship this side of heaven?
      * + 1. We need to remember that God the Father seeks worshipers…John 4:23. It should humble us and encourage us that the Creator God longs for and delights in the worship of His people.
          2. Obviously, not just any type of worship will do…true worship that is in spirit and truth is the type we see before us…unhindered…a part of life…grounded in His truth and lead by what he has prescribed there in.
          3. In other words, there need to be some correspondence in the way we worship now and the way the way the Godhead is worshiped in heaven.
        1. Attending worship is one thing.
        2. But being fully engaged in worship as all of these seem to indicate…a whole-heart experience…is what it ultimately means when it says “in spirit and in truth.”

* 1. How ought these two chapters shape the way live our lives today?

* 1. Why is a correct image of God important for us to get through life in general? J.B. Phillips once said, “The most important thing about any of us is the image of God we carry in our hearts, for the quality of our lives is determined by the way we think of Him.”

1. Revelation 6
   1. Revelation cuts to the heart of our deepest desires and questions about life:
      1. Why are we here?
      2. Who am I? Why do I matter?
      3. Where is our mixed-up, out of control world heading?
      4. So Revelation reassures us that we are NOT crazy – something IS missing in our lives. Things are NOT the way they should be. It is OK to feel dissatisfied with this world, as C.S. Lewis said, “If we find ourselves with a

desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probably explanation is that we were made for another world.”

* 1. A world without pain.
  2. A world of perfect harmony with our Creator and one another.
  3. A world that could come at any moment, when Christ appears.

1. At the beginning of chapter 6 we see clearly history between the 2 comings of Christ being played out. *“To be forewarned is to be forearmed.”(*old proverb that dates back to at least the 15th Cent, if not before) Our Father wants us to be aware that life on earth between the 1st and 2nd comings of Christ will be difficult at times but we will overcome because we have been marked and set apart in Christ who overcame on our behalf. Just so we know… worship has not ended… it is that worship goes on along with everything else…in this case the Lamb is being presented to John as the interpreter of history going forward.
2. So we must be clear, here this sets the stage for everything that comes next: WE CAN EXPECT WAR, CIVIL UNREST, ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND INEQUITY, DISEASE, AND DEATH! Are we clear on this?!?

1. So the scene is set as we come to the end times. Vs. 1-2- “Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.” a. The Lamb opens one of the 7 seals.
   1. The 4 Living creatures command the horses to “Come”…that is “come forth”…a commissioning if you will to carry out the commands of the Godhead.
   2. And just as they do that, John sees a white horse.
      1. Seeing and hearing and understanding are all crucial to John and for us today.
      2. Seeing, hearing and understanding what God has done, is doing and will do is crucial for us today.
         * We are assured of a plan.
         * We are assured that the Planner has everything under control and we need not fear our eternal security.

1. Describe the characteristics of the 4 horsemen in verses 1-8 as the first 4 seals are opened. (Just consider these texts within the context of the first 5 chapters as well as what you know of the rest of Scripture) War/ Conquest, war, famine, and death; God’s judgment:
2. First rider sits on the warhorse and the rider comes ready with his weapons of war to conquer…
   1. Christ opens the seal and his messengers, the 4 living creature, send out the first horse and rider in judgement has conquered His foes of sin and death and Satan.
   2. Many have speculated, through the years, that this rider on the white horse is Christ like in Rev. 19:1…where Jesus will be depicted as the rider on a white horse leading God’s heavenly hosts to conquer.
      * But all of these horses are instruments of judgment going out from the throne to carry out specific tasks for the Lamb.
      * They are here to usher in the darkness of the last days.
      * They are each harbingers of hardship, death and doom…pointing toward the end of things.
        + Judgment on the non-believers who run around saying the

“peace, peace…all is peace”

* + - * And at the same time they are a call to repentance for the elect that have not yet been brought in…this isn’t the end but the beginning of the end as Jesus said.
      * And these judgments that believers will be a part of will serve as part of our on-going sanctification, as well.
  1. Reading this passage in the context of the other series of 7s to come (7 Trumpets and 7 Bowls of wrath), as well as what Jesus says Himself in the Gospels about the end times which we just looked at from Matthew…
     + This enables us to see that if we must personify this rider he is represented in each and every tyrant, warmonger and oppressor since Christ ascended into heaven.
     + Men like the Caesars, or many of the Popes, or those seeking world domination like Napoleon, Hitler, the Kim dynasty in North Korea and of so many others.

1. Vs. 4- the 2nd rider on a red/fiery horse does not act alone or on his own… “Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, (with the result that, for the sole purpose of) so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.”
   1. He was given a sword…not his own…to do what he had been commissioned to do.
   2. He is granted/ permitted to take peace from the earth…as he is the slayer of people, the maker of wars “the destroyer of worlds” who rides on the fiery horse…
   3. Ethnic strife can be attributed to him, genocide, abortion and infanticide, suicide, psychopathic and premeditated murders and terrorism…along with general sense of uneasiness and fear.
   4. In some ways this has been the reality of life since Cain killed Able…
2. Vs.5-6- The 3rd rider does not act on his own either… “a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, ‘A quart of

wheat for a denarius,(a days wage) and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!”

* 1. The scales that he possesses don’t seem to be his which indicates he is “working” for someone else…
  2. He comes and a man’s daily wages barely buys the necessities…people have to decide between food or taxes.
  3. He brings famine from his horse that is black as “ink”…judgment used by God many times against His own people and the people of the world.
  4. This is THE world in which the original readers and hearers of this message existed. Many were marginalized so much that food was scarce and care would have been no existent from many of their neighbors.
  5. These riders coming fulfill their mission to cause famine, plague, devastations of all kinds on the economies of the world…price of things will go up, inflation, shortages… all as a result of unrest and war which is their job.
  6. And as to not touching the oil and the wine…two things are possible:
     + These are products enjoyed most often by the wealthy so this rider heightens the inequity and injustice among the classes dividing them more and more causing unrest and hatred.
     + Or it could be a source of joy and celebration for God’s people in the midst of trials and tribulations…for while we do see misuse of these in the Bible we also see them being encourage by God for his peoples pleasure.

1. Vs. 8- the 4th rider, Death, on a pale “sickly looking” (color of a corpse) horse along with his side kick Hades ( interesting that it doesn’t tell us if he is riding or what he might be riding…the grammar almost indicates that he was walking like servants would do behind their master) again, just so we see, “a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority (by the Godhead) over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.”
   1. These 2 do not act on their own either…They are given by God authority…in the same way God gave Satan authority to do to Job what he did….to
   2. Death brings the place of death and judgment with him, for 1/4th of the earth.
   * We are going to see that, was we move through the seals, trumpets and bowls that cover the same time period of history from different angles and fuller descriptions… that death and destruction increase in number and intensity.
   * Death, the product of sin, is in its last stages of dying…in a sense, is like a wounded animal…they always the most dangerous…God so uses this “wounded animal” in it death throws to do to this world in judgment what He has been promising from the beginning.
   1. Pestilence…malaria, bird flu, Covid-19, Spanish Flu, Black plague, locusts that still destroy crops even today… fentanyl, premediated drug use from other countries and cartels, human trafficking…all of this and more causing death of millions of people.
   2. Now this is nothing new on one hand…God has been judging people…believers and non-believers severely since the fall.
   * For the believer sanctification and holiness and glorification.
   * But for the non-believer judgment upon them as they metered out to others throughout the ages… with the ultimate of eternal damnation.
   * Rom. 1:18- “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”

* We are living in a world that has rebelled and rejected their God.
* The evils we see around us are no uncontrolled or unguided…in fact, this imager tells us they are overseen and carried out by the express command of the Lamb.
  + But praise be to God, Matt. 24:22-“And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”

(5) What do you suppose is the purpose for naming these two?

* + He who gives the name is the ultimate master.
  + Another way of telling us who is in control.

1. Again remember, the context sets the definition of these seals as being judgments upon the world…
   1. 7 part judgment that will be seen again in Chapters 8-9 with the Trumpets and then again in Chapter 16 with the bowls.
   2. But as many have pointed out the 7 seals, the 7 trumpets and the bowls are simply the retelling of the same events, each time emphasizing one or another aspect of the whole picture.
2. These prophesies are often tried to be connected with Zechariah’s picture of the horsemen (Zech. 1:7-11 and 6:1-8) but it would be better for Christian’s to look to the Gospels…wars and rumors of wars, great earthquakes famines, pestilence, and persecutions.
   * 1. Matt. 24:4-14, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”
     2. Luke 21:8-19-“And He said, ‘See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.’ Then He said to them, ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.”
     3. Mark 13 says much as the same as Luke.
3. Again, these un-sealings of these first 4 seals show us…that tribulation at this time just like at all other times in Scripture is also part of the believer’s lot.
4. Can you give examples of each type of calamity from history?
5. Now, just so we are clear: By opening the seals what is Christ doing?
   * + 1. He is sending them out commissioning them for the work of judgment.
       2. Does it make you think differently about the times we live in? How?

The Revelation of John April

30, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Review
   1. So we must be clear, going forward: WE CAN EXPECT WAR, CIVIL UNREST,

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND INEQUITY, DISEASE, AND DEATH! Are we clear on this?!?

* 1. We look at the 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse in verse 1-8, and what did we discover was their purpose and who sends them?
     1. 1st horse and rider- War, persecution and oppression…from all the worlds dictators, despots and evil rulers.
     2. 2nd horse and rider- “permitted to take peace from the earth”
        1. He is the slayer of people, “the destroyer of worlds”
        2. Ethnic strife can be attributed to him,
           + genocide, abortion and infanticide, suicide,
           + psychopathic and premeditated murders and
           + terrorism…
           + The progressive calling for violence because of everyone else’s misguided approaches to gender, abortion, free speech and double standards…even taking the side of the trans community recently when 6 people were killed by a mentally unstable woman…CNN, The View and many other progressive news outlets highlighted the injustices or supposed injustices against the trans community rather than deal with the murderer.
           + Which brings about a general sense of uneasiness and fear…no peace.
     3. 3rd horse and rider- “had a pair of scales in his hand.”
        1. He comes and a man’s daily wages barely buys the necessities…
        2. Think raging inflation and high taxes…making it impossible to purchase even the necessities like medicine et al.
        3. Think also supply change shortages or even nations stopping providing certain necessities…
     4. 4th horse and rider- Death followed by Hades… “they were given authority (by the Godhead) over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.”
        1. Pestilence…malaria, bird flu, Covid-19, Spanish Flu, Black plague,
        2. Famine brought on by locusts that still destroy crops even today…and warlords controlling seeking to exterminate.
        3. Planned drug invasion: premediated drug dispensing from other countries and cartels: think fentanyl crisis ,
        4. Countries and cartel involved in human trafficking…all of this and more causing death of millions of people.
     5. All of this was planned and is being directed by the Lamb…none of these riders, even Death and Hades act independently in any way…their weapons, the scale the commission to kill all come for the Godhead.

* + 1. Now, just so we are clear: By opening the seals what is Christ doing? 
       1. He is sending them out commissioning them for the work of judgment.
       2. Does it make you think differently about the times we live in? How?
    2. For those who may continue to think about such things and wonder if things will get better before Christ comes again…listen to these troubling words from Solomon from Eccl. 12:1-8- “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’ before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain, in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed, and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low— they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets— before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.” This is a picture of old age and how the body, like all created

things, is decomposing in preparation for the Last Day when it will all burn and then be made new again!

1. Now let’s turn to Vs. 9-11- “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.”
   1. We began talking about the first 4 seals as God telling us what to expect in the world around us…now what does this 5th seal tell us that we as believers ought to expect in these last days?
2. As the lamb opened the first 4 seals, we heard the cry of the 4 living creatures, but when the 5th seal is opened we hear a human cry!
3. John’s attention is drawn to something under the alter in the throne room…something that would have possibly disgusted him and encouraged him at the same time…the martyrs of God.
   1. Christian Martyrs! The 20th Century is on record as the bloodiest century of all time…and this one is close on its heals already.
   2. They are martyrs for God…a special calling of God’s people.
   * One who has been called to die because they proclaimed the Word and for their witness for Christ…very specific job description.

* + And as such they are placed close to God under the altar…referring to the altar of incense, in the most holy place…in heaven which is represented as at the feet of Christ…closest to Him…showing us and them a few things.
  + Others may kill the body but you go immediately to an honored place.
  + Their souls live, worship and rule with the Godhead.
  + God provides for His people and especially for those martyred for the faith since He called them to this suffering in life.
  + The souls of the departed martyrs are awake, aware, and engaged in what is going on!

1. These martyrs of the ages… have died, are yet to die and will die in witnessing for the faith.
   1. They cried out with a loud voice…with a strong voice! Same word as that used by Christ on the Cross…not a cry of the defeated but almost a battle cry!
   2. I Peter 5:8-9- “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”
   3. What is being communicated by the phrase*, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”* Justice!Why are the martyr’s crying out for justice?

• Just like in the Psalms (Ps. 119:124-126) they are expecting God to keep His promise and they are “reminding” God that the end is near…and how they just can’t wait for His judgment on those who dwell in the earth…

* + - so their brothers and sisters can be brought into the New Earth.
    - Vengeance is God’s...they know that. They can’t do anything themselves… but they so desire for God to receive glory for the carrying out of His promised judgment.

• It is not helpful (in fact, it would be wrong) to impugn these honored saints with any kind of earthly revenge or ulterior motive other than God’s own glory.

* + - * + Remember some of these saints were John’s friends…Peter, James, Paul and the rest of the disciples who had been killed for standing with Jesus.
        + John would have remembered that Jesus had told them often to expect persecution…expect to be hated as he was hated.
        + John was able to look into heaven and see that tribulation and the sword had not cut off these believers from Christ but instead secured for them a special place nearest to Christ.

(4) What is God’s response and why is it a source of comfort?

* + - * They are given white robes of honor and holiness.
      * They have earned the rest given the calling they had...
      * With the assurance that their brother and sisters will be along soon…though they will be killed in similar manner who will add their voices to the shouts and worship.
      * This reveals that we can also expect that our prayers for justice will ultimately be heard and answered.

1. So we can expect to be persecuted for our witness to Jesus Christ.
2. Revelation is not a guide on how to avoid persecution but rather as an encouragement to endure persecution faithfully…not to be led astray!
3. Again, why does God ordain such terrible things to happen to His people according to what you know from Scripture?
   * + 1. Suffering is understood as something that is a part of this world ...Suffering is a characteristic of the Church and some are called to the specific calling of martyrdom for the encouragement of the rest of God’s children.
       2. The unjust death of God’s children ought to do to us what it did for believers in the past…motivate us to stand for the faith in defiance against the tyranny and lawlessness of men and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ until they silence us as well!

2. What happens when the 6th Seal is opened in verses 12-17? “When He opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day

of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” Is there any place to hide from God’s judgment?

1. We can expect that a final judgment will come just as He has promised it would.
2. This is the day that all the martyrs under the alter have been praying for.
3. There have been many precursors to this final judgement in the Bible- The Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the killing of the first born in Egypt…and on and on.
4. We have seen this through the prophets and Jesus himself-
   1. Is. 13:9-13- “Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless. I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.”
   2. Ezek. 32:7; Joel 2:31;
   3. Matt. 24:29-31- ““Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”
5. All of us are meant to “feel” the horror of this scene! For nothing will be the same after this day…good for us…bad for non-believers!
6. There will be nowhere to hide for those who dwell on the earth.
7. They will seek in the end to hide from the God… even asking the mountains to fall on them in fear and desire to end it all now so they don’t have to stand before the supreme judge!
   * 1. See also, Hosea 10:8-“The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. Thorn and thistle shall grow upon their altars, and they shall say to the mountains, ‘Cover us,’ and to the hills, ‘Fall on us.’
     2. On the road to the cross in Luke 23:30 we hear Jesus saying, “But turning to them Jesus said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’”
     3. Some say that God loves the sinner and hates the sin…but God doesn’t send the sin to hell but the sinner. God is angry every day against the wicked and justly so…and every impenitent sinner is exposed every second to His wrath See. Rom. 1:18ff...
     4. Every day they refuse to repent they heap up the wrath of God upon themselves.
8. But what about His own?
   * + 1. Again, we will experience much of the end times tribulation …but we have a promise that doesn’t include what happens in verses 15-16…so ultimately we need not fear the last days. We will endure much of this, but not the final judgment that is placed on the non-elect!
       2. See I Thess. 4:15-18… they will be gathered up with Him—
          - The words “will be caught up together with them in the clouds TO MEET the Lord in the air…” have nothing to do with the Rapture as commonly spoken about…they speak of a processional taking place…that occurs when the King returns to His palace after being gone and gaining a great victory…
          - The people come and meet Him and immediately go back for a great feast.

* + - * + This is the sense of the words “caught up together…to meet the Lord…” and IMMEDIATELY is the operative understanding that goes along with this phrase…there is no time between having met the Lord and returning… for the whole purpose is to get to the palace for the celebration.
        + In other words, not a rapture where the Church is taken out while God finishes up His work but one after the work has been accomplished where we meet Him in the air and go into the new earth and new heaven…all things being made new again.

(3) In the Synoptic Gospels we find and interesting phrase “Many will come in my name saying, I am He! And they will lead many astray.”

• How will we know that any one of these is NOT the Returning King?

Because as the scriptures tell us the true King will not have to be announced…

We, all who are His, will know since we will be gathered up with Him to come into the new earth and new Heaven.

• Multiple times when talking about the end times, Jesus speaks of the elect and the blessing they will receive…the days of tribulation…the End Times…will be shortened.

1. Vs. 17 says, “…for the great day of their (HIS) wrath has come, and who can stand?” What’s the point?

(1) “their or HIS” speaks of the oneness of the Godhead from our perspective…

* + - * + But God through John seems to be making a further point…for the actual word used is “His”.
        + God wishes not to speak in such a way for His people to even think of God as a plurality(think gods even though He is 3 in One)…so as not to give any impression…even a hint of polytheism given the times and empire in which they lived. • He uses the pronoun “His” to confirm the oneness of the Trinity.
      1. One commentator put it this way, “John never makes the Godhead the subject of a plural pronoun or a plural verb when referring both God the Father and God the Son.”
      2. Once, again, this is not a new idea with John or other Hebrews…
         * “Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” (Duet.

6:4).

* + - * + God= Elohim is a plural pronoun…speaking of the Godhead/ Trinity…
        + Also in sight is LORD= Yahweh…the pre-existent Covenantal One…who is before all time and after all time…seeing at least 2 persons of the Trinity on display.

3. How would THIS chapter have been encouraging to these people? What about us today? How have your impressions of the end times been affected up to this point by this discussion?

The Revelation of John

May 7, 2023

1. Prayer
2. Review
   1. So we must be clear, going forward: WE CAN EXPECT WAR, CIVIL UNREST, ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND INEQUITY, DISEASE, AND DEATH! Are we clear on this?!?

* 1. When speaking of the end times we often read in the Synoptic Gospels, “Many will come in my name saying, I am He! And they will lead many astray.”
     1. How will we know that any one of these is NOT the Returning King?
        1. Because as the scriptures tell us the true King will not have to be announced…
        2. We, all who are His, will know since we will be gathered up with Him to come into the new earth and new Heaven.
     2. Multiple times when talking about the end times, Jesus speaks of the elect and the blessing they will receive…the days of tribulation…the End Times…will be shortened.

1. Vs. 17 says, “…for the great day of their (HIS) wrath has come, and who can stand?” What’s the point?
   1. The day they laughed about and said would never come will become their inescapable reality.
   2. No need to wait for the last day for the answer to this question!
   3. Only the believer can and will stand in that day.
   4. Rom. 5:1-2-“ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.”

1. How would chapter 6, with the 4 horsemen of the Apocalypse bringing judgement upon the earth, the talk of martyrs before the throne of God, and the final judgment on non-believers, have been encouraging to these people? What about us today? How have your impressions of the end times been affected up to this point by this discussion?

C. Revelation 7

1. Just before the 7th Seal is opened God seems to want to encourage His Church. So He steps aside from all the future destruction to show what is going on with His church and the blessings they have during some of the greatest times of struggle the world has ever known. This chapter is exclusively for the encouragement of the Church. If they are still wondering where they fit in all of this gloom and doom in this chapter He tells them clearly.

