

Why Revelation?

Text: Revelation 1.1–3

Theme: God gave the revelation to and through His Son. Why don't we use it?

Introduction – Sunday night, September 9, 2001

- you have a very strange dream; see horrific scenes
- two huge, giant metal trees, burning, crumbling
- prior, two large metallic birds collide into trees causing devastation
- every living thing in those trees die in fire and collapse

Next morning, Monday, September 10, you wake up very bothered

- you understand part of this odd vision
- try telling people: many don't want to hear it
- others don't believe you; life too good right now for such nonsense
- still others think too confusing to listen to, so ignore what you've told them
- only a few, dedicated listeners take heed and are warned

You know I'm talking about what happened on Tuesday, September 22, 2001

- what would you do if you knew ahead of time what was going to happen that day?
- who would you tell? How would you warn them?
- would you, yourself live any differently?

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.

(Revelation 1:9 ESV)

- something far, far worse than 9/11 is coming
- and we've been given all we need to know about what's coming
- not some weird dream or strange vision, but God revealing His truth to us
- God revealed to Moses and Israel what they needed to know & live
- God revealed to Samuel & he spoke this Word from God & began a revival among Israel
- when Josiah discovered lost Word of God in his day, society as whole transformed
- Ezra read God's Word out loud to people; repented, changed, turned to God
- why not today through what we have before us: the book of the revelation of Jesus Christ?

Early in 2021, I believed we needed to know the message of Revelation

- we needed it to live as God's people in world today
- we needed it to stand pure and strong in face of rapidly growing evil
- then I realized needed Daniel to better understand Revelation
- have also learned should go through Ezekiel, parts of Isaiah, and Zechariah as well
- but here we are: the book of the revelation of Jesus Christ

God gave us this revelation

- gave it to His Son, Jesus Christ, who entrusted it's message to an angel
- that angel appeared to John on Patmos and gave his this entire letter
- John, then, passed it along to seven churches in Central Asia
- those seven churches received it, read it, cherished it and used it

If they did then, we must ask...

I. Why We Don't

- before thinking about why we need to, let's think about why we avoid this book

1. Because we're afraid we won't understand

- hope you've read through it; used the devotional guide given last June
- if you have, you know: strange creatures, other-worldly imagery
- some scenes not only difficult, but perhaps disturbing
- you may know it's also apocalyptic and think right away: nope, not gonna do it!
- but book not written for those with secret decoder rings to figure out
- not written for scholars only, those who've studied for years & still barely know it
- written to ordinary believers in ordinary churches
- they were expected to understand it...and did
- so, book wasn't given to us by God to confuse us, stir up conflict or bring on fear
- written so ordinary believers like you & me will read it, hear it, embrace it
- in doing so, we'll be blessed

We also try to avoid Revelation...

2. Because we know there are lots of disagreements about it

- it's true; there are many who disagree on how to interpret this letter
- there are a few main approaches & schools of interpretation on these matters
- but this should not be a barrier to any of us
- my goal in preaching Revelation is not to win allies or create sparring partners
- my pray is that we all see Jesus Christ, high & lifted up
- my practice will be to do what I always strive to do: simply preach the Word of God

There's a third reason we often avoid the last book of Scripture...

3. Because we think Revelation is mostly about the future

- as American Christians, we're highly pragmatic when it comes to the Bible
- just tell me how to live it; don't bother me with deep theology
- and the future? It's all so far off, I can't relate to any of it
- but would John the Apostle have written to these seven churches if it weren't meant for them?
- there were things they needed to know 1900 years ago about Christ's return
- what would be different for us, who live 1900 years closer to that return?
- Revelation gives us a bit of everything: past, present, and future
- it gives us a reality that we need to know about now, to prepare us for the future
- yes, there are events here that will take place, perhaps in a future some time off
- but this book has little to do with *when* Jesus will return
- it's emphasis is upon what we are to do, who we are to be, and what we will need to endure
- so, let's do just that: patiently endure until Jesus comes

But one other reason often keeps believers from getting into Revelation...it's

4. Because we're uncomfortable with great suffering

- yes, there are some strange images & symbols presented in the pages of the this book
- but we, as Christians in America, have lived very comfortable lives
- the threat of being exiled to a deserted island or beheaded by the king hasn't been an issue
- so, when we read of plagues and trials, tribulation suffering and martyrdom, we flinch
- and we avoid thinking about it
- this is why it's good for us to talk about & pray for persecuted church in world today
- knowing what they go through can prepare us for what lies ahead, even for some of us
- Revelation invites us into this world of tribulation

- but it strengthens us toward patient endurance because evil's days are numbered

Well, let's consider...

II. Why We Should

- reasons why we should study it, hear it preached, read it and obey it are far greater
- let me give you just a few

We should study Revelation...