1. What seems to be the role of the first 4 angels in verse 1? “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.”
   1. Bringing calm to the world for a time while the elect are brought in…
   2. Ministering for God…they are holding back the full force of God’s judgment which we saw in the 4 Horseman until the time is right.
      1. Holding back the winds of the earth that assail the church.
      2. The spirit or wind of error…of the earth…will not go forth in full force until God says so…that is, God has unleash the horseman and they are working but not up to their full potential yet. So the fury will be controlled until the time is at hand.
      3. The wind may also represent:
         * False teaching…
         * False acceptance…
         * False tolerance…
         * False hope…
         * All being allowed to influence but not to their full potential…as if saying to us today…”We haven’t seen anything yet!”

* 1. See Zech. 6:1-8… “Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze. 2 The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, 3 the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses—all of them strong. 4 Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ 5 And the angel answered and said to me, ‘These are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before

the Lord of all the earth. 6 The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go after them, and the dappled ones go toward the south country.’ 7 When the strong horses came out, they were impatient to go and patrol the earth. And he said, ‘Go, patrol the earth.’ So they patrolled the earth. 8 Then He cried to me, ‘Behold, those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country.’ Does this

passage aid in your understanding of these angels?

3. Listen to the message of the 5th angel (vs. 2-3). “Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, ‘Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.’” What does it mean to be sealed here? Think a minute about other markings of God’s people in Scripture…

1. Ex. 12:21-23…on the lintels and doorposts…for protection from the avenging angel that was sent through Egypt to kill all Egypt’s first born.
2. Ezek. 9:4-5- The LORD says to one of those designated as an executioner, standing before Ezekiel, “And the LORD said to him, ‘Pass through the city,

through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it. And to the others he said in my hearing, ‘Pass through the city after him, and strike.

Your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity.’”…

* 1. The mark placed on people who were disgusted by the sinful practices of Jerusalem just before they were judged. To designate them as different from the sinners.
  2. These were God’s people may be “marked as spoken of in 14:1-“ Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.”
     + So they would stick out and be further ostracized and persecuted by the people in their areas.
     + It could be that, but it seems more that they were encouraged for their stand and encouraged to do more of it…and just like us today the true Christians would have known each other by their fruit and by the fact that God’s man pointed them out.
     + Jesus was also sealed… John 6:27-“For on him God the Father has set His seal.”
     + God seals us also- II Cor. 1:221-22-“ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”
     + We are sealed by the Holy Spirit in us- Eph. 1:13-14-“ In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.”

1. What are the ultimate benefits that are implied? (1) Think of this seal this way...the same is true for the others to a lesser degree…
   * + - * This is a seal known only to God and this “angel”…
         * This is a seal as clear as if it had been placed on the forehead of a person…anything placed there would not be missed…and it would be seen by God, this angel and any who bear the seal…
         * This is symbolic of God sealing His people with the blood of Christ as He sealed His people deliverance with the blood of the lamb in Egypt.
       1. So, obviously, again, we are talking about the “dreaded doctrine”- Election- See also, I Peter 2:9-10-“ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” …we are owned so we will be protected.
       2. Nothing will thwart God’s work… even in the midst of judgment … He has time for His children…we will all be brought in….we will be caught up to meet the Lord…and then the final seal will be opened.

This doesn’t say that we will not endure the last days…just not the final judgment bestowed upon the non-elect.

Also it is not saying that we will be protected from death but rather…we are insured entrance into the new heaven and new earth on that day.

John sees that God controls the whole process… nothing gets away from Him… and is able to take care of His people as well.

d. What is the ultimate reason for God to mark His people? How does He really do that?

* + - 1. To protect His own just as he did in the Exodus.
      2. The blood of Christ and our fruit verifies this faith given by grace!

e. How might this affect these believers who are living in constant fear of persecution and suffering?

**The Revelation of John**

**May 14, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **So we must be clear, going forward: WE CAN EXPECT WAR, CIVIL UNREST, ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND INEQUITY, DISEASE, AND DEATH! Are we clear on this?!?**
4. **What seems to be God’s plan in Chapter 7:1-3 and why?**
5. **To encourage His Church.**
6. **For there are rough waves ahead where she might/will waver when things get scary.**
7. **So it seems so far He is seeking to make sure she/we know that we are being watched over.**
8. **Chapter 7 continued:**
9. **Now, let’s look again, at what is going on in verses 4-10? *“And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:***

***12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Gad,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Asher,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Levi,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,***

***12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.”***

1. **Who are these 144,000 sealed Ones of verse 3 and 4? (So much has been placed on these verses by outside influence.)**
   * 1. **Some would have us believe that this number is the number of the Martyrs.**
     2. **Other say that this is a specific group of people who are alive before the end.**
     3. **Other still say it is The Jehovah Witnesses…although they had to even expand this number over the years since their group has grown…so now it is symbolic of all their ranks…**
     4. **Or is it simply symbolic of all believers as vs. 9-10 seems to indicate? I believe this is the easiest understanding of this text.**
     5. **From every tribe of Israel…really?**
2. **But why 144,000? What have you been taught?** 
   * + 1. **12 x12 x 1000 or 12 X 12,000= 144, 000= 12 Patriarchs of Israel times 12 Apostles of Jesus times 1000 (a number always representing “many” in Scripture)! This is a two-fold way of emphasizing completeness.**
       2. **Some have suggested that the reason the tribes are placed first is so we won’t forget to evangelize them…much like being reminded by Paul as he first went into the synagogues to reach out to his own people.**
       3. **There may be some merit to that desire but there really isn’t any indication that that is why they are place here this way…**
       4. **The real truth seems to be this: There will be a place for the believing people of Israel …they won’t be left out completely if they, like we, believe in Jesus as the Messiah.**
       5. **Whether the number be thought of as literal or figurative, this interpretation involves a depiction of Jewish-Christians in this world...not some separate group that come to faith in a different way than through Christ which seems to be the interpretation touted by dispensationalists.**
       6. **If, as has been suggested, the 144,000 of verse 4 and the *"great***

***number which no one could count"* of verse 9 are one and the same,**

**then we need to ask why it is that detailed reference is given to the**

**twelve tribes in verse 5-8 (twelve tribes with Dan omitted; Joseph**

**and one of his sons, but not Ephraim, are mentioned).**

* **Since Dan and Ephraim are left out John is also showing all that not everyone who is part of the visible church (or nation of Israel) will prove to have received the mark of God. Just like Judas, one of the 12, was actually a pretender.**
* **The number for the 12 tribes listed suggests in apocalyptic language that the number of people in these tribes is complete.**
* **One possible answer would be that in detailing it in this way, Revelation is mimicking what the book of Numbers does in the Old Testament whenever it records a census of fighting men (cf. Num. 1:21,23). Revelation 7 is therefore recording in symbolic manner, of God’s people having a representation from each tribe.**
* **As Scotty Smith puts it, *“We are once again exposed to a major theme of Revelation…all of Scripture for that matter…God is indeed Faithful to the covenant that He made with Abraham. He has secured salvation for His people…not just from ethnic Israel but also from the rest of the tribes, nations and tongues of the spiritual Israel* (Gal.3:6-9,29,6:16; Heb. 11:32).**
* **I concur with verses 4-10 symbolizing the fullness of the church…God’s people…but…**
* **there is something to be said about why Israel is broken out and specific numbers given beyond what we have already speculated about…Amos 3:12*-“Thus says the LORD: ‘As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed.”* Or Amos 5:1-3-*“Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel: ‘Fallen, no more to rise, is the virgin Israel; forsaken on her land, with none to raise her up.’ For thus says the LORD God: ‘The city that went out a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went out a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel.’”***
* **Rom*.* 9:27-*“*** ***And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved.’”***
* **In contrast to the fact that the Gentiles are not numbered… simply stating the obvious… *“a great multitude that no one can count…”…***
* **I believe it is done for a reason beyond the census thing of Numbers above…sooo… like the total exclusion of the tribe of Dan (its fell into absolute idolatry, Joseph’s other son Ephraim, for the same reason of idolatry...**
* **Because of Israel’s immense sin and rejection of God…could this be pointing out that a smaller number will be brought in from then to join with all of God’s people? A consequence of their sin? But through it all God’s covenant promise is kept…that even from Israel there will be those in the great multitude called the Church.**
* **Dispensationalists say that during the great tribulation…after the rapture this represents those who get a second chance (which is actually a third chance or more)…these are a superaddition to the Church a supplementary body near and precious to Christ made up after the Church proper has finished its course.**
* **So isn’t Israel “special”?**
* **Not the political nation of Israel.**
* **Yes, since they represent His first born among men.**
* **No, in that God loves all His people equally.**
* **Yes, since there was always a remnant in it of true believers.**
* **No, in that that remnant represents it part of the greater Church …salvation is and always has been in and through Christ Jesus.**
* **This number then does prove that some of the Jews will be saved by belief in Jesus …not because they are Jews.**
* **All will have equal status before God as with every other tribe, language, people and nation…but because of their sin…only a true remnant will be chosen.**
* **The number is NOT important in the end …God’s electing power has secured all who are to come in…and all those WILL come in whom God has elected into His family before the foundations of the earth.**

1. **If this is the church as I believe than this is a clear indication that the Church is NOT raptured out of the tribulation between the first and second Coming of Christ…**
2. **They/we instead are sealed for survival and complete salvation during this time even in they die they are sealed for heaven.**
3. **And if we are wondering, Paul makes enough references to the Church being the Israel of God in Romans 9-11 and in Galatians.**
4. **So the *“a great multitude that no one can count”* captures all of God’s elect.**
5. **The numbers listed as well as the Gentiles simply tell us who makes up this great multitude.**
6. **In this way, the promise given to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations is fulfilled.**

* **Gen. 15:5*-“And He brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.’ Then He said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’”***
* **Gen. 17:4-6-** ***“And God said to him,* ‘*Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.”***
* **God’s covenant of grace has now unfolded in all its multi-faceted dimensions.**
* **The beauty of the work of redemption has been disclosed.**

1. **What conditions allow the multitude of 7:9-10 to wear their robes and sing their songs? *“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”* What is it about God that they have learned from their experiences?**
2. **They are there because they have been washed clean by the blood of Christ.**
3. **They recognize the fact…that salvation is only through and on account of the work of Christ Jesus as determined beforehand by the Godhead. Salvation cannot be had in any other way than through Faith alone through Christ alone!**
4. **They had been chosen before the foundations of the earth in God’s divine election and they had been predestined to serve Him this way…WE have! For we are part of this great multitude!**
5. **There is going to be A LOT of people at this party!**
6. **They know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that *“salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb! ”***

* **Not to them…they did not get their own salvations it was a gift given to them.**
* **They see how this predestination and election thing works for sure sine they are on the other side.**
* **They are praising God for the wonder of His plan that has unfurled just as he said it would.**

1. **This would have been of great comfort since so many were still trying to teach that it was at best a combination of faith and works that gets us into heaven and at worst…only pious Jews will get in! Pious in the ones who follow the letter of the Law…like the Pharisees whom they disliked and distrusted.**
2. **It was God’s great mercy through the Cross work of Christ that had saved them and taken away the just sentence of God’s wrath against all who sin…And it by God’s great grace that we and they endure in this life to receive such blessings as the white robe of perfection and a palm branch of complete peace and restoration with our God.**

**The Revelation of John**

**May 21, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **So we must be clear, going forward: WE CAN EXPECT WAR, CIVIL UNREST, ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND INEQUITY, DISEASE, AND DEATH! Are we clear on this?!?**
4. **How are the 144,000 and the great uncountable multitude spoken of later in verses 3-8 related?**
5. **Just a quick look back at the statement that shouted out by the great multitude in vs. 10, *“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”* What are some significant things about this statement that we all too often take for granted?**
6. **It is not our salvation. Salvation belongs to the Godhead. We see this throughout the Bible.**
7. **It only becomes ours after God grants it to us…having been paid for by the blood of the Lamb and then that same blood having marked us as being in Christ forever!**
8. **For them, being in heaven they can really see how God has saved and preserved His people for Himself even through persecution, affliction and even judgment….so they can’t help but praise Him.**
9. **Reminding us yet again…that we should be doing the same thing in the here and now.**
10. **Just for fun: In vs. 12 in the original koine Greek there is a “the” in front of each descriptive word…as in *“Amen! The Blessing and the Glory…etc.”.* What does the continual use of the definite article “the” communicate? *“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”***
11. **Revelation 7 Continued:**
12. **What is the purpose for the question asked of John by the elder in verses 13-14? *“Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?’ I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’”***
13. ***“Who are these…”* he is essentially saying to John, *“Do you see them? They deserve our recognition and respect”*…like the inspection of the troops returning from battle.**
14. **These Christian soldiers emerge through the tribulation , *““These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”-* 7:14— there is no indication of a rapture away from the battle.**
15. **These are the ones who by grace had been saved…the elect ones…who have endured unto death during the last days…the great tribulation, if you will.**
16. **Another proof that suffering is a characteristic of God’s Church that we all too often seek to deny. Persecution is guaranteed to us during this time but blessing for all who overcome.**
17. **John registers his desire to be taught by this elder rather than having to hear his own opinion/answer…in his humility he beseeches the elder to teach him…even if he knew the answer he recognizes that there is so much more to gain by listening to this saint than by hearing his own voice.**
18. **What is the connection between the “great tribulation” and the white robes in this case? (Different from the white robes talked about in verse 9)**
19. **The tribulation will be worse than the Exile ever was…Matt. 24:21-22-*“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”***
20. **The blood of Christ and the fruit of their works have washed their robes clean…the faith of God to His elect and a reward for their obedience. God’s sovereignty and human responsibility.**
21. ***“Washed and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”*…this is an interesting turn of a phrase. We don’t think of things being made white if soaked in blood…but the blood of Jesus cleanses.**
22. **How is suffering a purifying agent for God’s people?**
23. **What is the vision of verses 15-17 communicating in this song to them and to us that brings us great hope in the midst of difficulty? *“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”***
24. **We can expect to enjoy the presence and provision of Christ forever in a cleansed creation.**
25. **This is a poetic picture of what all who have been marked by the blood of the Lamb, all who have been sealed to Christ by the Holy Spirit, all who have patiently endured the tribulation of living for Christ in a hostile world, can expect.**
26. **We can expect that we will not only be protected in the final judgment; we will enjoy the protective presence of God for all eternity.**
27. **Though many of us may experience great sorrow now, God Himself is going to bless you with the comfort of His real life presence as a shelter and our Shepherd forever.**

* **We can expect hardship.**
* **We can expect to be persecuted for our clear witness to the person and work of Christ.**
* **We can expect that our prayers will be heard and acted on in heaven.**
* **We can expect that justice will be done.**
* **We can expect that when judgment falls, we will be protected in the judgment.**
* **Though we may be mistreated in the here and now, we will have a place of safety in our forever home.**
* **Though we may experience going without in the here and now, we will be provided for there so that all of our needs will be met forever.**

1. **Nothing and no one will be able to harm us. All of our needs will be provided for. All the pain of the past will be wiped away—not through an impersonal declaration but personally and lovingly, as God himself will wipe away our tears.**
2. **We’ll be safely in the fold of our shepherd, the Lamb.**
3. **Our Father will do these personally, Himself, because of His great and steadfast love!**
4. **What are some of the truths that we are encourage with in this chapter?**

**The Revelation of John**

**May 28, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **What did we say about suffering being a purifying agent for God’s people?**
4. **What are some of the truths that we are encourage with in chapter 7? See also Isaiah 25**
5. **Chapter 8- The 7th Seal**
6. **It is necessary for us to remember as we consider this last seal that this is not the last time we will see this imagery. It has already been pointed out that the 7 seals, the 7 trumpets and the 7 bowls are simply the retelling of the same events, each time emphasizing one or another aspect of a whole picture...that even with these picture we still do not see the whole picture.**
7. **The 7th and last seal of judgement is now opened by Jesus. At this happening 7 trumpets of judgment are revealed. In the same way, the 7th trumpet will announce the 7 bowls of judgment when we get there.**
8. **Now 8:2-11:19 seems to be speaking more to the difficult times are now and ahead of us marked as the last days…justice is coming.**
9. **Just like the seals these are speaking about the judgments that will happen on the earth between the time period of the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ.**
10. **So these are not MORE judgments but a further development of the same end time story.**
11. **They are meant as prophesy…meant to arouse the Elect to respond to the Gospel in repentance and faith. Those who are awakened during this time will find refuge in Christ. Those who ignore these trumpet warnings are those who are the non-elect destined to eternal judgment when the final trumpet is blown.**
12. **What other event can you think of in which trumpets played a major role?**
13. **Think also Joshua/Jericho for a moment… The Joshua/Jericho pattern is particularly interesting because in that story it was the seventh sound of the trumpet that brought upon Jericho the final cataclysmic destruction of the city walls. The first six were preparation of the final judgment.**
14. **Likewise the first six trumpets in Revelation are anticipatory of the final judgment of the *"Great City"* (11:8) of which the battle of Jericho is the most memorable Old Testament incident in which trumpets played a major role.**
15. **What is being spoken of in verse 1 when it says, *“When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”*?**
16. **Following the opening of the 7th seal, there is stunned silence in heaven *"for about half an hour"* (8:1). A number of Old Testament passages seem to be inthe background here:**
17. **Habakkuk 2:20, *"But the LORD is in His holy temple; let all the*  *earth be silent before Him."***
18. **Zechariah 2:13, *"Be still before the LORD, all mankind, because He has roused Himself from His holy dwelling."***
19. **Dan. 4:19- *“Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and this thoughts alarmed him.*” The Hebrew says Daniel *“was dismayed for about an hour”.***
20. **These 3 passages depict someone about to execute judgment,**

* **the result of which produces a sense of profound awe… a dramatic pause at the revelation of God’s holy majesty and/or His will as in the case of Daniel.**
* **Heaven has been a noisy place up to this point…but not at this moment…that breathless /somber moment of great expectation!**

1. **On the day of judgment God’s wrath will silence all who have rejected His grace, for they are without excuse…and we, the Elect, and the 4 living creatures and the elders will all be spellbound and silent:**

* **As we see that He is actually going to do as He has always said He would do as far as judge the world for sin.**
* **We are also silent because the new order is getting ready to start where we enter into our eternal inheritance….and then… *“Every knee shall bow and every tongue confession Jesus as Lord!”***
* **Right, true and just to do as He has said He would do and all are amazed to silence before the God of the universe.**

1. **Let’s stop here a minute to discuss the relationship between the Seals of Chapters 6,7 8:1, the Trumpets of chapters 8:2-11:19 and the Bowls of chapters 15:5-16.**
2. **Because we’re used to events being presented to us in chronological order, we might assume that the seven trumpets depict events that transpire after the opening of the seven seals and before the pouring out of the seven bowls.**
3. **But in actuality the events depicted in the seals, trumpets, and bowls take place over the same time period—the time between the first and second coming of Jesus.**
4. **Revelation is showing us the same scene from different angles, and each angle helps us to see and understand a different aspect of what is taking place during the same period of time.**
5. **Think of it as similar to watching a sporting event on television.**
6. **Most major sporting events have numerous cameras covering the same action, and when something significant happens in the game, they often replay what happened from numerous camera angles.**
7. **As we see it from different angles, the reality of what transpired becomes clearer to us.**
8. **That is what is happening in the book of Revelation.**
9. **The seven seals of Revelation 6 and 7, the seven trumpets of Revelation 8 through 11, and the seven bowls of Revelation 15:5-16 each show us the same period of human history—the time between the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and the day He returns in glory to establish His kingdom on this earth and to usher in the new heavens and the new earth.**
10. **We may notice that the blowing of the first 4 Trumpets has some similarity to the opening of the first 4 Seals.**
11. **Like the first 4 seals were grouped together to communicate what life will be like in this world between the Comings of Christ, the first 4 Trumpets speak to difficult realities in this world in this same time period.**
12. **But while the first 4 Seals portray difficulties that are experienced by everybody, the focus of the Trumpets seems to be on how those who are not sealed…those who are not in Christ…those who *“dwell on the earth”* or think *“under heaven”* as Solomon says in Ecclesiastes…will experience life on earth during this time.**
13. **Who or what do the 7 angels here represent and what are they doing in vs. 2? *“Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.”***
14. **Like the 7 angels/ministers of the churches were to sound the trumpet of the gospel,**
15. **These 7 angels of heaven would be sounding the trumpets of God’s providential judgment… everyone will know what’s going on… remember 6:15-17- *“Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave[d] and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”*?**
16. **And they stand before God awaiting their marching orders. They are God’s “means” of judgment upon the earth.**
17. **Chapter 6- 8:1 seems to be focused on telling us…the Elect…that there will be difficult days ahead for us, but God will protect us and we have a great future before us. (Chapter 7) The angels are holding back the final destructive winds of God’s total justice until all the Elect come in.**
18. **But… what do verses 3-4 tell us about the prayers of God’s children? *“And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.”***
19. **I loved this from one of our older members: *“They don’t get lost.”***
20. **In Chapter 5:8 it was the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders who held a harp and the golden bowls on incense before the altar of the lamb, which are the prayers of the saints. *“And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”***
21. **Verse 3 suggests that the prayers have already been accepted by God as they are in the hand of the angel and rising as sweet aroma before God.**
22. **The prayers of the saints (5:8, 6:10 and now here in 8:4) are described asascending to God, helped in the process by the addition of incense by the angel who stands at the altar (8:3).**
23. **Incense is associated with sacrifice (e.g. Day of Atonement, Lev. 16:11--19) and suggests its acceptability and its sweetness to God.**
24. **If the smell of incense rising (see Lev. 16:12-13, Psa. 141:1-2) is strange to us…**
25. **For the Jewish worshippers of the Old Testament it demonstrated in a way the powerful way smell can evoke a response…sometimes not so pleasant a response for some of us who are allergic to strong fragrances.**
26. **For us incense has been used for calming influence (like scented candles)…never really worked for me because of an allergy to these types of aroma.**
27. **It is a picture of the way our prayers rise before God…as we can actually see the smoke generated by the incense…and are accepted by Him as something pleasant and sweet.**
28. **Particular angels assist in the presentation of our prayers before God. there is structure and form…everything and everyone has a job in worshiping God and ensuring that God’s people are cared for.**
29. **What does this tell us about God’s people?**
30. **They are known by their life of prayer.**
31. **Prayer describes a saint of God. It is what we do.**

**The Revelation of John**

**June 4, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **Just a reminder: What did we say about the relationship between the Seals of Chapters 6, 7, 8:1, the Trumpets of chapters 8:2-11:19 and the Bowls of chapters 15:5-16?**
4. **Because we’re used to events being presented to us in chronological order, we might assume that the seven trumpets depict events that transpire after the opening of the seven seals and before the pouring out of the seven bowls.**
5. **The events depicted in the seals, trumpets, and bowls take place over the same time period—between the first and second coming of Jesus.**
6. **Revelation is showing us the same scene from different angles, and each angle helps us to see and understand a different aspect of what is taking place during the same period of time.**
7. **Think of it as similar to watching a sporting event on television.**
8. **Most major sporting events have numerous cameras covering the same action, and when something significant happens in the game, they often replay what happened from numerous camera angles.**
9. **As we see it from different angles, the reality of what transpired becomes clearer to us.**
10. **That is what is happening in the book of Revelation.**
11. **We have talked about living in the final days…the days of the great tribulation as Jesus refers to in John’s Gospel, look for a moment at I Cor. 10:6-11- *“Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.’ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.”* What are somethings we learn from this text?**
12. ***“Now these things took place as examples for us*...” What things? *“For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.* I Cor. 10:1-5**
13. **They were shown grace in everything and in the similar way that we are today.**
14. **Because of all that God had done for them they were without excuse when they rejected and they were rejected by God.**
15. **So this then is an example to us that not everyone uses the grace of God appropriately even when given professing all the same things as every other Christian…they will be known by their works. And their works were similar to many of the problems affecting the church in Corinth.**
16. **Their list.**
17. **Misusing the ceremonial meals just to look good before the church and then heading off to indulge in your idolatry…with the idolatry always in the back of your mind. (Think the Lord’s Supper as this is what this chapter is leading up to…**

* **a misuse of the supper to look good,**
* **to fulfill your obligation,**
* **to use it as a way to look better than everyone else,**
* **then to leave and do what you had planned to do as if no one was watching…**
* **well… obviously God is watching and the warning given in the Supper WILL come to pass upon those who seek to misuse for their own pleasure.**

1. **Adulteries of all kind were punished severely by God since He held and holds His covenant people to a higher standard.**
2. **We must not put Christ to the test…Jesus said we must not test God…so we must re-think our behaviors or their will be dire consequences from sickness to death.**
3. **But maybe the biggest statement is telling us that we are currently in the end times… *“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.”***
4. **What does Rev. 8:3-4 tell us about the prayers of God’s children? *“And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.”***
5. **I loved this from one of our older members: *“They don’t get lost.”***
6. **Verse 3 makes it clear that the prayers of the saints have already been accepted by God as they are in the hand of the angel and rising as sweet aroma before God.**
7. **What does this communicate about God’s expectation for His people?**
8. **We are to be known by our life of prayer.**
9. **According to this prayer describes a saint of God. It is what we do.**
10. **Revelation 8 continued:**
11. **How would you describe what is being communicated in vs. 5? *“Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.”***
12. **It seems to me that this is like what happens at the beginning of a race of funny cars…the lights go from red to green and engines sound like they are going to explode…the ground shakes…and then they are off like lightning! The angel is given the green light to unleash Hell on the earth!**
13. **The martyrs of Rev. 6:10 cried out- *“They cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”***
14. **But not just the martyrs but all the prayers of God’s people calling on Him to do His will. So the fire of God descends in answer to the prayer of all the saints of God…living and dead.**
15. **II Peter 3:8-13- *“But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”***
16. **Prayer changes the world.**
17. **Eugene Peterson, citing George Herbert (1593-1633), makes the following allusion: *“The prayers which had ascended, unremarked by the journalists of the day, returned with immense force—in George Herbert’s phrase, as "reversed thunder."***
18. **This is an unseen affect …unseen by us that is in this life. Prayer reenters history with incalculable effects. Our earth is shaken daily by it." See I Cor. 6:2-3-*“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!”***
19. **The description of the Day of Judgment as consisting in *"thunders, sounds, lightning and quaking,"* seems almost certainly to borrow from the description of God’s appearance at Mt Sinai in Exodus 19…also Good Friday.**
20. **This passage certainly teaches that God uses the prayers of His people to accomplish His sovereign purposes…it is one way that we enter into judging along with Him. They, too, are the “means” God uses in judgment.**
21. **What, generally speaking, do you see in verses 6-12 that we have seen before? We will break these down specifically, in a moment. *“Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.***

***The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.***

***The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.***

***The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.”* And what is the purpose for all of this?**

1. **If we take the first 4 Trumpets as a whole to begin with they each seem to picture in impact of ongoing but not yet final judgment on the things in this world. The trumpets are sounding an alarm; warning of the danger of having only what this world seems to provide to depend of for satisfaction and security.**
2. **The plagues of Egypt…their severity and the utter sovereignty over all things that God displayed there.**
3. **A prelude, perhaps, of that great and final Exodus in which God’s Church is caught up to be with God only to immediately return to inhabit the new heaven and new earth….**
4. **the True Promised Land which must be purged of all the sin and sinners just like the original promised land was to be purged of the sinners…this time it really will be purged and purified.**
5. **We see that God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow…until He comes He will and has sent His warning to man of His judgments before He sends them and before He completes them.**
6. **In His Word He sounds the alarm…**
7. **His providences display that He is preparing for His consummation …**
8. **His ministers declare the great and terrible day of the Lord as we are also declaring His gospel so that His people will come in to His family.**
9. **All of this, so that if people be surprised…it will be their own fault.**
10. **Who is causing these disasters to occur? Why?**
11. **God is causing His will to be carried out.**
12. **The nature of the Day of Judgment is vengeance, the vengeance of God.**
13. **It is the Day when God vindicates His justice.**

* **Wrongs are put right.**
* **Sin is punished.**
* **God’s honor upheld.**
* **Whatever may be the inadequacies of judgments in this world, they will all be burned up and the world to come will be one in which purity and righteousness shall reign.**

1. **Read Isaiah 24- Isaiah’s Apocalypse**
2. **What do you suppose the word “trumpets” communicated to many of these people? Business as usual for God! This would be of great comfort to the people to know that God has not changed how He does things.**
3. **In the Old Testament, trumpets announced an alarm that holy judgment was to be engaged in against Israel’s enemy, or against Israel as God’s enemy.**
4. **Hosea 8:1-*“Set the trumpet to your lips! One like a vulture is over the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law.”***
5. **Zeph. 1:14-18-*“The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet* *blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of His jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end He will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.”***
6. **Joel 2:1-2- *“Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.”***
7. **The Bible, also, uses trumpets to announce the need for the assembly to congregate before God. Consider:**
8. **Ex. 19:15-16 *-“And Moses said to the people, ‘Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.’ On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightning’s and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.”***
9. **Joel 2:15-16*- “Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.”***
10. **Matt. 24:31*-“And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other”***
11. **1 Thess. 4:16 *“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”* .**
12. **Now let’s break this down a bit. What does this first trumpet seem to be affecting?Vs. 7-*“The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”***
13. **Think the 7th plague on Egypt. Think the brimstone of Sodom and Gomorrah…blood red may indicate its color if this actually happens…but probably simply symbolizes the blood of those who die as a result.**
14. **This trumpet represents the kind of destruction which at any time damages the earth…**
15. **Burn, Burn, Burn! 3 times He says this to confirm how fleeting the things of this world are.**
16. **For we place too much significance on the world and what the world provides…we are too attached to it…and when we “lose” something of value to us we are in despair because we held it too tightly.**
17. **This is physical and figurative language all tied up together.**

* **Hurricanes, famine, wild fires…environmental catastrophes. Each affecting the air and agriculture.**
* **Severe drought and with that in some parts of the world comes scorching heat that literally can burn the skin right off a person.**
* **All “natural” and environmental disasters are to be seen as God getting our attention…and being a product of the last day’s judgments.**
* **1/3rd of all the fields and trees that should be providing food and ongoing commerce will be burned up so that actual hunger will not be satisfied…millions will die from starvation along with death caused by weather catastrophes.**
* **But all that we place our trust in outside of the LORD will come to naught and will burn!**
* **And accordingly, when we get to the bowls in Chapter 16, even the non-believers will know these events are God’s wrath against them and not just natural disasters.**

1. **Compare this with the 4th seal…Rev. 6:7-8-*“When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” 8 And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.”* but the judgments are not going to be systematic in that one happens and then the next and then the next…in last days they will happen together….**
2. **What does the use of the words “a third” seems to be communicating? Again, just like the 4th seal…not all is finished yet…It is not the end …yet! Severe but not total…yet!**

**The Revelation of John**

**June 11, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Chapter 8 continued:**
3. **What does this first trumpet seem to be affecting?Vs. 7-*“The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”***
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2. **What does the use of the words “a third” seems to be communicating? Again, just like the 4th seal…not all is finished yet…It is not the end …yet! Severe but not total…yet!**
3. **What does the next trumpet seem to affect in vs. 8-9? *“The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”***
4. **In Revelation, more often than not, mountains speak of kingdoms, both good and bad. (14:1, 17:9, 21:10). He uses the little word *“like”* here to make the point that this is a symbol for something else.**
5. **Here is a picture of the great kingdoms of the world that come crashing down as God shakes the earth as He has done in days gone by.**
6. **Whatever God does to kill so many fish certainly affects the fishing industry…yet another food chain issue…and so they won’t need as many ships to do less work.**
7. **So we have here for sure a kingdom shaking event and possibly yet another ecological event…oil and gas and supposed emissions…not brought on by man but by God…though man will be and is being blamed for such end time events.**
8. **Whatever exactly happens we see that this destroys the lives and livelihoods of those who live in these kingdoms…just as God has done in days gone by…to prepare His people to repent before the final Day comes….and to increase the suffering of those who will be judged.**
9. **What sea would these people have in mind when they heard this? Can you think of any events that would have been on their minds?**
10. **Mediterranean …for in John’s days this was THE only sea that they KNEW…had much knowledge about.**
11. **Explosion of Mt. Vesuvius (Ad. 79) maybe even the sacking of Jerusalem in AD 70.**
12. **Considering vs. 5 a minute, how do our prayers enter into the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum with Vesuvius’ explosion?**
13. **In other words, how are seemingly tragic events influenced by our prayers?**
14. **How should that inform our prayers?**
15. **With the mentioning of ships it seems to indicate that commercewould be severely affected by these world catastrophes…**
16. **Think 9/11, think stock market problems, recession, the Great Depression, global merchandise shortages.**
17. **Sometimes the only thing to cause people to look up toward heaven is when a catastrophe occurs or some type of financial crisis hits.**
18. **What does the next trumpet seem to affect in vs. 10-11? *“The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.”***
19. **SeeIsaiah14*:*12-15- *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.”***
20. **This is Babylon is pictured as a star cast down from heaven into a pit.**

* ***“O Day Star, son of Dawn”*= “shining one, son of dawn” Comparing Babylon with Venus rising in the morning only to be overtaken by the sun.**
* **As we know, Babylon thought itself to be THE city from which all kingdoms needed to compare… it saw itself as the city of the gods!**

1. **This particular star is called *“Wormwood”-***

* **Only time used in NT…but 8 times in OT to always refer to bitterness, poison and death.**
* **“Poisoned or extremely bitter sulfuric water” that will at the very least make you extremely sick that could lead to death.**
* **This harkens back to the prophecy of Jeremiah 9:15 and 23:15 where God judges His disobedient people by giving them poisoned water to drink.**
* **Not only physical but spiritual poisoning through false prophets and teachers.**
* **This trumpet blast ruins the very basics of what people have thought of as life giving...like the necessity of water…**

1. **Depending on the things of the world often ends up poisoning us, our relationships and our expectation leading to on-going mental illness or even suicide.**
2. **What does the next trumpet seem to affect in vs. 12? *“The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.”***
3. **The image is that the “lights of heaven” are partially darkened.**
4. **This has always been considered a picture/image of the failure of the world’s wisdom and it’s long sought for spirituality...seeking enlightenment only to live in the darkness.**
5. **This is clearly an image of those who live in the darkness without the ability to actually see what is true and right and good, as well as, who is true and right and good.**

* **Prov. 29:18- *“Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.”* What should this encourage us to do?**
* **Matthew 24:5-14- *“For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”***

1. **God intends to demonstrate His power over all false gods and idols just like He did in Egypt.**
2. **God is calling His people to repentance with these actions by basically saying all is not clear because of your lack of the Spirit.**
3. **What is being communicated in verse 13? *“Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”***
4. **Note: this could be an eagle…a notable bird of prey…or the Greek word is similar to angel… But more than likely an eagle to inspire awe…not that an angel wouldn’t but then he has been hanging out with a whole bunch of angels! Lol!**
5. **Typical beginning of an oracle of judgment, *“Woe, Woe, Woe!”***
6. **Problem is the earth dwellers are by nature not inclined to choose to come under the kingship of the true King since they have given their allegiance to the Prince of this world. And like a despot he torments his own for his own pleasure.**
7. **Interesting…more is coming as if this wasn’t enough…and they will be worse than the first 4.**
8. **God goes for perfection in all things even His judgment…which glorifies his name as well.**
9. **What new things do we learn about the great tribulation from the first 4 trumpets that we didn’t know from the first 4 seals?**
10. **Revelation chapter 9**
11. **Let’s look at the pictures being described more closely in verses 1-11.**
12. **Who do you know is the star fallen from heaven in verse 1? *“And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.”***
13. **Satan!**

* **The text , in this case, speaks of a person *“he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.”* Not a literal star! See Rev. 9:11- *“They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.”***
* **And it had already fallen…John can see Satan and what he is preparing to do by God’s command.**
* **Isaiah 14:12-*“*** ***How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!”* This is first referred to as the Fall of Babylon but later it seems to come to represent Satan’s downfall.**
* **Luke 10:17-20- *“The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning (like a falling star) from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.’”***

**The Revelation of John**

**June 18, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **So we must be clear, going forward: WE CAN EXPECT WAR, CIVIL UNREST, ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND INEQUITY, DISEASE, AND DEATH! Are we clear on this?!?**
4. **What were some of the new things that y’all talked about from the first 4 trumpets that we didn’t know from the first 4 seals?**
5. **Revelation 9**
6. **Let’s look at the pictures being described more closely in verses 1-11.**
7. **Who did y’all talk about last time concerning the star fallen from heaven in verse 1? *“And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.”***
8. **Satan!**

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1. **Satan emerges on the scene as an instrument of God’s judgment. God throws Him down…fallen from heaven to earth…to do His bidding. God gives him power to do as God commands.**
2. **God is sovereign overall including the delegated “power and authority” of all the demonic forces and Satan, Himself.**
3. **Does this truth shock you in anyway? Why or why not?**
4. **What is being communicated here in verses 2-5? What is it that comes from the bottomless pit once it is opened by Satan? Vs. 2-5- *“He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone.”***
5. **We see the bottomless pit…the pit pf Hell… the abyss…bottomless to accommodate all the enemies of God. It is so bad that smoke chokes out everything around it.**

* **This leads me to wonder what is in mind here…and when this occurs…or has it occurred many times.**
* **Many call this choking smoke *“the smoke of deception and delusion, of sin and sorrow, of moral darkness and degradation that is constantly belching up out of hell.”***

1. **Locust…real bugs…not some helicopter or some other military machine…God has used these critters before. See**

* **John has used OT imagery before to describe heavenly and earthly realities.**
* **Ex. 10:4-6, 12-15-*“*** ***For if you refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country, 5 and they shall cover the face of the land, so that no one can see the land. And they shall eat what is left to you after the hail, and they shall eat every tree of yours that grows in the field, 6 and they shall fill your houses and the houses of all your servants and of all the Egyptians, as neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day they came on earth to this day.’” … “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come upon the land of Egypt and eat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left.’ So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night. When it was morning, the east wind had brought the locusts. The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever will be again. They covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was darkened, and they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Not a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field, through all the land of Egypt.”***
* **Joel 1:6-7-*“For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number; its teeth are lions' teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped off their bark and thrown it down; their branches are made white.*”**
* **These locusts are described just a bit differently than the ones in Egypt before the Exodus…these seem to be especially ravenous and terrifying.**
* **The Hebrew seems to indicate that there were none like these before.**
* **If that is the case each successive use by God for judgement will be worse than before.**

1. **Who are the locusts told to torment? Why?**

* **The locusts are used to torment all those on the earth who persist in living only for themselves and rejecting God’s Truth…**
* **The non-elect that have not previously been sealed…and whose names are not found in the book of life.**
* **These locusts while similar to the other uses in Exodus and Joel…are vastly different…**
* **They are unstoppable for 5 months,**
* **They are fierce, extremely painful, causing terror in all but especially towards non-believers.**
* **And they are meant to cause terror and suffering on all the unrepentant.**
* **It will be so bad…vs. 6-*“And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them.”***
* **For this period of time things will be so bad that this is their desire.**
* **Death is not an escape as many in this life seek to teach.**
* **No mercy in death by God… they desire it but it won’t come.**

1. **Who are they to leave alone? Why?**

* **God has commanded what specifically they are to do and they carry out their mandate to the “T”!**
* **Just like in the Exodus God’s people while in Egypt were separated by the blood of the Lamb so the death angel didn’t visit them…only the first born of the Egyptians/non-believers.**
* **His people to the degree that we aren’t personally attacked, but;**
* **We will suffer along with everyone else because of the economic upheaval that this will cause.**
* **We will have to listen to the cries and tears of people in pain.**
* **We will have to deal with people when they notice that the locusts aren’t affecting us in the same way.**
* **Just like when the Assyrians surrounded Jerusalem besieging it, God’s people had to suffer through even though God had planned and would soon execute His judgment against Assyria to such a degree that everyone knew it was God’s doing.**
* **God’s electing, effectual and distinguishing grace will preserve His people from a total and final fall.**

1. **What is Satan’s job at this point, again?**

* **To unlock the shaft of the bottomless pit…that’s all!**
* **God is the One who directs the locust to do as He wills.**
* **Why do we spend so much time in fear of him whom God directs?…**
* **Who can’t do anything more than what God “gives” him to do**
* **That is why Jesus says to fear God instead of Satan.**