1. Because we can understand its central message

- it's not necessary to nail down every single image or symbol to know what God tells us here
- our goal should be to listen, take to heart and apply that which IS clear
- many NT scholars disagree as to details
- but most all agree on the central message, the big picture
- God is the sovereign judge of all mankind, and when He sends His reigning Son to bring it all to a close, those who are His will rejoice, while all who stand opposed to Him will be judged for all eternity

We should give time to this book...

2. Because we need to see this world from heaven's perspective

- sadly, too many people take today's news headlines & interpret Scripture by them
- but you'll always go wrong that way, every single time
- in Revelation, the curtain to heaven is pulled back for John
- as he writes what he saw and heard, we get to look in upon it as well
- all that he gives to us is from heaven's perspective, not the world's
- and if we would do the same, we'll be better able to see true nature of things
- instead of merely severe suffering upon earth, we'll see the Christian's grand victory in Christ

Then, we should study Revelation...

3. Because we want the blessing of 1.3

- prosperity gospel preachers have tainted the meaning of being blessed today
- we think it means just living a good, pleasing life
- God will use Revelation to correct those assumptions that we have however
- it says very clearly in the opening words of Revelation:
- 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.
- John closes with almost the same exact words
- "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Revelation 22:7 ESV)
- so, if you truly want to be blessed, let's study Revelation & keep it

The final reason we need this study is...

4. Because we need to live out Revelation's story

- some of us just want to live "the American dream" whatever that may be
- others hope to "live happily ever after"
- still others tell children, as they grow, you can be whatever you set your mind to
- but there is story that you & I as Christians should be living out
- that story must shape our every day life
- that story is all about the kingdom of God, and we must live it out

- Revelation will definitely help us do just that

So, we enter into this prolonged look at the last book of the Bible.

III. What We Need

- we've seen reasons we avoid this book and why we must avoid those reasons
- we've considered briefly why we need to get into this book
- but what do we need to grasp all that God has for us?

1. A sanctified imagination

- John wrote this in his first letter:
- That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life
- here, John will be writing about what he sees
- but what he sees is not like what he saw when Jesus walked this earth
- so, our minds need the Holy Spirit to help us see what John saw
- and not what these things look like literally...often that would just be foolish
- no, our heavenly imaginations must be employed because this is from heaven's perspective
- so, pray God's Spirit gives you eyes to see, as well as ears to hear

2. Developed skills of interpretation

- most of us avoid apocalyptic passages because interpreting them isn't easy
- but that gives us weak interpretive muscles
- so, we're going to need a good workout to develop skills at seeing the meaning of this book
- we'll need to see how God's Word uses symbols to tell us about a different reality
- we'll need to see how John uses the OT, while never actually quoting from it
- we'll learn to see how what John sees represents something more
- there are no secrets in this book; what God wants us to know has been given to us

3. Eyes & ears open to the Old Testament

- there are references to Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zechariah, just to name four OT books
- John gives us the same picture of the very same God of the OT prophets as he saw
- heaven, the throne of God, the kingdom, and the heavenly Jerusalem are the same
- John knew his Bible; Bible he had was the OT
- so, be ready to do some reading and digging in the OT to help us here

4. The overall picture of the book of Revelation

- Lord willing, next Sunday, I'll be singing the song of Revelation
- the melodic line is important to each of us here
- it will help us comprehend many of the details, seeing where they fit into the grand scheme
- so, don't miss next Sunday...I'll leave it at that!

5. No more unhealthy preoccupations with the future

- while some avoid this book, others are sick because it's all they look at
- or should I say: they get a calendar out, study their newspapers, and try to figure out timing
- they try to piece together puzzle pieces not actually given to a picture never viewed by God
- Revelation wasn't written to entertain us
- not here to give us a timeline or vast copiously filled-out prophecy charts
- don't get upset if I don't talk about the rapture because Revelation doesn't talk about it
- my heart's longing in preaching this book is not to feed your fascination with future events

- it is to make us see the Lamb slain who reigns as King and comes for us & to judge
- there is much beauty, truth, hope, and help for daily living in these 22 chapters
- I long for each one of us to see that, embrace Him, and sing with that heavenly chorus

Conclusion – Biggest Challenges

- there will be many challenges we'll face as we walk thru the revelation of Jesus Christ
- I hope you'll read it as a challenge
- it's 22 chapters, 404 verses, 11,465 words long: about 1 hr 40 minutes even for slow readers
- I hope you'll read passages for each upcoming sermon; try to list them in bulletin

But more than that will be the challenge of...

Living up to it

- grand schemes of Christian living given us here
- to be witnesses, to conquer & be victorious with Christ
- to put off sin, withstand evil, and not be deceived by idols

But even harder than that, the greatest challenge of all will be...

Living it out

- your life will need adjustments because of this book of God's Word
- your mind will need continual transformation as we walk thru it
- the challenge is given in the very promise of blessing itself
- blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.
- let's go hard after this blessing together, shall we?
- and may we all anticipate what God will do in us and for us