1. **So, just so we are clear, who is this Trumpet focusing on?**
2. **What do you suppose is the point of all the descriptive language found in vss. 7-11? *“In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle: on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.”***
3. **Notice John’s use again of the word *“like”-* *“In appearance the locusts were like horses prepared for battle…”* it is as if John is struggling to understand and explain what he is seeing.**

* **He repeats this with each description:**
* ***“heads like crowns of gold”***
* ***“like Human faces”*- they come in familiar ways…familiar people…family, friend, church members.**
* ***“hair like women’s hair”***
* ***“teeth like lion’s teeth”***
* **Each of these is attached to these demons so they are counterfeit at best…seeking to make what was beautiful ugly.**
* **It is as if John is struggling to understand and explain what he is seeing.**

1. **Joel 2:4-5- *“Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run. As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle.”***

* **In these chapters in Joel God uses the prophet to give us the image based on real life events…of locusts and military might to describe the demonic army set against us all the time…and set against God that will fight on the LAST DAY.**
* **Now John adds some more devastating and horrendous details to these locusts/scorpions that come up from the bottomless pit...by the very nature of what they are called onto do and where they have come from we understand their demonic nature.**
* **Once again this is nothing new in God’s economy. Except this time they were only to torment the unbelieving people.**
* **Again, each successive use by God for judgement will be worse than before.**

1. **All of it together gives a vivid sensation of these demonic creatures sent to bring a spiritual plague of misery upon humanity.**

* **This can be seen in the number of marriages, partnerships and alliances being broken.**
* **This is seen in the growing numbers of mental illnesses and suicides occurring around the world.**
* **This is seen in the amount or drug and alcohol abuse where people are so seeking to get away from reality.**
* **Maybe also in things like alternate reality technology where we can set up our own world.**
* **This is seen in the amount of compromise even in the church.**
* **This is seen in the redefinition of things that have always been clear. Manhood and womanhood, Marriage between one man and one woman…**
* **This is seen in falsehood is being called truth and truth is called false.**

1. **The power to hurt people is in their tails, in the devastation left behind after the “fun” of sin has been had.**
2. **Again, what is being communicated by the “5 months”?**
3. **The normal lifespan of a locust in considered being 5 months.**
4. **Interesting that it is the same amount of time that the water stayed upon the earth during the flood…150 days Gen. 7:24.**
5. **Whatever else it means it certainly points to the fact that their time and terror are in God’s hands…not in their “king” but in God’s hand.**
6. **A 2nd mentioning of this in verse 10 helps us to see that there will be a lot of repetition of the same details and each time a little more details offered up.**

**The Revelation of John**

**June 25, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **So we must be clear, going forward: WE CAN EXPECT WAR, CIVIL UNREST, ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND INEQUITY, DISEASE, AND DEATH! Are we clear on this?!?**
4. **I keep reminding us of this so that we are not surprised by the hardships that are occurring so that we get it into our heads that we are in the final days.**
5. **So that we can be encouraged that Christ is returning…and He is returning soon.**
6. **What does this mean for us during this time?**
7. **Again, what are some of the things that are being communicated in God’s use of these super locusts, if you will?**
8. **This will be a terrifying, troubling time. We will seek relief in all the wrong places…even in death…but it won’t be found.**
9. **God has taken away and is taking away the grace that He has shown even to the unbeliever in these last days.**
10. **But in that there will be an end. For the sake of the elect, Jesus said, the time would be cut short.**
11. **The events that they represent have happened, are happening and are yet to happen and then the end comes.**
12. **Once again this is nothing new in God’s economy. Except this time they/it are to only torment the unbelieving people.**
13. **Again, each successive use of means by God for judgement will be worse than before.**
14. **Again, what is being communicated by the “5 months? “*They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails.”***
15. **The normal lifespan of a locust in considered being 5 months.**
16. **Interesting that it is the same amount of time that the water stayed upon the earth during the flood…150 days Gen. 7:24.**
17. **Whatever else it means it certainly points to the fact that their time and terror are in God’s hands…not in their “king” but in God’s hand.**
18. **A 2nd mentioning of this in verse 10 helps us to see that there will be a lot of repetition of the same details and each time a little more details offered up.**
19. **Continuing in chapter 9**
20. **In what regard is Satan a “king” over these critters? What do these names of verse 11; tell us about Satan’s purpose? *“They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.”***
21. **He is king of the damned...if you will…God’s instrument of judgment upon all the fallen and those who have not been chosen.**
22. **The names here designate his role in all of this…a destroyer= Apollyon and maker of destruction= Abaddon.**
23. **In both Hebrew and Greek it always means *“destroyer/tormentor…as in destroyer of worlds”!***
24. **He is leading all God’s enemies including himself into destruction…**
25. **All “kings” are under God’s control and direction whether they understand that or not…no different with this one.**
26. **This king is a tyrant who seeks only to destroy for his own pleasure…think of the many tyrants who sent millions of people to their deaths over the years.**
27. **John 10:10- *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”***
28. **Why is verse 12 here? *“The first woe has past; behold, two woes are still to come.”* (remember 8:13)**
29. **Just when they thought there might be a reprieve…after all it can’t get any worse can it?**
30. **John now announces in verse 12 that only the first WOE is past and there are yet 2 more to go….the worst is yet to come.**
31. **It could more easily be read this way… *“The first disaster is past, but now I see two more approaching.”***
32. **As the end draws near, there is a marked increase in the intensity and severity of the trumpet plagues is what is being pictured in these few words.**
33. **The vision shows clearly how bad things will be.**
34. **Vs. 13-19-“*Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents with heads, and by means of them they wound.”***
35. **What do we know about these angels? What is their mission? What can they do on their own…anything? Who do you think prepared them for the task at hand?**
36. **These angels are not commissioned or sent, as “good” angels usually are they are *“released”* to kill and to wound as God has commanded them.**

* **Sort of like a ferocious dog that has been penned up and then released on the unsuspecting people.**
* **Release the hounds!**

1. **This word “wound” in verse 19 is an interesting word. Their mission is to kill and to wound… I WONDER…could this “wounding” be all the false teaching that has wounded the Church through the ages… making it weaker?**

* **Arminianism, health and wealth gospel, universalism…all things that wound and weaken the church…**
* **False teaching damages the ability of the Church. It corrupts and contaminates the way we think and feel… it dictates what makes us angry and what is anticipated in the future.**
* **Why does God permit these false prophets to work such havoc on His Church?**
* **This is a very solemn question, and we must restrict ourselves to what the Scriptures say by way of reply because to here speculate cold be a dangerous excise.**
* **Deut. 13:1-4- *“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, ‘Let us go after other gods,’ which you have not known, ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.”***
* **From those words it is clear that God brings false teachers for the same reason as He does persecutors of His people: to test their love, to try their devotion, to show that their loyalty to Him is such that they will not give ear to His enemies.**
* **Error has always been more popular than the Truth, for it lets down the bar and fosters indulgences, and for those very reasons it is to be “hated” by the godly as it is by God Himself.**
* **Also, error serves as a flail or a threshing floor, separating the chaff from the wheat. Let some plausible and popular preacher come forward with an old error decked out in new clothes (New Perspectives on Paul, different and divergent views on creation or the end times) and empty professors will at once flock to his side; but not so with those who are established in the Faith. Eph. 4:11-14- *“And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, SO THAT we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”***
* **Thus, by means of the false prophets, God makes it clear who the ones are who hold the Truth in sincerity: they are faithful to Him despite all temptations to turn away to a *"broad"* way.**
* **The genuine gold endures every test to which it is subjected. Also the unregenerate "converts" are revealed: the counterfeit gold will not withstand the fire.**
* **Those who are attracted by a new thing only hang around until the next one exposes itself. *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”* (1 John 2:19).**
* **Thus, they who turn away from orthodoxy to heterodoxy must not be regarded as real Christians.**
* **Lastly, God uses false prophets for the punishment of those who don’t receive the truth. They are a sign of the end of the age. It is very clear from Matthew 24:5, 11, etc., that Israel's rejection of Christ and those in the latter days who reject Christ was/is followed by the appearing of many false Christ’s in their midst who fatally deceived large numbers of the Jews and so many people since Christ’s ascension.**
* **So many who have wound up in Arminian Churches have neither foundation nor assurance to be safe and often fall especially after a crisis. A very large proportion of those found in the cults of our day were once members of or regular attenders at churches which were more or less sound in the Faith. As has been said, I think by Martin Lloyd-Jones*-“Weak theology leads to weak doxology.”* Which leads to, as Sam Storm says, *“Theology without doxology is idolatry.”***
* **We must beware, and at the same time be prepared so we never find ourselves despising or distrusting God's Truth or we will fall in love with Satan's lies.**
* **The one who by grace can say Psalm 119:29-32- *“Put false ways far from me and graciously teach me your law! I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. I cling to your testimonies, O LORD; let me not be put to shame! I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!*” …will not be move from them.**
* **Just some Revelation speculation on my part! Lol!**

1. **Now back to the text: They were released from the same place historically, the region of the Euphrates, as the armies God used in humbling Israel. This either speaks to a place that Satan will marshal his forces against God on THAT DAY…or from a place (the pit/abyss) from which they come to spread throughout the earth bringing the plagues with them since there are so many *“The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.”***

* **100,000,000 or is it 200,000,000 troops?**
* **Greek= *“double myriad of myriads”*= an indefinite number. This is how Nebuchadnezzar’s army was often described as well… *“as far as the eye can see”* is the expression. This was true of many of the armies God used in the Old Testament.**
* **This is apocalyptic literature and as such the properties of this are different than other genres…as in the case of numbers they often stand for something other than the number given in English…**
* **While the words can be translated with numbers the exact Greek translation would read*… “Two ten thousands countless thousands” (double myriad myriads)...***
* **The Geneva Bible translates it *“twenty thousand times ten thousand” …***
* **The King James *“two hundred thousand thousand”…***
* **NKJV *“…two hundred million”…***
* **NASB- *“…two hundred million”…*while the words for these huge numbers can be translated with numbers…the point literarily is that this is an army so vast that it can’t be counted...and controlled by man! Think all the armies of the world save for believers… kind of picture.**

1. **They were released spewing all forms of death, described as having, *“fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths.”***
2. **Who commands them? What is their purpose?**

* **God does!**
* **Like the locust…they are not a “good” army.**
* **They are to maim and kill at God’s command as part of His judgment…not Satan’s.**
* **God prepared them and has kept them in a state of readiness.**
* **God had fixed the exact time for every event to occur. Think the use of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians and Medes and Rome…all armies at God’s disposal!**
* **Just as we have seen before in the OT all the forces of the earth are under God’s sovereign control. He truly is the Almighty One.**

1. **Where have we heard about *“killing a third”* or was it a fourth of mankind?**

* **Chapter 6:8- *“And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.”* 4th Seal**
* **Chapter 8:7- *“And a third of the earth was burned up…”* 1st Trumpet**
* **Precise numbers are not what Revelation ever goes for.**

1. **What about the plagues? LOOK AT THESE NUMBERS!!!**
2. **Since the number 3 represents divine wholeness, completeness and perfection, these *“3 plagues”* may refer to ALL plagues that have and are occurring and are yet to occur. Here are just a representative few:**

* **1st century Alexandrian Plague- Libya, Egypt and Syria- high death toll.**
* **2nd Century- Antonine Plague- 166 AD- massive loss of life. Estimates from 10-50% of the whole Roman Empire.**
* **The Plague of Justinian- Bubonic plague- 6th Century- 25-60% of Europe died 15-100 million**
* **The Black plague 14th Century- 30-50 % entire population 75-200 million**
* **Also in the 14th Century Leprosy grew into a pandemic.**
* **17Th Century saw 20% of the population of London was killed in what was called the great plague of London.**
* **19th Century- 1855- 12 million people in India and Chine died from a plague coming from China.**
* **The Spanish Flu- early 20th Cent.- 17-100 million**
* **20th and 21st Century- HIV/Aids- 42 million worldwide from 1983-2022- an average of 700,000 a year over the course of the last 10 years.**
* **Covid- 20 million so far…**
* **Many smaller plagues occur every year throughout the world.**
* **Many diseases that were eradicated have returned like malaria that kills up to 4 million people a year.**
* **Diseases like cancer, ALS, Parkinson’s and others that seem to be on the rise…**
* **Different forms of cancer- 1.8 million new cancer cases with 600,000 deaths reported in 2019, just in the US (according to the CDC)**
* **Hearts disease – 9 million worldwide in 2019-16% of the world’s population. (700,000 in the US alone in 2019- CDC)**
* **Stroke- 6+ million worldwide in 2019**
* **COPD- 3.5 million worldwide in 2019**
* **Neonatal conditions- 2million in 2019**
* **Abortion- 700,000 children in 2019 in the US alone. (Guttmacher and CDC numbers)**
* **Diabetes- 1.5 million worldwide in 2019**
* **Kidney diseases (on the rise) 1.3 million worldwide in 2019**

1. **Billy Graham is reported to have once said something like,**

* ***“If God doesn’t judge America for its egregious sins He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.”***
* **Well, He has judged and is judging us and the rest of the world; for more people have died since Christ’s ascension than that that ever made up the population of Sodom and Gomorrah.**

1. **Look back a minute to 8:1-4. What role do the prayers of God’s people have in the events that are unfolding? Ever thought of it that way?**
2. **This is what that passage was pointing to… *“I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet…”***

* **The *“voice”* has been understood to be the prayers of God’s people.**
* **The prayers of God’s people play an active role in the drama that is unfolding in the latter days…as well as those who have gone on before…both included together are an obviously powerful force.**

1. **When we think of the end times we do not consider “our role”!**
2. **What seems to be the result of all of this suffering upon unbelievers according to vs. 20-21?**
3. **2 times we read that they did not “repent”. They witness all of this death and destruction and their hearts are so hardened. They refuse to turn from the very things that are ruining their lives.**
4. **The trumpets have been blasting followed by continuous judgment even though they are preliminary to the final blow that is yet to come…but they love their lives too much…just like those who heard the warning about the great flood and continued in their sin up until the time the floods took them away.**
5. **Think chapter 6:15-17- *“Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’”* as what will happen next from what is said here.**
6. **At first those unbelievers who are not God’s will act even worse than they have been…**
7. **See Matthew 24 for Jesus’ words!**

**The Revelation of John**

**July 2, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **The purpose of these first 6 trumpets has been, of course, to warn a pagan and idolatrous world and the Church that judgment is coming.**
4. **The unbeliever won’t consider these as the judgment of God.**
5. **However, those of the Elect, will see them, by God’s grace, as what they are and be granted salvation in time. Matt. 24:21-22- *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”***
6. **Listen to Isaiah 33:3-4-*“At the tumultuous noise peoples flee; when you lift yourself up, nations are scattered, and your spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers; as locusts leap, it is leapt upon.”***
7. **The images that come to mind abound, I hope.**
8. ***“When you lift yourself up, nations are scattered”-* There will be fear of the end and for those who believe, a fear of God that will give great hope from across the nations, all because of Christ’s death and resurrection.**
9. ***“…and your spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers; as locusts leap, it is leapt upon.”* The image here goes along with the destruction in the end times which is meant as judgment on the non-elect (that will be gathered to perish on THAT DAY and eternally) and then to call the Elect to faith and the Church to repentance.**
10. **Now, let’s try to step back from all of this “interesting” imagery…hail and fire mixed with blood...a great mountain burning with fire…a star falling from heaven…an abyss…smoke that covers the sun and the air... an abyss…smoke that covers the sun and the air…then out of the smoke comes extremely well made poisonous locusts and then the fire and smoke and sulfur with the horses having power in their tails to wound….along with an innumerable number of troops arrayed with great armaments. When we consider these 6 trumpets so far what kind of things do we know they stand for throughout history since Christ’s ascension?**
11. **8:7-“*The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”***
12. **8:8-9- *“The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”***
13. **8:10-11*-“The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood.A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.”***
14. **8:12-13 *“The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night. Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”***
15. **9:1-3- *“And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth.”***
16. **9:12-15- *“The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come. Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind.”***
17. **Islamic terrorist problem, think 9/11**
18. **Hatred of Christianity... chooses idols of their own making.**
19. **Hatred of truth…calling untrue things true.**
20. **Hatred of authority…killing of police and the assassinations of leaders but even more than that…no fear of God no matter what is going on around them…that is for them...not for me.**
21. **Ill-gotten gain- gambling and thievery continues to be on the rise. As of last week (June 2023) now we have sports betting on Special Olympics.**
22. **Abortion, Euthanasia, Infanticide and physician assisted suicide- the murder of our children and the systematic killing of our elderly, by convincing them that they are a drain on their families and society…and that they should have the “right to die”.**
23. **Drug addiction and death.**
24. **Genocide in different parts of the world…man’s hatred of other men.**
25. **In appropriate relationships:**

* **Living together outside of marriage.**
* **Divorce**
* **Adultery being rampant.**
* **All types of “marriages” acceptable and unacceptable to men.**
* **LGBTQ-homosexuality, asexuality, transgenderism…all becoming rampant as fallen men and women attack the image of God…and are actually hating themselves…and rejecting how God made them.**

1. **Nothing new, of course, Read - Rom. 1:18-32- Mental illness leading to suicide!**
2. **Chronic illnesses (cancers, HIV/AIDS-ex.- 1.4 million adults in Uganda-5.4 % of the population , ALS, plagues), hardships, insecurities, death by unknown causes, severe pain and suffering of all manners… Listen to select texts from Deut. 28:15-68**
3. **Orphaned children…800,000 in Uganda because of parents who died from HIV/AIDS.**
4. **Blight and real locust have come to deplete the food supply of much of the world. In fact, the locust thing is almost yearly in parts of Africa…so many the size of *“biblical proportions”* that we hear very little of that leads to famine.**
5. **All Wars…but specifically both World Wars…and subsequent wars Korea, Vietnam, Gulf War…continuing War on Terror!**
6. **One commentator said this about Trumpet #5 specifically (but it would be true for all), *“whenever unbelievers suffer in this way, all the many- shaped ills which torment them, and which kindly death will not come to relieve- like chronic hardships, disease, enmities, and insecurities… these ills are the locust of Trumpet #5, marshaled and led by the angel of the abyss at God’s bidding.”***
7. **Many of these affect the believer as well but we have a hope of transitioning to be with God rather than the judgment of eternal damnation.**

**The Revelation of John**

**July 16, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **Why the interlude before the giving of the 7th trumpet?**
4. **What did we conclude about the mighty angel in verses 1-3? And why would this image be important to the people then …and to us today?**
5. **This is the book of Revelation…it is about revealing things formally not known or understood…so why does God not reveal to us what was said in the 7 thunders?**
6. **Some things we simply cannot know. Why? See Deut. 29:29.**
7. **In our desire to be ready for the end, we must not place more emphasis on speculation about the last days than our living for God in the last days.**
8. **What is the next thing that the “angel” announces? Vs. 5-7-*“*** ***And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as He announced to His servants the prophets.***
9. **See Dan. 12:6-10 for a comparison passage- *“And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, ‘How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?’ And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, ‘O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?’ He said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.”***
10. **The *“mighty angel”* swears by the name of God the Creator and Sustainer of all that the end is coming soon… *“there would be no more delay”.*  This is the time of the end that was told to Daniel.**
11. **God will delay His judgment no longer…the day of mercy is about to give way to the Day of Judgment.**
12. **A *“mystery”* in biblical vocabulary isn’t something no one knows.**

* **A mystery is something no one could know unless it was revealed to them.**
* **If you could know it by intuition or personal investigation, it isn’t a mystery, because mysteries must be revealed by God…biblically speaking.**
* **Therefore, something can be known and still a mystery in the biblical sense.**
* **And this *“mystery”* is most likely the unfolding of His plan from all eternity…just like this Revelation of John.**
* **an act of revealing or communicating divine truth- something that is revealed by God to humans**
* **an act of revealing to view or making known; something that is revealed; especially an enlightening or astonishing disclosure.**

1. **According to verse 7, only when God’s plan for human history IS completely revealed, at that time…at Christ’s 2nd Coming…all prophecy will be fulfilled in its entirety…the end of the age will have arrived.**
2. **It is the mystery of the way in which God’s promise to Abraham, that in him all nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3) would be fulfilled.**
3. **It is the mystery Paul describes *“making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.”* Eph. 1:9-10**
4. **In other words, it is the mystery of the gospel being completely fulfilled. Eph. 6:18-19- *“To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel”***
5. **So now the final judgment is at hand and we would then expect that the very next sentence would read “And the 7th angel blew his trumpet.”**
6. **We would expect the judgement day. Yet that won’t technically occur in our text until 11:15.**
7. **Just like after the 6th seal the 7th does follow immediately.**
8. **So what’s the delay about given that the angel said *“there would be no more delay”?*  10:8- 11:13 doesn’t necessarily indicate a delay it is just more information of what is going on at the same time.**
9. **In verses 8-10 the voice from heaven speaks again. *“Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, ‘Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.’ So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, ‘Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.’ And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.”* What does he tell John to do and why does John have such mixed reactions? Why does this little scroll make John’s stomach bitter? Why would something from God, especially something associated with His Word, first be sweet then bitter? What is God seeking to communicate to His Church here?**
10. **John is told to actually eat it in his vision and he does….all of it.**
11. **John needs to digest all of God’s truth the sweet and the bitter…for it is all God’s truth/Word…**
12. **He is to do this so he can be affected by it through and through…**
13. **That is… he must also experience both the sweetness and the bitterness…the suffering…which is always part and parcel with the Christian life… so he can better proclaim it.**
14. **Suffering for Christ’s sake is sometimes the better teacher enabling believers to persevere in our proclamation of the Word.**
15. **There are hard and terrible truths in the Word which are bitter and there are those truths that cause great hope and are sweet.**
16. **Bitter sweet…**

* **The Word is to always be sweet speaking of our communion with Him and His goodness.**
* **But in our stomachs the reality of God’s word is often bitter *“since we don’t have the stomach for it”* … *“we can’t handle the truth” …*we don’t understand and find it hard to accept how all the pain brings God glory.**
* **Before Christ returns believers who have the sweetness of communion with God will also have to suffer before the final triumph leaving a bitter taste in john stomach at this realization.**

1. **Compare :**

* **Psalm 119:1-3- *“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”***
* **Ezek. 3:1-3- *“And He (the LORD) said to me, ‘Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and He gave me this scroll to eat. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.’ Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.”* The prophet was also commanded to eat a scroll one that contain the revelation of God to Israel.**
* **So, this is obviously God’s Word.**
* **The gospel of God is always sweet to the believer but it is bitter in that it is often followed by persecution.**
* **The gospel is sweet to those being called by God but bitter to those whose hearts have been hardened against it.**

1. **In our day, it is also the lack of “ingesting” the Word…making it apart of us that leads to weakness and lack of assurance within the church. It leads to manifestations such as:**
2. **Depression…except to where because we live in a fallen world the body is not producing the necessary components needed to keep mentally healthy.**
3. **Anxiety- except where, because we live in a fallen world Bi-polar diseases and other can be somewhat treated.**
4. **Identity confusion…for the Christian this one is directly tied to our lack of ingesting the Word…or our lack of not being of the faith.**
5. **In these last days as the time gets closer to the end our suffering will be more intense but during that time we are to keep doing what God has proclaimed from the beginning…proclaiming His Word to a lost, dying and persecuting world…and encourage the Church to endure through these Last Days.**
6. **We are to be a blessing as Gen. 12 tells us…**
7. **We are to make disciples as Matt. 28 tells us…**
8. **We are to be His witnesses as Acts 1 so clearly reiterates what the rest of Scripture has said from the beginning…**
9. **This is the sweetness of the Gospel…we are not to be agents of despair and division and contempt before the world…that is bitter.**
10. **We are to teach the whole counsel of God even the judgment that is coming…as God’s heralds in these last days. It is however a message of bitter consequences for all who do not receive it.**
11. **Now specifically look at Chapter 10:11- *“And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.”*, what is God seeking to communicate to His Church through John?**
12. **There is yet work to do...In these last days as the time gets closer to the end our suffering may be more intense but during that time we are to keep doing what God has proclaimed from the beginning…**
13. **Can’t miss the message to be sure…that John and all who are called are to bring the message *“about”* the elect to those who have not yet come in and to us who are “in” to encourage the Church and to fill the kingdom since God uses His people to do both.**
14. **What is the church to do during these end times?**
15. **We are to be a blessing as Gen. 12 tells us…**
16. **We are to make disciples as Matt. 28 tells us…**
17. **We are to be His witnesses as Acts 1 so clearly reiterates what the rest of Scripture has said from the beginning and now we see to the end…which will bring us into the next section and the next question…**
18. **We are to love one another as Christ loved us…in the fullness of all that that means.**
19. **We will be God’s means to bring in His elect that have yet to come in and to bring back those who have wandered…James 5:19-20- *“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*”**
20. **So how does this chapter attempt to answer the first question, *“How long till the end?”***

**The Revelation of John**

**July 23, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **Again, why the interlude before the giving of the 7th trumpet? As there was an interlude between the 6th and 7th seals to help believers to swallow all that was about to happen (chapter 7)…to take a breath if you will…so here between the 6th and 7th trumpets is another interlude Chapter 10 and 11:1-14.**
4. **To give us a breather…**
5. **To prepare us by encouragement in the midst of the battle.**
6. **To remind us who is in control.**
7. **To help us to know and understand…that God’s Word is so sweet concerning eternal life…but the realities of this fallen world in these last days can cause our stomachs, which are weak by nature, to be bitter to the facts as it was meant to do.**
8. **These, of course, are NOT actual pauses of the actual sequence of events.**
9. **Many well-known commentators (dispensational and not) have said this interlude…this break in the action/judgment if you will, consists of answering the question of time… “How long till the end?” and “What is the Church to be doing during these last days?”**
10. **Chapter 10 speaks to the first question and chapter 11:1-14 speaks to the latter.**
11. **So how does chapter 10 begin to answer the first question, *“How long till the end?”***
12. **It is here now.**
13. **And it is yet to come.**
14. **Already and not yet!**
15. **And it won’t be long! “*There would be no more delay”***
16. **Rev. 11**
17. **As we come to Chapter 11 it is important once again for us to not speculate too much about the details. Since God’s Church is often referred to as a temple; the temple here represents the Church of God, if we consider Chapter 10:11 as talking about the elect from every nation, tongue and tribe. God’s elect come from all ethnicities… in His church He shows no partiality… no favoritism. I Peter 2:4-10 speaks of 3 of the ways God honors us speaking of the Church being the temple.**
18. **We are honored to be a place. I Peter 2:4-5 switches the metaphor from family to being a stone of the Temple of God. *“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house…”***
19. **Pay close attention to the words “being built up”= in the Greek is a passive…meaning that this is being done TO us…it is not action done BY us.**
20. **Christ is building us up into a “spiritual house”. This is accomplish with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.**
21. **What an amazing honor: we, sinners, individually and corporately, are being built up and we are the temple of the living God.**
22. **We are honored to be a royal priesthood in this temple. *“…to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”***
23. **All priests came from a specific tribe…the tribe of Levi…now n Christ all believers are priests.**
24. **Not just the temple but the priest offering spiritual sacrifices in the temple. *“Spiritual sacrifices”*= are sacrifices that are offered by virtue of the work of the Spirit in our lives, because of our love for God and for one another. See Rom. 12:1-2; Ps. 51; and Heb. 13. These are always sacrifices given in earnest not as simply a rote exercise.**
25. **Not just priest but a royal priesthood… *“…a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”* I Peter 2:9**
26. **We are honored to be a people. *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession… Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”-* I Peter 2 9-10**
27. **This if you will is a quadruple honor.**
28. **This was Israel’s honor once upon a time, as she represented the Church in the OT, but now it defines all believers in Christ…Jew and Gentile alike.**
29. **Again what doctrine is John made aware of and what is John to do in vs. 1 and 2 and why? *“Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.”***
30. **Again we see this constant theme of two groups of people. The elect… *“those who worship in the temple”* and those *“the nations”* who are outside of that group.**
31. **As we have just been saying this measuring of the temple…is the measuring/counting of the people of God …all those who are in Christ.**
32. **John 2:20-21- *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking about the temple of His body.”***
33. **I Cor. 3:16-17- *“Do you not know that you[c] are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.”***
34. **Eph.2: 19-22- *“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”***
35. **This is another form of speaking about preserving the people of God and that there is a place reserved for all the faithful.**
36. **This measuring corresponds to the sealing of the *“sealed ones”* in Chapter 7, which did not protect from physical threats of sickness or persecution but rather insures eternity to those who are God’s.**
37. **John described the church in Chapter 7 like an army of 144,000 and the church in heaven as a great multitude that can’t be counted.**
38. **Now we see the people of God as the temple. The NT uses this imagery so this is not new.**
39. **He is told to measure the temple which is similar to the earlier counting and sealing…this is an indication of God’s choice and protection of ALL His people.**
40. **What do you suppose verse 2 is speaking about when it says in part, *“…but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations…”*?**
41. **A few definitions have surfaced through the years with many being not viable.**

* **The first being that it is the persecuted church... I am not persuaded to this.**
* **Another one is… all those who believe themselves to be believers but have compromised with the world. I John 2:18-19- *“Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”* Also, those that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 7, as those He never knew… so these are those who ARE NOT in Christ…**
* **The world,**

1. **But specifically, these who are not in Christ, but who know better, turn on the Church and will do everything it can to silence and stifle the Church’s witness the world. Even now the world holds little respect for the church.**
2. **Doing everything in its power to undermine, oppose and persecute God’s people…but the Church will remain even if it appears to fall.**

* **The church has been so divided on the basic issues for so long that its authority to speak to culture is being mocked and ridiculed…and it is mostly the churches fault for this.**

1. **The one I hold to is simply the difference between the elect and the non-elect. God has promised to deal with the non-elect in judgment though He has also said that His people will suffer for we are called to suffering.**
2. **They, the world will trample the holy city…the Church at every turn.**
3. **Now what are we to make of this “42” months in verses 2 and 3? *“…but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”***
4. **Remember numbers in apocalyptic literature are normally symbolic.**
5. **So John is actually communicating what this time will be like and that I will be shorter than it could have been…not how long it will last.**
6. **This would have been comforting to them and should be to us that there is a scheduled end…even iif we don’t know exactly when that will be.**
7. **42 months=1260 days= 3 1/2 years= half of the 7 year period that represents the whole tribulation times from Christ’s ascension till His return. A time of intense conflict between the elect and the non-elect. But God has used this imagery before:**
8. **For 42 years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness from Egypt to the Promised Land…certainly a time of testing and judgment on His own people for their unbelief.**
9. **Elijah prayed that the rain would stop over Israel and for 3 ½ years…42 months God withheld the rain. Obviously another time of rebellion of God’s people in the Northern Kingdom…**
10. **Daniel vision 3 ½ years is the time prophesied concerning the tribulation of the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes during the Intertestamental period just before Christ’s birth. This was an intense time of suffering through which God’s people emerged victorious by God’s grace. But, of course, this looked to the end times as well for its complete fulfillment.**
11. **So whether it is 42 months, 1260 days, or 3 ½ years in revelation we should automatically think of it as a period of time for testing and suffering which is overseen by God from which God’s people will emerge as overcomers just like He told the Churches at the beginning of this book.**
12. **The tribulation will not be as long as it could have been, because of the elect…See Matthew 24:22- *“And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”* This is God’s grace for the elect…the persecution won’t be as long as expected…AND for the non-elect for the time of the tribulation could have been longer and more intense.**

**The Revelation of John**

**July 30, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **If asked, what is wrong with the world today? How would you answer that in a short form…since most people won’t sit still for long answers? And then do you actually believe it?**
4. **What did we say last week that we are to make of this “42” months in verses 2 and 3? *“…but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”***
5. **Remember numbers in apocalyptic literature are normally symbolic.**
6. **So John is actually communicating what this time will be like and that I will be shorter than it could have been…not how long it will last.**
7. **This would have been comforting to them and should be to us that there is a scheduled end…even iif we don’t know exactly when that will be.**
8. **42 months=1260 days= 3 1/2 years= half of the 7 year period that represents the whole tribulation times from Christ’s ascension till His return. A time of intense conflict between the elect and the non-elect. But God has used this imagery before.**
9. **The tribulation will not be as long as it could have been, because of the elect…See Matthew 24:22- *“And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.”* This is God’s grace for the elect…the persecution won’t be as long as expected…AND for the non-elect for the time of the tribulation could have been longer and more intense.**
10. **Before we move on: Turn to Matthew 25:1-13. The Parable of the 10 virgins is actually one of 2 parables that Jesus tells as He prepares to tell the disciples about the final judgment. Read 25:1-13 and vs. 31-34 let’s talk about how this parable reflects all that we have talked about up to this point.**
11. **Rev. 11:3-14- *“And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here!’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.”***
12. **And what do we make of these *“2 witnesses”* of vs. 3-14?**
13. **Since this is a section is filled with much symbolism, let’s consider together these things:**
14. **It seems it could also mean without actually drawing a sweat to make it fit:**

* **Luke 24:46-48- *“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”***
* **Acts 1:8- *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***
* **Why two?**
* **Well in John’s day testimony was confirmed by having at least 2 witnesses but in this case there were 4…**
* **The Apostle John, the “2 witnesses”, that represent God’s Church called to be a witness and the Godhead who gives the Word of proclamation….So it is confirmed that this would be done.**

1. **These “2” might represent a small number, but a sufficient number for God’s purposes of faithful…a remnant….the true Church…a smaller number within the greater body of professors.**

* **Interesting: within the letters to the 7 churches which represented the Church as a whole only “2” of them were free of anything against them from God…**
* **Smyrna and Philadelphia…**
* **Think 2 lampstands of verse 4…were these 2 “more” faithful?**
* **Christ sent His disciples out in groups of 2 to proclaim the gospel…not an army going one place…but a small group.**

1. **They could be two prophets that were in the midst of the church before the Fall of Jerusalem or they could be 2 prophets that might appear before the 2nd coming of Christ…but I find this 2nd scenario unlikely since the time of the prophets have passed…**
2. **Also, there could actually be a couple of main spokesmen for the Church that are being referred to here.**

* **By referring to them as *“2 olive trees”* they would be men like Zerubbabel and Joshua (Zech. 4:3)…who led the church after the Exile to rebuild the temple.**
* **These 2 are like priest and king…but it could simply mean that the power of these men will be evident within the true church at this time.**
* **The description of the men given in vs. 6-7, seem to be men like Moses and Aaron…describing the power that was given them in Egypt before the Exodus.**
* **Some have also looked to Moses and Elijah as those being spoken of here…vs. 6.**
* **In all cases, the true church is being called upon to stand firm in the face of great oppression and persecution…there must be many martyrs (witnesses) as represented by these “2”...for the Church grows and is sanctified by the blood of the martyrs. But God will protect the greater Body of the Church from all evil leveled against it (vs.5).**
* **Verse 5 is rather descriptive…what does he mean; in real time and space…since actual fire will not pour out from our mouth and consume our foes? Speaking God’s Word…His truth will in fact, bring down judgment upon His enemies…The elders have been given the authority to bind/discipline those with ungodly intent. The Word spoken has incredible power.**
* **What does this say about the Church today? Something we too often forget…we as God’s children equipped with His Word and His Spirit are powerful and not to be messed with. And… we have nothing ultimately to fear.**
* **Look at the power we have at our disposal as sons and daughters of the King. Why would we want to seek to define ourselves in any other way than how God defines us…**
* **This identity also comes with purpose. We have been created as we are with a purpose to glorify God exactly where we are placed by God. There shouldn’t be an identity crisis within the Church of the living God.**

1. **In God’s wisdom, our identity as image bearers simultaneously elevates and humbles us.**
2. **It reminds us our calling is too grand and too glorious to be contained in human categories.**
3. **But it also confronts our pride by reminding us we are not God.**
4. **In this sense, understanding our identity as image bearer’s centers us, putting us in our place in the best possible way.**
5. **However, *“2 witnesses, 2 olive trees and 2 lampstands”* more than likely refer to the same thing…namely the Church in opposition to the world.**

* **It is the Church… these witnesses…these lampstand…olive trees… with the authority of a Zerubbabel or a Joshua who are telling the truth that the world needs to hear.**
* ***2 lampstands, 2 witnesses, 2 olive trees* are all very public like the fact that we are, in Christ, the light of the world.**

1. **vs. 7*-“the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them”* …is an interesting phrase.**

* **This language was most often used at the time speaking of conflicts between two opposing forces- *“groups of people.”***
* **The world will rejoice when the Church looks like it is stifled and close to death, but of course, God is always underestimated even by His own people…think Elijah thinking he was the only one left…to the world thinking they can actually “kill”… snuff out the church, the way Satan thought he had won when Christ went to the Cross.**

1. **Jesus told us that in this life there will be *“tribulation”…*He could have used the word for hardship or the word for suffering…or the word for persecution…but He choose to use the word *“tribulation”* …for things will get remarkably harder before He comes. But then the Church has always been persecuted from within and from without.**

* **If the Church is in mind…let’s back up a minute to vs. 3- *“And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”***
* **This reveals how the Church needs to be humble *(sackcloth)* as it wields the power and authority of the Last Days as well as suffering under the persecution of the Last Days.**
* **Sackcloth is a garment of repentance and mourning…a symbol that one was guilty of sin and being mournful/penitent of that sin.**
* **So the ministry in these last days is to be one of repentance …the free call to forgiveness as the Prophets before us.**
* **Our ministry is wrapped up in the knowledge that judgment is real and the time is close so we must in the Spirit of repentance ourselves be calling others to repentance and forgiveness.**

1. **Can you see that God through John seemingly has gone out of His way to make the story of these witnesses sound similar to the story of Jesus?**

* **They suffer like Jesus and are raised to heaven like Jesus.**
* **The intended message to those in the 1st Century and the message to us today is the same.**
* **We should expect to suffer like Jesus …but we can also be expected to be raised like Jesus.**
* **Those two always go together for the believer.**

1. **What John foresaw was soon to happen.**

* **The Church was given great power and boldness to witness for Christ.**
* **The Church would be persecuted severely being fed to lions and being lit on fire as torches to light the city of Rome.**
* **But as with all persecution the more severe the more the Church grows…think Rome, China or Iran…the more persecution, the more the Church grows.**
* **So that the earlier church Father Tertullian would write in the 2nd Century that *“the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”***

**The Revelation of John**

**August 6, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review and continue in Chapter 11**
3. **When we consider the *“2 witnesses who are also the 2 olive trees and 2 lampstands”* what is being communicated to God’s church to be doing during these last days?**
4. **In the power of God’s Word and Spirit we are to do even greater things than Christ did when He was in the earth the first time.**
5. **We are given the power and the call to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**
6. **We are to be humble and repentant so that we do not become presumptuous and proud.**
7. **We are to realize we will suffer and then the End will come and our salvation will be complete.**
8. **Our identity is wrapped up in Christ and nothing else.**
9. **Compromise is not an option…loving one another as Christ loved the church is to be our primary function after loving God with all that we are.**
10. **Focusing on Christ…living in Christ…fearing the Lord with delight is the only reality that will get us through these last days intact.**
11. **Chapter 11 continued.**
12. **Let’s stop here a minute- We talked briefly about the action of the beast last time so what are we to make of this critter? Vs. 7-8-*“And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,”* What do we make of this critter?Where have we seen this critter/person before? (9:11; I John 2:18, 4:3)**
13. **So what part of the story is technically being told here? 6th seal (6:12-17)… 6th trumpet. (9:13-21)**
14. **What does the use of the definite article *“the”* indicate?**

* **That he is real and well known…Satan as we saw when we looked at chapter 9.**
* **It could be the beast of 13:2…which seems to refer to the same beast of Dan. 7:7…but I prefer the Chapter 9 reference since that seems to be the logical context at this time…**

1. **Verse 8 is an interesting verse. *“and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.”* From a Middle-eastern point of view what is being communicated by the fact that the *“2 witnesses”* were left to *“lie in the street of the great city”…?***
2. **To not bury someone is the ultimate form of disrespect for them.**

* **Most cultures in the Middle-east bury their dead within 24 hours…unless they are criminals of the extreme…and they might leave their carcasses up for all to see.**
* **These “men” were not “criminals” any more than Christ was.**

1. **This is the world under the sway of the Beast. As verses 8 says of this city … *“that symbolically (or spiritually) is called…”* This is given so that there is no mistake that God is not talking about a literal particular city.**
2. **The reference toSodom and Egypt seems to refer to major sins against God that we have known there:**

* **Sodom = immorality and idleness;**
* **Egypt =idolatry; oppression, persecution and slavery…**

1. **The direct reference is actually to Jerusalem but also, it represents as one commentator put it *“every city and no particular city where unrighteousness reigns”-***
2. **As the world looks on with its persecution and oppression it will delight in seeing what it perceives as its death…what will that look like?**

* **Churches having their tax exempt status taken away.**
* **Christian doctrine coming under scrutiny and being labeled “hate speech”…the Word of God being rejected or as Peter says, *“There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.”***
* **Democrats are introducing a bill doing away with the terms “husband” and “wife”. Air Force Academy is already seeking to make cadets conform to this.**
* **In the UK and Canada it is consider a chargeable offense referring biblically concerning homosexuality or the trans ideology.**
* **Not using non-binary pronouns is also a chargeable offense in the UK, Canada and many European countries and there are bills in our Congress to do the same thing.**
* **The secular world and many within the Church see our identity as something that we achieve instead of receive. They take the brokenness of a fallen world and fashion it into identities in everything but Jesus Christ.**
* **Christians put in prison for defying the government.**
* **Churches closing down from outside pressure.**
* **Christians being killed for the faith…more and more martyrs on the world scene…we see this now…more have been martyred for the faith in the last century then in any other and this century is poised to be worse.**

1. **But as usual God will bring upon His enemies the same as His enemies have been allowed to bring upon His people. This is God’s great promise that has always been true! Jer. 25:33-*“And those pierced by the Lord on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground.”***

* **The prophets reveal much about the end days when talking about the judgment around the corner…whether it be against Israel, Judah, Assyria or Babylon.**
* **Those who were not sent into exile from Jerusalem and Judah..*.*Zedekiah and the people left behind.**
* **The surrounding pagan nations deciding if they should join Zedekiah in his fruitless quest.**
* **All nations and peoples … *“on that Day…”* the Last Day!**

1. **Ah, the resurrection of the “2”…3 1/2 days later in vs. 11-14- *“But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here!’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.*” What is going on here?**
2. **Periods of revival occurs within the church …especially before the 2nd Coming.**

* **We always get all fired up when we actually come to realize that we are being persecuted…that there really is an enemy…and we need to get on the stick.**
* **Are we there yet? Has there been enough-**
* **Death…**
* **Enough misrepresentations of God and God’s Word…**
* **Enough open immorality for us to actually do something…**
* **Or are we still paralyzed…in shock over how things are turning out…simply can’t believe what this world is coming to…and we must be careful not to rock the boat.**

1. **It makes more and simple sense to see this as the resurrection of the Church…the Elect...**

* **than to think of a couple of guys being resurrected with no mention of God’s church…**
* **we are talking about people groups here…those who will be called up to meet with the Lord in the clouds and those who will be judged which is the 3rd woe …the 7th Trumpet. Vs. 14-*“The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.”* See also- Psalm 50:3-4; Jude vs. 14-16; Rev 6:12-17.**

1. **Then the resurrection of the Church at the Coming of the LORD… vs 12- *“Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here!’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.* …and then the judgment of the earth-vs. 13- *“And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.*”**

* **Not an invitation but a command. I Thess. 4:16-18-*“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”***
* **Isaiah, Amos, and I Kings all talk about events where 1/10th or 7 thousand people were spared when judgement wiped out the majority.**
* **John may have this in mind but flips it on its head, writing that only a 1/10th suffer judgment while the rest are terrified and give glory to God as they come to this realization of who God is too late.**
* **This may be what Paul writes about in Phil. 2… *“…that every knee shall bow…and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”***
* **We see throughout the OT that the threat of punishment doesn’t change a hard heart…but the moment judgment comes there is an immediate seeking of God…like “fox hole prayers”.**
* **But God has decreed the judgment and nothing will change it…it is too late…just like we often see in the prophets…it is simply too late.**
* **How many times does God say that He does not hear their cries? You can imagine that many cried out to God when the floods hit but God was not listening for they were destined to perish.**
* **It has also been surmised that this is another way of describing those of us who have come to know the Lord since the ascension of Christ, but this seems unlikely since nowhere in Revelation do we find anything that speaks of a great conversion of many believers just prior to Christ’s 2nd Coming.**

1. **All of this actually speaks to the great “COST” of witnessing for Christ. The declaration of the witnesses for Christ is costly… making many more martyrs. This work comes with this promise: *“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”* Rev. 1:3**
2. **In review let’s consider together how this vision of these 2 witnesses would have affected the hearts of John original audience. What practical and timely importance would this image have for the persecuted Christians in the 1st century if the 42 months (1260 days) was a reference to something that would happen thousands of years after their deaths?**
3. **On one hand, if the 31/2 years period is indeed a reference to the whole Inter-advent period…the whole age between the 2 comings of Christ…then we might see the relevance and encouragement not only for these 1st Century Christians and for every subsequent generation of believers as well.**
4. **As God’s people no matter how bad it gets we are not to have a bomb shelter mentality…or a prepper mentality for our calling has never been to retreat…think of the armor of God covering only the front.**

* **We are to, at the very least stand our ground. We are not to give up ground...think The Armor of God…**
* **But the fact is today, that the Church is in retreat on too many fronts and there is little practical protection for a retreat.**

1. **This would be an encouragement for they are not to fear Rome’s worst assaults…just like in the history of God’s people…there might be times when it appears the Church will cease to exist…it won’t.**

* **The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Persecution and suffering is our lot in life.**
* **God’s plan to do in His enemy would be and is an encouragement for His people just like it was in the past.**

1. **As the *“2 witnesses”* we the Church are called to preach with word and presence the gospel of Jesus Christ…we have been empowered by God Himself… He is the God of the miracle and the persecution.**

* **Our calling is not to be successful but to be faithful to the plan…to the mission as outlined by God…**
* **He gave us the mission plan…we know the beginning and we know the end…everything in between is just details.**
* **And we must be ready to die in this life for the good of the plan…for God’s glory, if that is our calling.**

1. **This is our Father’s World…what do we need to fear? See Rom. 8:35-39-*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***
2. ***“When men project the Church’s ruin, God is preparing for its deliverance.”*- Matthew Henry**
3. **On the other hand we must remember that we are all *“to bear witness”* for God:**
4. **That witness will have risk and pain associated with it and we shouldn’t leave this work up to a few.**
5. **And that ministry is everything that a Christian man, woman or child does for the glory of God.**
6. **There is a lot of work to be done and a short time to do it all…is how we need to look at it and this text tells us that it is a short time. It is just the right amount of time, because it is God’s time…but short none the less as God measures time.**
7. **As sons and daughters of the KING we should desire to reflect both His genius as Creator and His mercy and grace as Redeemer.**
8. **In the Song of Solomon the bridegroom makes a couple of statements about his bride that are eye-catching to be sure: Song 6:4, 10- *“You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners…Who is this who looks down like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?”***

* **The bride is like an army with banners? She is like the sun with the reflected beauty/glory of the moon. She is awesome!**
* **That is the true church, which is the bride of Christ: the church comes to reflect the bridegroom’s awesome magnificence.**
* **We know from the Apostle Paul that believers are being transformed from glory to glory…into the image of Christ. But Song of Songs specifically specifies that transformation is growth in a reflected awesomeness.**
* **Led by the Spirit into conformity with Christ, the Church begins to exhibit to the world fearsome divine qualities of holiness, happiness, wholeness and beauty which the world is coming to hate more and more.**
* **Thus the Church shines like the moon in the darkness, reflecting the light of the sun, having none on its own, bringing about wonder and dread to the world. Believer’s become like heaven’s Solid people in Lewis’s The Great Divorce; their wholesomeness and loving joyfulness are actually fearful to others…so much so that the world seeks to persecute and oppress.**
* **This is obviously troubling to the unbeliever for how it exposes their grumblings and their crookedness and foolishness. In the fear of God, believers become …like their God…blessedly and beautifully fearsome.**

**The Revelation of John**

**August 13, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **What is the main point that is communicated in the story of the “2 witnesses” to the church then and for us today?**
4. **Chapter 10 sort of answered the question of “How long to the end”? So with this in mind, how do these 14 verses answer the second of the two questions, *“What is the Church to be doing during these last days?”***
5. **Rev. 11:15-19**
6. **Let’s stop here a minute. What all kind of things had been going on between the 1st and 7th trumpets?**
7. **Judgements on non-believers.**
8. **Persecution and suffering of God’s church worsens as people see that we are resolved in our faith.**
9. **The elect from every nation, tongue and tribe continue to come in during this time.**
10. **What is this scene depicting when this 7th Trumpet is blown verses 15-19? *“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.’ And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying,***

***‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was,***

***for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.***

***The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged,***

***and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.’”***

***Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen within His temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.***

1. **The END! No waiting period… second…third or fourth chances…The End! My favorite part of a bad song!**
2. **There have been plenty of warnings and it hasn’t changed the overall landscape of people.**
3. **But then, warnings do not move the heart…only God moves the heart…and that wasn’t the plan for the enemies of the LORD.**
4. **The time is short…and here he is telling how quickly it will all happen.**
5. **God keeping covenant! Some say talk is cheap…and it is unless it is followed up with the actions that go with the words.**
6. **The New Heavens and New Earth! *“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”***
7. **Judgment is complete! *“The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged…”***
8. **Just as the trumpet of the 7th day blew down the walls of Jericho, when the 7th angel blows the 7th trumpet our pilgrimage in this life comes to an end…and we will possess all that has been promised in its entirety. *“…rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”***
9. **He will have cleansed…burned everything up and made it all new…He will have finally dealt with the destroyer and all His enemies.**
10. **What are some of the implications for the Church concerning the 7 trumpets?**
11. **Until the 7th trumpet God’s people are still coming into God’s Church.**
12. **While persecution abounds, we do not need to fear…all of it must and will happen then Christ returns.**
13. **Each new day is one day closer to His return.**
14. **We have peace with God now in Christ…we have security in Christ as well…we can fear God/ enjoy God something that those who dwell in the earth do not have and cannot have.**
15. **During this time our purpose and our identity is clearer than we might think on some days…We are His and we are called to glorify God!**
16. **We no longer belong to the world in any shape or form…influenced, tempted. God kept His wrath short for the sake of the elect.**
17. **Whenever we are tempted to give way to the fear as the world, we know we have a refuge… Jesus Christ.**
18. **In these last days anxiety abounds because of the fear of the world.**

* **Anxiety abounds because our culture has given up God as the proper object of our fear.**
* **The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom/knowledge in Scripture…and this is a happy and healthy fear given to us to control our unhealthy fears.**
* **The loss of the fear of the Lord ushered in an age of anxiety and weakness in these last days, but the fear of the Lord is the antidote to all our anxieties.**

1. **After 3 days breath returned to Him, He rose again and ascended to the right hand of the Father.**
2. **He has walked this road before us…He has run this race…but He will also walk this road with us.**
3. **With the sounding of the 7th Trumpet we are sealed forever in the Godhead …our salvation is complete.**
4. **God will physically dwell among His people!**
5. **Describe the worship that occurs at the sound of the 7th and final trumpet. Why such praise?**
6. **VICTORY!! This is what the Christian is to long for and desire above all else…that God’s justice would prevail and that the end would come in His time.**
7. **We are to look forward to that every day. As Martin Luther said, *“There are only 2 days on my calendar, This day and That day. Because That day is coming, This day can be lived with hope and patience.”***
8. **Who are these whom are praising God? Why is that significant for them and us?**
9. **Voices in heaven…the martyrs?!? As an answer to their prayers throughout time.**
10. **The Holy critters around the throne…praising God which is what they are called to do.**
11. **The saints that have gone on ahead of us…the great cloud of witnesses.**
12. **What doctrines do they remind us of by their words of praise?**
13. **One more thought here on this worship.**
14. **Turn for a minute to Rev. 20:11-15. *“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”***
15. **Comparing these two texts Rev. 11:15-18 and Rev. 20:11-15 we see that the Rev. 20 passage is simply another picture of the final judgment…more details.**
16. **It would be almost impossible to make sense of these sections if we think one follows the other chronologically.**
17. **We aren’t watching a movie unfolding in real time; we are looking at different angles of the same event.**
18. **As I said, rather than a movie…think of this as an instant replay…giving us the same event from different angles so we can see and have a better understanding of what is before us…while not even giving us all the information but enough to get a correct interpretation of what is happening and what is to come.**
19. **How should this prayer and worship instruct our prayer and praise today?**
20. **Vs. 19 is an interesting verse. This is seen as a response to the song of the elders. What things might this communicate to its readers for generations?**
21. **Wow…we have the answer to the question…Where is the Ark of the Covenant? At least we know where it will be. It is seen within His temple…**
22. **This tells us that He knows where it is now.**
23. **This also tells us that if he will preserve an object a symbol of His grace…then, of course, we are preserved in Him always for we will be seen in His temple as well. Rev. 21.**
24. **The Ark of the Covenant would communicate the blessing and promise for the believer as God is with them and has been with them (The ark in the OT was a symbol of God’s abiding presence with His people.)**
25. **The cosmic disturbances would communicate God’s divine wrath…AND at the same time His power and presence…He is not safe…but He is always good and right!**
26. **Once again this is not an earthly temple but God’s throne room. From the most holy place flows both the promise of covenantal love seen in salvation and at the same time righteous justice…grace and justice from the One True God.**
27. **The simple truth is this…this entire scene is a reminder to us and the world that God will faithfully carry out His covenantal promises for His people and that He will judge the enemies of His people just as He promised.**
28. **How should the knowledge of these 7 Seals and 7 Trumpets affect us as believers? What attitude should we seek to cultivate concerning this justice of our God?**
29. **They remind us that it is right for us to long for the day of justice but we should not have a heart of self-righteousness or vengeance.**
30. **We cannot assume that we are somehow less deserving of God’s judgment…**

**The Revelation of John**

**August 20, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **How should this prayer and worship in vs. 15-18 instruct our prayer and praise today?**
4. **How should the knowledge of these 7 Seals and 7 Trumpets affect us as believers? What attitude should we seek to cultivate concerning this justice of our God? How should they comfort us at the point?**
5. **Soberness- it is by grace alone that we are saved from this calamity and others are not.**
6. **They remind us that it is right for us to long for the day of justice but we should not have a heart of self-righteousness or vengeance.**
7. **We cannot assume that we are somehow less deserving of God’s judgment…**
8. **On that last day, Chapt. 11:19 we can expect our total glorification. I Peter 5:4- *“And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”***
9. **Rev. 12**
10. **The first 11 chapters’ capture all that will occur in between the 2 Comings of Christ in short form now the rest of the book simply elaborates on the events already spoken about.**
11. **Just like the first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis sets the ground work for everything else that comes after. This is something we need to remember as we move forward.**
12. **Everything has been already talked about and what is to come speaks of things in more detail…not new events but the same ones already spoken of with more details and ...yet...another perspective. Remember the instant replay analogy where we get to see the same event from different angels hopefully getting more detail.**
13. ***“God pushes back the curtain of human history and lets us peer backstage to know what really is going on behind the scenes, behind all the fury of drama that has been under way ever since Adam and Eve sinned against the Father* *in the Garden and was intensified with the birth of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.”* (Scotty Smith , Unveiled Hope)Thinking about this quote and what we have read here in our text what are some reasons he would talk about *“the fury of human drama”* intensifying because of the birth of Jesus?**
14. **One would be that we absolutely see the ultimate cause of the on-going tribulation of the people of God…Satan’s rage against the Church…His final blow if you will.**
15. **If he can just get us all to turn on God…but that strategy isn’t working overall…so he rages as the beast…and he seduces as the Prostitute (as we will see) …working overtime if you will to get his way.**
16. **But we have already been told…we know the enemies plan of attack…and we have been told while we may lose our life…we won’t lose!**
17. **Chapters 12-14 are an interesting interlude before we get to the Bowls of Judgment. These chapters seem to have a message for the believer that goes all the way back to the first chapter. An ongoing refrain that we have heard before. This section, Revelation 12:1–14:20, features the second coming again, as the great dragon, Satan, persecutes the church. If this event is meant to follow chapter 11, the chronology would be confusing. It’s better to see this section as another recapitulation, and the intensity increases as John uses the imagery of a bloody winepress for God’s great harvest judgment.**
18. **A Theme of endurance in hardship…with a promise of overcoming.**
19. ***“I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus…”***
20. **And the *“to the one who conquers”* phrases in each letter…communicating both the need to endure through to the victory won in Christ Jesus.**
21. **Also we made the point back at the beginning that if we are ever asked; What is the Book of the Revelation really about, you can tell then that the Revelation is a call to patient endurance of tribulation**
22. **And here is this interlude between the 7 trump[ets an the 7 Bowls John is coming back to that theme …which seems to be a primary aim of this letter …to call believers to patient endurance in these Last Days.**
23. **Or …as some commentators have suggested …that John, here in the middle of this book, is connecting his call to patient endurance to what makes the call necessary; namely, the pressure that Satan is placing on our souls to keep us from patient endurance in these Last Days.**

1. **What three players are spoken of in the drama/conflict that unfolds before us in the first 5 verses? *“And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne…”* This chapter is sort of a synopsis of what has been and what will be.**
2. **It would seem: The woman, Jesus, and Satan.**
3. **This might seem rather elementary but, who is the woman that gives birth to a son? The “obvious answer” may be Mary. But look close at the description here and in the rest of the chapter.**
4. **She is a radiant bride…language used of God’s people by God Himself. She shares in His light.**
5. **Remember Joseph’s dream of the sun, the moon and the 11 stars, which represented his father, mother, and his brothers all bowing to him. This was the family that became the 12 patriarchs which represent the covenant peoples of God.**
6. **12 stars could also represent the 12 Apostles… representing the Church…God’s people in their leadership.**
7. ***“She”* is the Church who gives birth to a Son….Jesus…Mary represent the Church as well.**

* **Just to be clear this is NOT just Israel as dispensationalists want to imply…**
* **For after Jesus ascends to God, the woman is left behind with *“the rest of her offspring…those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”* -12:17**

1. **The first time it was put forth that this was specifically Mary was in the 4th Cent. But that was never the position of the Church.**
2. **The early church through to the Reformers all understood this passage to be speaking of the cosmic battle between God’s people and Satan with God’s Son being the awaited Messiah coming forth out of His true bride.**
3. **So there are only 3 main players to this drama The True Church, Jesus, and Satan and his minion. As Mary was elevated she became more prominent but she still always represented the people of God.**
4. **Once again, maybe elementary, but who does the dragon represent here and what is he seeking to do?**
5. **Once again, we are introduced to the devil, our adversary…Satan.**

* **Our enemy who is striving to get us to stop patiently enduring**
* **stop us from overcoming**

1. **the 7 heads simply represent his authority given to him**
2. **the crowns= the authority God has given to him…He is powerful and has a universal reach all given to his by God to carry out His decrees.**
3. **10 horns represent his great power granted to him by God**
4. **12:9 defines for us who this serpent/dragon is, *“And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world…”***
5. **The dragon positions himself to seize and destroy the child of the woman…**

* **There doesn’t seem to be anything more urgent to him than this…and he seems completely convinced of his success…forgetting in his evil blindness who is in charge. *“that he might devour it…the Child.”-***
* **He believes that he can make the child succumb to his ways (think temptation of Christ in the wilderness) …and what we see here is also Satan always seeking to devour the church…a roaring lion. The dragon hates the Son as he hated the Father before the foundations of the earth because he hates to whole Godhead.**

1. **It may cause us to think of Mary…and there is a sense of that, but maybe even more so Eve.**

* **Ever since Eden, Satan has sought to destroy the promised child before the child put an end to his perceived dominion.**
* **God said to the ancient serpent in the garden that God would put enmity between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of the serpent…but the outcome of that conflict would not be in doubt.**
* **Gen. 3:15- *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”* The offspring of the woman will crush the head of the snake.**
* **Satan was behind the murder of Abel.**
* **Satan was behind Pharaoh making as decree that all Hebrew males were to die…drowned in the Nile River…sp Moses could not come forth.**
* **Satan was behind Saul’s murderous hatred for David.**
* **Satan was behind Haman’s desire to eradicate the Jews.**
* **Satan was behind Herod’s decision to order all male children to die under the age of 2 in and around Bethlehem seeking to kill Jesus.**
* **Each person was responsible for their own actions but Satan inspired the action.**
* ***“She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron but her child was caught up to God and to His throne…”* speaks of God’s king, God’s Son, in Psalm 2, to whom God will give the nations and the ends of the earth.**
* **So this single sentence traces the events of Jesus’ birth all the way to His resurrection and ascension to the throne at the right hand of His Father in heaven.**
* **And God will watch over His people during this time.**

1. **Note: a bit of historical context…Many have said that this is picture of Rome (ex. R.C. Sproul)…speculation which may fit an historical narrative…if Rome is in mind here then it would break down this way- (remember this speculation.)**

* **Rome was considered to be a dragon of great strength by many of the non-Romans of the day.**
* **With 7 heads= the fact that Rome was built on 7 hills(see also Rev. 17:9)- “City on 7 Hills/Mountains**
* **There would become 10 horns after Caesar Augustus for the Roman Empire was divided into 10 provinces.**
* **7 crowns/diadems=7 kings (See Rev. 17:10)**
* **The falling of the stars is seen as Rome conquest of 1/3 of the then known world.**

1. **Once again, elementary, who is the child? Jesus! And what do these few words tell us of this child?**
2. **Jesus’ rule and true authority are emphasized… 12:5- *“who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter”***
3. **But this secondarily speaks of the power of the Church which is called to rule…to have dominion.**

**The Revelation of John**

**August 27, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **So as we started this chapter who were the main players on the stage of history recorded here? What is the point?**
4. **The woman/the Church, Satan/ dragon, Jesus- the male child who would rule all the nations with a rod of iron.**
5. **To show us yet again in short form the conflict that has been going on, is going on and will go on between Satan and God’s church until Christ returns and makes all things new…vs. 1-5.**
6. **How does knowing this give the Church then and the church today…HOPE?**
7. **Now let’s pick it up at verse 6- *“…and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.”***
8. **Do you perceive a “Aha moment” here? If so, what and/or why?**
9. **Once again, we see the 1260 days spoken of…why and how does the wilderness tie in here?**
10. **This is speaking again of the period between the 2 comings of Christ.**
11. **This will be a period full of conflict in an evil world.**
12. **It speaks of the persecution the Church will exist under…wilderness has 3 images that immediately would come to mind for the children of God:**
13. **First- the wilderness wandering of their sinful, not obedient period when they refused to go into the Promised Land because the giants were too big…**

* **Even Joshua and Caleb had to endure that time in the wilderness…as a remnant of the remnant preserving and showing how God was keeping His covenant to bring His people to the Promised Land…**
* **So the true Church will be within the church between these 2 periods existing, thriving sometimes…not in others always being persecuted by someone somewhere with that persecution intensifying as time goes on.**

1. **Second- the wilderness experience of David as he ran from King Saul.**

* **There were times of hardship and times of celebration as these “marauders/raiders…rebels for God sought to work for God’s people and for God’s glory until David was finally elevated to the throne to which he had been anointed.**

1. **Third, Christ’s wilderness experience for 40 days where Satan tempted Him. This early church would have been taught about this temptation for them to know that in Christ they too can overcome.**
2. **Fourth, The True Church will suffer like wandering in a wilderness with no place to call our own…not being in its home…but it WAS God who prepared these “digs” and brought us here…so we will suffer but…**

* **But the church will be protected and provided for during this time…it will not cease to exist no matter what is thrown at it until Christ returns in glory.**
* **So the Church will not be raptured out of these last Days…it has always rode out the storm to the calm tomorrow.**
* **Remember: *“When men project the Church’s ruin, God is preparing for its deliverance.”-* Matthew Henry**
* **Vs. 6 will be spelled out in verses 13-17**

1. **What event(s) in history are verses 7-12 most easily speaking about? *“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”***
2. **And he utterly fails in his vicious attempt to destroy Jesus. 12:4-5- *“His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne…”***
3. **He is defeated by Michael and thrown out of heaven- 12:7-9- *“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”***
4. **He is defeated ultimately by the blood of the Lamb and the word of testimony.**
5. **The testimony of the martyrs spurred the Church on to greater things for the Lord.**
6. **The Church patiently endures for the glory of God which means persecution, oppression and death in these latter days…and if not those then our reputation, our friends will leave us…our jobs could be in jeopardy… (We see Christians getting fired across the workforce now…even greater numbers coming.)**
7. **Is this the battle that occurred before time in heaven or is this symbolic of the battle the victory won on the Cross by Christ?**
8. **Both? Col. 2:13-15- *“God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.”***
9. **Jesus’s atoning death put an end to Satan’s “right” to stand in the throne room of heaven and list out all of the reasons why you and I deserve God’s wrath…. On that Day the accuser was thrown out.**
10. **The battle in heaven that ultimately cast Satan from heaven the first step to his being cast in the lake of fire.**
11. **Satan rages and fights back all because he knows! 12:12- *“…he knows that his time is short!”***
12. **Given the reference to Gen. 3…we see the history of the world at play here.**
13. **Ever since Gen. 3, Satan has been tempting mankind and mankind has fallen over and over again…though God’s elect/remnant continue to return to Him in repentance…individually and corporately.**
14. **Among his attacks are accusations designed both to destroy our confidence and to engage God’s wrath against people as sinful as we are: Satan is *“the accuser of [the] brothers”* (Rev. 12:10).**
15. **Satan has been “speaking into God’s ear, if you will”, seeking to undermine the relationship with mankind, especially God ‘s elect…seeking to convince God just how bad people are…and His elect are even worse.**
16. **Think the conversation with Job…what was Satan’s ultimate desire?)**
17. **But in one crucial verse (Rev. 12:11), John tells us how these believers overcome the devil. *“And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”***

* **His attacks go to the very core of things…he is an accuser…our accuser…interesting that he still has God’s ear.**
* **But because of Christ all of us are able to overcome the devil…forever and a day!**
* **By the blood of the lamb. The word “by” here is an interesting word…it means *“on the grounds of”-***
* **When all Satan’s accusations are brought forward …Satan is silenced because our acceptance with God is not based on our own merit but on the death…the very blood of the covenant of Christ. See Rom. 8:34- *“Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”***
* **He is telling the truth to be sure about us…but that doesn’t change God’s love for His elect in anyway.**

1. **We also overcame *“by the word of their testimony”* This does not mean that they just frequently gave testimonies…it is highlighting the fact that they constantly bore testimony to Jesus in this life…**

* **By their words and their actions…even the ultimate sacrifice, if needed. *“…for they loved not their lives even unto death.”***
* **It is hard to defeat an opponent who is not only willing to die for what they hold dear, but also, for whom death actually means WINNING!Phil. 1:21- *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”***  **Our dying day is our ascension day! And on that day…at that moment we receive the crown of the faithful.**

1. **But now, if I read this section correctly;**

* **Christ has defeated death, eternal damnation and separation from God… and**
* **Satan has been thrown down…so the Only voice, God the Father, listens to is God the Son and the Spirit concerning His elect…**
* **Since we have been given the righteousness of Christ….Christ lives in us and we no longer live…God does not see the fallenness of His children...for it does not define our nature.**
* **We are to be constantly proclaiming the Gospel no matter the cost...not counting the cost!**
* **Our faith was evident, is another way to put it… so evident that we will be persecuted because of it…and so evident that people will ask about the hope within us. I Peter 3:13-17- *“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”* This spells Satan’s defeat as surely as Christ’s death and resurrection. When we keep silent, Satan wins!**

1. **So as His children we should not allow for the thinking that Satan is still seeking to undermine our relationship with God and he may win…we now have an Advocate before the Father day and night…not a detractor any longer.**
2. **We must remember still: The message of Revelation to them and to you and me is this:**

* **Doing battle against the devil may mean that we lose a lot in this life. We might lose our reputation, our friends, our job. We might even lose our life. But to live and die in the Lord will turn out for our blessing.**
* **To live our days on this earth all out for Christ, no matter what assault the devil sends our way, is true victory, not defeat. We won’t regret it.**
* **Our life won’t be over. We will awake to find ourselves among the many who have laid down their lives for the gospel before us. Jesus Himself will comfort and reward us.**

1. **This is good news…this is the gospel!**

**The Revelation of John**

**September 3, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **What are some take a ways for us from 12:1-12?**
4. **How would these verses have brought any hope to the people then and to us today?**
5. **Revelation 12:13-17.**
6. **Sooo… what is happening in verses 13-17? *“And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.* What are we looking at here?**
7. **See verse 6- *“and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.”***
8. **In many ways …this is simply a re-telling of verse 6 with a bit more symbolic information.**
9. **Satan couldn’t have Christ so now he pursues the Church...the last Days that we will see again in Chapter 20.**
10. **How does God take care of the woman/Church during this time?**
11. **The woman/church was given the “hope of the LORD”- *“2* *wings of the great eagle”***
12. **She is carried into the wilderness to be nourished. This is symbolic of the true church living as sojourners and aliens in this world between the 2 comings of Christ.**
13. **See Ex. 19:4*-“You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.”* Not real eagles but with haste and security and hope.**
14. **Isaiah 40:31- *“but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*”**

* **This is God’s way of doing business to give hope and to save His people from the onslaught of evil and darkness…**
* **You remember how hopeful all were in the Hobbit when the eagles came…*“The Eagles are Coming! The Eagles are coming?”*  Where do you think the imagery of eagles comes from for Tolkien? This is another of the places where he heartily said he used imagery from scripture.**

* **John Berridge, (1716- 1793), an Anglican evangelical revivalist and hymnist) put it like this: *“Run, John, and work, the law commands, Yet finds me neither feet nor hands; But sweeter news the gospel brings, It bids me fly and lends me wings.”***

1. **He provides for her a place to be nourished in the wilderness. The Church has not and will not be abandoned. What do you suppose this is?**

* **Jesus promised when He left that he would always be with us…Matt. 28:20.**
* **The Church lives in and by the Spirit of God, His Word and the Church as a whole.**
* **“Place” in Scripture often refers to the “place” of worship.**
* ***“for a time, and times and half a time”-* is another way of saying 1260 days or 3 ½ years. See Daniel 7:25-27. *“He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; His kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”* The End times as we have been saying. With Jesus with the Church and knowing the time He has set.**
* **But the Church will remain as is His way. Ezekiel 20:37-38- *“I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.”***

1. **vs. 15 seems a bit “fluid” at best… *“The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood.”* – goes to his deceptive ways, think serpent and how he talked in the garden.**
2. **Floods frighten people...drowning…whether by water or deceptive speech…which is what is in mind here…**

* **Deceptive speech that continually changes the cultural landscape to be divisive and trick us into thinking God is not with us…or to trick us into thinking that it is up to us…God may be there but He only helps those who help themselves.**
* **Prov. 10:19-*“When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.”* Speaking so much to confuse or to seem truthful when in fact not…always seeking to deceive.**

1. **So this is a river of continually changing cultural norms…**

* **This is change for the sake of change to where change becomes the “norm”:**
* **Trying to keep the church putting out fires,**
* **Keeping us off our guard…continually causing us to doubt and question…**
* **Changing God’s definitions trying to get the Church to buy into the changes…**
* **Teaching that immorality is good and getting the Church to remain quiet.**
* **All he has to do is keep us confused about the truth and he wins. See Dan. 7:25- *“He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.”***

1. **Today’s American church is so full of lack of assurance and trust in God because it doubts…it no longer understands the fear of the Lord…so it has nothing to compare the other fears to.…**

* **So it is suspicious of each other… too sensational…from the outside looking in you would have to wonder if the church actually got the memo that Jesus won?!?**
* **The church today also is full of naïveté and presumption. Many are unwilling to teach that Satan is still a mighty adversary… more powerful than we are…He has been dethroned but not done away with…yet!**
* **Much of the rest of Revelation going forward is written so that we may know what to expect from Satan and his minion…so we will know the schemes and his end…God is giving us a heads up so that we will be comforted in the dark times. Satan’s end is sure!**

1. **vs. 16 tells us that just like in days of old God would use: *“But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.”***
2. **The *“people of the earth”* to do His bidding even the protecting of His Church…think Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes, and Constantine a Roman emperor.**
3. **God will move in such a way that the evil factions will seek each other’s territory…or in so doing they over shoot their objective and end up helping those they set out to hurt (as we will see later)…because only God calls the shots.**

* **In The Lord of the Rings, in the *The Return of the King* section we find Gandalf talking to Pippin about the providence of the relationship between Frodo and Gollum, he says, *“Treachery, treachery, I fear; treachery of the miserable creature Gollum. But so it must be. Let us remember that a traitor may betray himself and do good that he does not intend. It can be so…sometimes.”***
* **Evil men in their desire to care only for themselves will sometimes do things that actually benefit others... as would be God’s will for them to do…thoughthey do not see it.**
* **In his greed Gollum ends up helping all those he hated by destroying the One Ring that he desired above life itself.**

1. **Also, our suffering during this time is a “good thing.**

* **The Bible is clear that God uses suffering to make us like Jesus.**
* **Evil is evil. It’s painful, confusing, and real. Behind it is the malevolent mind of Satan.**
* **But God uses it for his bigger purposes:**
* **Genesis 50:20- *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people[b] should be kept alive, as they are today.”***
* **Acts 4:27–30- *“for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”***
* **For all eternity your past experience of evil will enhance your eternal experience of glory.**

1. **Why is the serpent furious? Vs. 17- *“Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”***
2. **Having failed with Christ, Satan, like many men who have visions of grandeur in their minds and hearts, never concedes defeat. Every time he is beat back he returns with a renewed fury and vengeance.**
3. **He strikes individual believers because he “knows” (in his own mind) he can’t gain victory if he takes on a united group of believers. He attacks individuals which reminds us of the importance of covenantal unity.**
4. **God speaks and acts on behalf of His people. We are saved individually, if you will, but then we become part of the family and we exist for one-another. When we venture outside that family structure we become vulnerable since we were created to be One Body to glorify God…we can’t do it well or for long on our own.**
5. **What should the saints of Christ be prepared for as a result of the dragon’s fury?**
6. **I wonder if there is anything to be learned from Bilbo when he gets the best of Smaug in the Hobbit!?**
7. **Satan will seek continually to destroy our unity and undercut our assurance…his biggest tools are disunity…division…disillusionment within the family. Satan sets out to separate us from one another thinking that if we stand opposed to one-another:**
8. **He wins…**
9. **The testimony of the Church is weakened at best…destroyed in that location at the worst.**
10. **As we have said…it weakens us as believers when we do not have the refuge of our church…our family…**

* **We end up standing alone…and Satan can weaken that lost believer to the point of severe consequences…**
* **That is why it is so important to seek out the lost…lost brothers and sisters and the lost non-believers presenting them with the truth of the gospel.**

1. **But, we must remember…the truth remains...no matter how dark it gets…we must know that God is always with us and will not forsake us…we MUST know this!**
2. **We need to realize… Persecutions lead to Strength, maturity, and growth in the Lord…we become more and more people of the Word and the testimony of Jesus becomes more precious to us.**

**The Revelation of John**

**September 10, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **Just a reminder: Why is Satan so furious?**
4. **Having failed with Christ, Satan, like many men who have visions of grandeur in their minds and hearts, never concedes defeat. Every time he is beat back he returns with a renewed fury and vengeance.**
5. **He strikes individual believers because he “knows” (in his own mind) he can’t gain victory if he takes on a united group of believers. He attacks individuals which reminds us of the importance of covenantal unity.**
6. **God speaks and acts on behalf of His people. We are saved individually, if you will, but then we become part of the family and we exist for one-another. When we venture outside that family structure we become vulnerable since we were created to be One Body to glorify God…we can’t do it well or for long on our own.**
7. **What should the saints of Christ be prepared for as a result of the dragon’s fury?**
8. **I wonder if there is anything to be learned from Bilbo when he gets the best of Smaug in the Hobbit!?**
9. **Satan will seek continually to destroy our unity and undercut our assurance…his biggest tools are disunity…division…disillusionment within the family. Satan sets out to separate us from one another thinking that if we stand opposed to one-another:**
10. **He wins…**
11. **The testimony of the Church is weakened at best…destroyed in that location at the worst.**
12. **As we have said…it weakens us as believers when we do not have the refuge of our church…our family…**

* **We end up standing alone…and Satan can weaken that lost believer to the point of severe consequences…**
* **That is why it is so important to seek out the lost…lost brothers and sisters and the lost non-believers presenting them with the truth of the gospel.**

1. **But, we must remember…the truth remains...no matter how dark it gets…we must know that God is always with us and will not forsake us…we MUST know this!**
2. **We need to realize… Persecutions lead to Strength, maturity, and growth in the Lord…we become more and more people of the Word and the testimony of Jesus becomes more precious to us.**
3. **Revelation 12:13-17 continued**
4. **How are the saints…the believers… described her in verse 17? What does that tell us about what should characterize our lives?**
5. **We should live in such a way knowing that we will always BE IN SATAN’S CROSSHAIRS.**
6. **True believers are faithful and obedient to God’s Word and the Gospel of Christ. We should remember that we should seek to live more and more in the fear of the Lord so that we are not consumed with the fear of the world, Satan or even our sin.**
7. **Many in society and many in the Church have lost or ...maybe better, given up God as the proper object of healthy fear.**
8. **Our culture and the Church are necessarily becoming ever more neurotic, ever more anxious about the unknown—indeed, and ever more anxious about anything and everything.**

* **Without a kind and fatherly God’s providential care, we are left utterly uncertain about the shifting sands of both morality and reality.**
* **In ousting God from our culture and too often redefining Him in our churches, other concerns—from personal health to the health of the planet—have assumed a divine ultimacy in our minds. Good things have become cruel and pitiless idols. And thus we feel helplessly fragile.**
* **No longer anchored, society and the Church fills up with free-floating anxieties.**

1. **Clearly, the fear of God is not at all what we might expect, with our culture’s allergic reaction to the very concept of fear.**

* **Instead, we should be able to say with Spurgeon that this is the *“sort of fear which has in it the very essence of love and without which there would be no joy even in the presence of God.”***
* **In fact, the closer we look the closer fear of God and love of God appears.**
* **Sometimes fear of God and love of God are put in parallel, as in Psalm 145: 19–20*-“He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them. The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.”***

1. **We learn from history about the place of the Church in these Last days. In The Holy War, his allegorical story of the siege of the town of Mansoul, John Bunyan introduces his readers to Mr. Godly-fear, a man of *“courage, conduct and valor.”* The town of mansoul represents the soul of every believer along with being the allegorical personification of Christianity and a symbol of England of his day. It is valuable counsel, if you like allegories like Pilgrim’s Progress, on how to fight the good fight of faith.**

* **Mr. Godly-fear embodied Bunyan’s conviction that the fear of the Lord gives believers strength, PROV. 14:26- *“In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence…*” especially in the face of anxieties and the fear of man.**
* **John Flavel agreed and wrote that the *“carnal person fears man, not God; the strong Christian fears God, not man; the weak Christian fears man too much, and God too little.”***
* **We don’t tend to talk much about “the fear of man” today: we call it people-pleasing, peer pressure, or codependency.**
* **Some classic signs of it are the over commitment that comes from an inability to say no, self-esteem issues, and an excessive sensitivity to the comments, views, and behavior of others.**
* **And then there is the “fear of man” associated with how we react to the latest cultural construct like LGBTQ+, or transitioning…or equity.**
* **Codependency is seen as such a problem today that it has spawned a whole therapeutic industry and made millions for airport pop-psychology books.**

1. **When the fear of the Lord becomes central and most important, other fears subside.**

* **Likewise, Joshua would urge the Israelites before entering Canaan: *“Do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them”* (Num. 14: 9).**
* **And Jesus offers very similar counsel in the Sermon on the Mount. In telling his disciples not to worry, he gets them to look away from their worries to the kingdom of God: *“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* (Matt. 6: 31–33)**
* **In this, Jesus is not merely distracting his disciples from their worries, like a parent waving a toy when a toddler cries. He is reorienting their perspective. For our fears act like a blinding, disorienting fog, stopping us from seeing anything else.**
* **So Jesus puts God and his kingdom as the sun in the sky of their perspective, both above everything and enlightening everything.**
* **To be clear, the fear of the Lord does not eclipse and consume other fears simply because it sees God is bigger than the other things, though, as they say, there certainly is that.**
* **The delighted fear of the merciful Redeemer helps here, just as much as the awed fear of the Creator.**
* **It is beauty that kills the raging beast of anxiety. See, for example, how in Psalm 27:1, David speaks of the Lord’s *“light”* and *“salvation”* as the balm for his fears. When describing the Lord as his stronghold, refuge, and joy, David focuses on the beauty of the Lord: *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”***

1. **But a correct understanding of the fear of the Lord is what is needed in these last days.**

* **One author put it this way, *“Led by the Spirit into conformity with Christ, the church begins to exhibit to the world fearsome divine qualities of holiness, blessedness, happiness, wholeness, and beauty. Thus the church shines like the moon in the darkness, eliciting both wonder and dread. Believers become like heaven’s Solid People in Lewis’s* The Great Divorce*: their very wholeness and loving joyfulness are fearful to others. This combination is deeply alluring and inexplicable, yet at the same time troubling to unbelievers for how it exposes their grumbling crookedness. In the fear of God, believers become—like their God—blessedly and beautifully fearsome.”***
* **Oh and this makes Satan furious as well especially when we believe it and act accordingly!**
* **Michael Reeves from his book REJOICE AND TREMBLE says, *“The fear of God is the ultimate affection that expels our sinful fears, our anxieties, and our spiritual lethargy.”***
* **Martin Luther said about the fear of the Lord, *“To fear God is not merely to fall upon your knees. Even a godless man and a robber can do that. Scripture presents the fear of God as a matter of the hearts inclination.”***
* **Tim Keller in his Book FORGIVE: Why Should I and How can I? (a book that everyone ought to read before the summer is out) quotes Derek Kidner’s commentary on Psalm 130:4 *–“But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.”* When Kidner says, *“The fact of forgiveness here is certain, it is not in doubt. But verse 4 is also notable for the reason for our forgiveness, “that you (God) may be feared.” which may sound like a strange outcome of forgiveness. In reality it confirms the true sense of the ‘fear of the Lord’, in the Old Testament (really all of Scripture) dispelling any doubt that it means reverence and implies relationship.”* Then Tim adds, *“So this term would be best defined as a joyful awe and wonder before the transcendent greatness of who God is. The fear of God means then…to be affected deeply by who God is and what He did and does. The more we experience grace and forgiveness and love, the more we leave behind ourselves…it is then that we bow to Him in amazed, wondering submission to His greatness. When we really understand that we are forgiven to fear the Lord, it does NOT lead to “loose living” or independence but to respectful surrender to His sovereignty.”***
* **It has also been said through the ages that it is the fear of the Lord that makes Christianity the most song filled religion in the world.**

1. **They continue to honor and keep the teachings of the law and gospel.**
2. **What must we believe as well during this time? Jesus told us, *“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33)**
3. **Satan will seek continually to destroy our unity and undercut our assurance…but the truth remains...no matter how dark it gets…we must know that God is always with us and will not forsake us…we MUST know this!**
4. **John Flavel in his classic book Keeping the Heart gives us 14 ways to keep our hearts during these end times. I will give just 7 of them here: “Now let us inquire how a Christian may keep his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great and threatening dangers. There are several excellent rules for keeping the heart from sinful fear when imminent dangers threaten us:**

* **Remember that this God in whose hand are all creatures, is your Father, and is much more caring of you than you are, or can be, of yourself. *“For He who touches you touches the apple of His eye.”* (Zechariah 2: 8)*.***
* ***Let me ask the most fearful woman whether there is not a great difference between the sight of a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody thug, and of the same sword in the hand of her own loving husband. For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; he is Lord of all the hosts of creatures.***
* ***A religious young man was at sea in a raging storm with a number of other passengers, who were half dead with fear. He was the only one seen to be very cheerful, as if he was not concerned about the danger. One of the passengers demanded the reason for his cheerfulness. “Oh,” he said, “it is because the pilot of the ship is my father!”***
* **Urge upon your heart the express bans to fear. He has charged you not to fear: *When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified (*Luke 21: 9). *In nothing [be] terrified by your adversaries* (Philippians 1: 28). In Matthew 10: 26-31, within the span of six verses, our Savior commands us three times not to fear men.**
* **Solemnly consider that even if the things you fear should really happen, there is more evil in your own fear than in the things you fear!**
* **Fear is both a multiplying and a tormenting passion; it represents troubles as much greater than they are, and so tortures the soul much more than the suffering itself.**
* **Thus it was with a blessed martyr; when he would make a trial by putting his finger to the candle, and found himself not able to endure that, he cried out, “What! Cannot I bear the burning of a finger? How then will I be able to bear the burning of my whole body tomorrow?” Yet when that tomorrow came, he could go cheerfully into the flames with this Scripture in his mouth: *Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; . . . when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned* (Isaiah 43: 1-2).**
* **Be confident that you are doing your duty, and that will beget holy courage in times of danger. Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?**
* **It was this contemplation that raised Luther’s spirit above all fear: *“In the cause of God,”* said he, *“I ever am, and ever shall be, stout: herein I assume this title, ‘I yield to none!’”***
* **Hear the saying of a heathen, to the shame of cowardly Christians. When the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidus Priseus to not come to the senate, or if he did come, to speak nothing but what he would have him to speak, the senator returned this noble answer: that since he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate; and if being there he were required to give his advice, he would freely speak that which his conscience commanded him. The emperor threatening that then he would die, he answered, “Did I ever tell you that I was immortal? You do what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in my power to die with constancy.”**
* **Righteousness is a breastplate: let them tremble, whom danger finds out of the way of duty.**
* **Consult the honor of religion more, and your personal safety less. Do you think it is for the honor of religion that Christians should be as frightened as rabbits, startled at every sound? Will not this cause the world to think that whatever you say, still your principles are no better than other men’s?**
* **Learn to quench all despicable creature fears in the reverential fear of God. This is a cure by diversion. It is an exercise of Christian wisdom to turn those passions of the soul which predominate most into spiritual channels; to turn natural anger into spiritual zeal, natural joyfulness into holy cheerfulness, and natural fear into a holy dread and awe of God. This method of cure Christ prescribes in Matthew 10 and is similar to Isaiah 8: 12-13: *Neither fear ye their fear.***
* **Pour out to God in prayer those fears which the devil and your own unbelief pour on you in times of danger. Prayer is the best outlet for fear. Where is the Christian who cannot set his seal to this direction? And Christ is our best example (Mark 14:32).” (Hebrews 5:7- *“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.”)***

1. **When we live by these standards what is promised for believers found here?**
2. **Persecution**
3. **Strength, maturity, growth in the Lord…we become more and more people of the Word and the testimony of Jesus becomes more precious to us.**
4. **How can these two chapters bring hope and comfort to us today in our present circumstances?**
   1. **Since it was a book of hope to the people then it should be a book of hope to all believing generations as well.**
   2. **It is a book for today…A book that helps define for all who can see what is going on and where we are going.**
   3. **Since loneliness causes despair and there is so much …at least perceived loneliness…this book reminds us that we are not alone and that God is continuing to do that which He has promised from the beginning and that He is bringing to a consummation…SOON!**
   4. **It has been a book of hope in times of distress in the Church and a book of great consternation among scholars when the Church has been seemingly at peace. I say, seemingly, because the peace within the Church is a lie… for when we are fighting among ourselves it is the worst.**
5. **Ultimately what is communicated here about Satan, the Antichrist, the serpent and us…believers…that Christians need to take to heart?**
   1. **He is defeated but he is still a mighty adversary until the time when Christ returns.**
   2. **He has been conquered but not eradicated yet. See II Cor. 2:11- *“…so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”***
   3. **But God is always with us and will not forsake us…we MUST know this!**
6. **Sooo… Why, again, does God allow him such “reign”?**
   1. **Because it is His plan…the plan of redemption and the plan of future judgment of His enemies.**
   2. **He has always worked this way as it has all been built in to the “plan” from before the beginning.**
   3. **His allowing is simply His using the means that He created to use for His purposes.**

**The Revelation of John**

**September 17, 2023**

1. **Prayer**
2. **Review**
3. **Revelation chapter 13.** 
   * + 1. **Just a minute: Chapter 12 ends with, *“And he stood on the sand of the sea.”* What would be your first impression of who “he” is concerning this statement?**
4. **That Satan was standing at the sea shore waiting for something to come forth…which we see at the end of 12 and we will see at the beginning of chapter 13.**
5. **That Satan was standing there next to the sea contemplating his next move as if he reigns over the sea. The cultures of the time thought of the sea as a place of chaos and evil...something to try and tame but something that ends up taking life.**
6. **But what if the correct translation was, *“And I stood on the sand of the sea.”?* How would this change your perspective?**
   * + - 1. **It is said that John often stood on the seashore of the island that he had been exiled on to pray for God’s guidance…to “feel” closer to his churches across the sea…so if this is the case then perhaps the last part of this verse goes with the beginning of Chapter 13.**
         2. **Many of the older parchments favor *“And I stood (or I was standing) on the* *seashore.”…*which goes well with the very next verse in John’s continuing revelation sent by God.**
7. **We must remember that what is before us here is just a further explanation of the Church’s enemies…not new enemies…just old enemies described with more detail.**
8. **A couple of Satan’s minions. These are represented as 2 beasts; the first in vs. 1-10 and the second in vs. 11-18.**
9. **So together with the dragon these constitute an unholy trinity to stand as a counterfeit for and against the true Trinity.**
10. **Many of the Reformers saw this as the Roman Catholic Church…**
11. **First in its rise on the world stage as a political power**
12. **Then on the second dealing with its ecclesiastical power.**
13. **When you are looking for an Anti-Christ you can always find one…and given the separation and the apostasy that was evident at the time in the Roman Catholic Church leadership and its corruption of power it was an easy target.**
14. **But the same arguments could have been leveled against the Pharisees and Sadducees before and after Jesus’ time.**
15. **And also against the Jewish leadership during it worst corruptions…for it is clear that throughout the generations *“the abominations of the desolation”* have been occurring from within and without God’s people.**
16. **See II Chronicles 29 for an example of God’s people having to have the temple re-consecrated by Hezekiah because it had been so desecrated by past kings.**
17. **Describe the first beast using verses 1-4. *“And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’”***
    1. **Hydra, King Ghidorah…Godzilla’s enemies as well as the people of the earth. But, of course, it is none of these.**
    2. **While this imagery is only the things of science fiction and is strange to us…it wouldn’t be for the people of John’s day.**
       * + 1. **We have seen these images already in this book- Rev. 6:8 and 9:11…**
           2. **They would have been familiar with the Old Testament where there are other images related to…similar too as well…**

**Dan. 7:1-8; 11-12,…let’s go there a minute and compare and contrast the beasts of Daniel and Revelation.**

**In Daniel there are 4 beasts which have many of the characteristics of the beast (s) we will look at here in Revelation.**

**Daniel sees this vision of all the turmoil that will come to the world through the years and what God will do and he is so moved his color changes.**

* 1. **If this beast represented the Roman Catholic Church for many of the Reformers, who would the beast represent for these 1st Century people?**
     + - 1. **The beast here would represent the Empire of Rome for John’sreaders and hearers.**
         2. **Something to consider…the text says of the first beast, *“One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed…”*  This sound incongruous: if a wound is a mortal wound or a fatal wound how can it be healed?**

**A counterfeit resurrection of sorts!**

**This symbolism is obviously meant to describe the repeated historical manifestations of “this” monster.**

**He emerges in Nero, then to Domitian and Nerva in the 1st Century.**

**He emerges in many of the Popes throughout time like Innocent III or Leo.**

**He emerges as a Queen Mary or a Charles I persecuting the Church.**

**Or as a Stalin, a Hitler or any other dictator from yesterday and today.**

**In every case, eventually the monster is cut down…with many thinking that evil has finally been dealt with…only to come again in another person or ideology.**

**After the Third Reich we have seen genocide in the eastern bloc of the Soviet Union, in Cambodia, Rwanda, and in China and that is not to even talk about the millions killed through abortion, euthanasia, and infanticide.**

* + - * 1. **By presenting the person and work of Satan this way John is setting a question before his readers…like Elijah before him…Who will you serve? Which means he is setting that question before us, as well.**

**We may like to think that we can add some Christian faith on top of our ordinary middle class life, but we can’t.**

**We may want to think that we can have a consuming loyalty to our country or political party while maintaining our loyalty to Christ…but we can’t.**

**John is saying either we follow the Lamb wherever He goes …to death if need be…or we follow the beast and according to vs. 4 that is what the people of the earth choose to do. *“And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’”***

**Interesting that they are convinced there is no use putting up a fight. *“…who can fight against it?’”***

**And that is exactly what the beast wants us to think.**

**This is an interesting response to the beast for a few reasons:**

**Don’t we find it interesting that the beast would be worshipped…what would that look like today? Following without question a person or a spirit of modernism, materialism, socialism, climate change, death …whatever the pervading spirit of the age is. Many of the most despicable tyrants were “loved’ by many of the people…especially those who benefitted from being with him.**

**Another interesting aspect of their response to the beast is their sense of inevitability. The wording here is clear that there is no use putting up a fight…nothing worth fighting for…or fear of the beast…or, why fight when he gives us everything? “Resistance is futile!”**

**Their response reveals how they see themselves…as those not capable. This is what the beast wants and they fall for it hook, line and sinker as they say. Whenever we are battling against sin, he whispers in our ear, You can’t resist. This is who you are. You are broken and nothing will put you back together. You can’t help it you were born this way. Besides it in not that big a deal in the long run.**

**The question we often have goes something like this, *“Have people lost their reason/sense? Where has common sense (read biblical morals) gone?”* But they have in fact lost sense as well as their conscience to this “blindness”. They don’t think about the consequence on themselves or others they simply live in the moment.**

**A philosopher once said, “If man had but a sight of hell it would be enough to make him live a godly life.” Would it? of course not.**

**Solomon said this in Eccl. 9:3-6-*“This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.”***

**But Scripture, the One true voice, says, *“Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded.”* James 4:7-8**

1. **Vs. 5-10- *“And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming His name and His dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear: If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.”***
   1. **How many of us in here like to read words like these? *“And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming His name and His dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.”* –vs. 5-8**

**At first glance it seems wrong that the beast would be given this type of power. But then think Job!**

**Before thinking this too far-fetched…remember the devil and his minions were cast down …down to the earth…the devil is called the prince of this world after all.**

**So the rule of Satan has been confirmed in many places Old and New Testaments…**

**But, it is only a rule…likened to that of Assyria and Babylon used of God to bring about His planned end.**

**And he is given this authority between the Comings of Christ *“42 months”.***

**But it says he is allowed to make war on us and conquer us! What can that possibly mean? Martyrdom!**

**Allowing Satan to believe he has won. But where do the martyrs go during this time and what kind of influence do they exert?**

**His authority is obviously far reaching… *“And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.” –* vs. 7b-8**

**This gives him the impression he is winning as well.**

**All the time God is setting him up for a great and terrible fall along with all those who follow him who identify with the evil of the age…by not following Christ.**

* + - * 1. **Again the emphasis is on two groups of people…those with the mark of the beast/dragon…and those with the mark of God (7:3-4, 14:1) Also, first part of vs. 10 and the last part of vs. 10 shows the contrast as well using language of judgement from the prophets.**
        2. **We obviously want to conquer not be conquered*.* After all Revelation has made some big promises to those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.**

**But one of the main ways a believer actually conquers is…???**

**By laying down their life for the Gospel and for others.**

**Everything within and without tells us to preserve our life at all cost.**

**Jesus is calling His saints here to love Him more than we love our own lives.**

**Matthew 16:25- *“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”***

**John 15:13- *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”***

* 1. **Just an a aside: How is the 4th beast of Daniel’s vision (Dan. 7:1-8,) much like the first beast here in Revelation 13:1-10…the one that seems even more fierce than the first 3 in Daniel? Many have posited many assumptions. Dan. 7:23-27-*“As for the fourth beast there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”***
     + - 1. **Most will say that this points to Rome…with its 10 “mini- kingdoms”…specifically Julius Caesar and the succeeding kingdoms.**
         2. **While the imagery of the beasts may have been familiar to John’s readers, they might not have associated the Roman Empire with the beast.**

**Some churches had obviously seen the terrible nature of Rome up close and personal…**

**But others churches such as Laodicea and Thyatira likely enjoyed being part of the “free” Roman society enjoying the perks that came with being a roman citizen.**

**Others say that it points to the Seleucids and its 10 “mini-kingdoms”…which were overthrown by Antiochus Epiphanes…he was known for his craftiness and cunning…**

**Others point to Herod the Great as being pictured here as well…**

**Luther posited that was the Turkish Empire…**

**And then the Moors/ Muslims…**

**Fast forward could it be the Islamic “empire” that has been down and not so influential and then come back to life, if you will, through the centuries since Mohammad…that seems to be surging against God and His saints…and the whole non-Islamic world.**

**This beast and the next one represent all evil governments and groups (read governments of men) that have come along.**

**Anything anti-God is considered evil in Scripture.**

**In the first beast we have outright opposition against God’s people in these last days.**

**The devil’s tactics never change no matter the generation.**

**Think what it may be like to be identified as a Christian in North Korea, Communist China, or Iran.**

**In the next one we will see evil in the guise of religious deception. The beast will be described later as a “false prophet” in Rev. 19:20.**

* 1. **To summarize this into our own world a minute; if it was an actual representation of something or someone…a beast…a dragon…anything evil and vile… what would the natural response be of people? To turn away and fight against it. So, with that in mind, what do you suppose this beast symbolically represents?** 
     + - 1. **The State-**

**That seemingly stands up for the underdog…the marginalized…meeting needs for the “good of the people”**

**When all a long they are solidifying there reign over all the people.**

**It seemingly does what the people want for them to do as long as they are doing it to the other guy.**

**To oppose “hate” speech…religious doctrine that doesn’t promote any lifestyle…any immorality…any life and death decision.**

**To do away with the pesky practice of free speech to promote “equity”.**

**So this beast is out to divert our loyalties away from Jesus as our only hope and toward the state and its policies and programs as our best and only hope. Perhaps we should be willing to recognize this power at work closer to home.**

**This first beast represents governmental tyranny throughout history working against Christ and his church. It is political and governmental powers demanding the loyalty that belongs to Christ alone.**

**Because this beast is so devious, we don’t always recognize the work of the beast for the tyranny it is.**

**Sometimes the evil of political, social, and economic entities is subtle. Instead of appearing beastly, it appears beautiful. Instead of outright persecution, its ideas and actions are much more subtle, yet equally as evil.**

**They are beastlike in the way they demand loyalty to their philosophies, language, sexual ethics, priorities, and methods.**

* + - * 1. **The Church…at least the compromised reprobate church.**

**Just like the state standing up for the marginalized that are seemingly that way because of societal constructs …**

**Not standing up for true justice based in God’s Word.**

**But it says what the people want to hear.**

* + - * 1. **Some other “trusted” entity that as people we have become dependent upon…like?**
  1. **In vs. 10 and in vs. 18 we have a call to the church. Vs. 10-*“Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.”*  And vs. 18- *“This calls for wisdom…”*  What is the point? What is God seeking to communicate to His church with these verses?**
     + - 1. **Endurance in the face of great suffering…death, oppression, imprisonment for our beliefs… because God promises that His own will persevere to the end...for He has us in the palm of His hand and no one can take us out of His hand neither the hand of the Son. (John 10)**
         2. **This is a call to endure ...just like the rest of Revelation when it is not easy to follow Christ…**

**We are to continually prayer for endurance and faith to simply believe. *“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”* we know the drill.**

**We are to pray for endurance and faith simply to continue during this time when times get tough…giving others around us an example.**

**We are to continually pray for endurance and faith that we might continue no matter the cost to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.**

**We are to continue to pray for endurance and faith so that we can more and more love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength…and our neighbor as ourselves.**

**We are to continue to pray for endurance and faith so that we can continually call others to endure in faith in these times!**

* + - * 1. **Faith is a certainty of so great a salvation through our deliverance into the New Earth. (Rom. 5:1)**