

Same Song, Second Verse

Text: Revelation 1.1–3; 22.6–7

Theme: Seeing God's glorious justice and steadfast mercy strengthens us to live lives of worship and patient endurance by faith in Jesus until He comes.

Introduction — Two surveys, interesting results

- a survey: what book most church-attenders would like taught or preached from the Bible
- same survey asked: which book of Bible most pastors don't want to teach or preach
- the book was the same in both cases: the book of Revelation

Why do you think that might be?

- another survey said vast majority of Christians either don't read or study Revelation
- why? Afraid of it, or afraid they won't understand it
- I almost titled this sermon: Revelation or Obfuscation
- and now since many might be confused...
- the irony is that to obfuscate something is to confuse or hide it's meaning

Many Christians are right there when it comes to Revelation

- some are fascinated, some obsessed
- others avoid because it is obscure
- others frightened by those who think they know it all
- others have nearly ruined this book by conjecture, speculation, and foolish imageries
- I fell prey to this, in early 70s, great images of beasts like locusts in Rev 9 depicted as Apache helicopters
- other such vain and muddleheaded imaginings ensued and still do to this day
- so, it's no wonder so many wish to study it but preachers don't want to preach it

We must not be afraid of this book

- do not be afraid of images & symbols
- do not be afraid of what we see coming down the pike
- do not be afraid of struggles to understand it properly
- we need this book more than ever today

Can we understand the book of Revelation?

- yes, we can; especially if we learn the song of Revelation
- we have begun to learn it, haven't we
- *The book of Revelation is seeing God's glorious justice and steadfast mercy strengthening us to live lives of worship and perseverance by faith in Jesus Christ until He returns*
- use this theme & you'll understand it
- you may not understand every detail, but not necessary to understand every detail
- you will still profit spiritually: remember Rev 1.3
- just hear it read each week
- but read it out loud as a family
- read it to your spouse, read it to your children
- it is most beautiful and most practical book in New Testament
- this means pictures, symbols, and images meant for...us
- we're meant to interpret them, understand them, and apply them to our context today

Yes, Revelation is difficult...at times

- it is apocalyptic literature: an unveiling and a revealing of Christ & the course of history up to the end
- we don't like apocalyptic though
- why? Because it's fueled by Old Testament
- and if you don't read the OT...
- if you follow some men's advice & unhook the OT...
- you're not going to get it, understand it, be blessed by it, nor keep and obey it
- instead, we must see God's history of redemption thru whole Bible to see all this

Revelation has 404 verses

- in those 404 verses, there are over 500 allusions to the...Old Testament
- John uses nearly every OT book
- most from Psalm Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel
- usually miss this because we just stick with familiar Sunday school stories instead of the whole
- more of OT referenced here than in any other NT book
- more than half of these references come from...you guessed it
- Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel
- 404 verses, 500+ references, and many come from...Daniel...and most from Daniel 7!
- Isaiah has the most of any OT book, then Daniel most in proportion to size

Symbols are vitally important, but make it somewhat difficult

- there are colors mentioned and they mean things
- ch 1.13: golden lampstands, golden sash, white hair and robe, feet like burnished bronze
- symbols are important: we must learn to understand them
- animals are used symbolically: dragons and beasts and horses, oh my!
- what do these things mean? We'll keep learning this
- objects used symbolically: lampstands, stars, and more
- when you see these symbols, look for what John tells you these things mean
- he does this with the stars and the lampstands
- numbers play a large part in Revelation, must seek meaning behind them to understand
- ch 1: number seven...literal when it comes to the seven churches
- but seven is also the number of completeness or fulfillment
- just ch 1 alone: 2x, v.4; 1x v. 11, 12, 16, and, get this: 7x in v 20
- more than seven churches in Asia, so why only seven: completeness or whole church of Christ
- also, as we saw, those seven churches formed a circle...a complete circle on the map...hmmm
- seven churches, seven spirits, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven signs, seven bowls
- do you get the idea? These numbers are important
- number 3: the Trinity; number 4: number of creation; number 12: number of people of God
- we'll see this more and more as we come to more numbers

Now, I am fairly certain that some, if not many of you, may disagree with my approach to Revelation

- or you'll disagree strongly with my conclusions
- so, what do you do with that contention?
- first wrong thing to do is just to come and argue with me
- it would be wrong, for you just may well lose the argument
- but another, more important reasons is this
- you're so busy arguing with the Word of God preached that you miss the blessing of Word of God

- don't do that, miss the blessing
- instead, simply enjoy the glory of God in the face of Christ & the promise of His return

Well, this has all been a good review by way of introduction

- and yes, I planned it this way, because we need reminding of how to view this entire book
- with what is coming down the pike in chapter 6 and beyond, we needed this review

But let's continue this review by considering...

I. WHAT WE'VE SEEN SO FAR

- I am reminded of words of Peter in 2 Peter 1
- *Therefore I intend always to **remind** you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of **reminder**.*
(2 Peter 1:12–13 ESV)
- so, in just a few moments, lest we forget the Lord our God, let's be reminded

1. What this book is

- let consider briefly, what we've seen in chapter 1

1) Revelation

- Rev 1.1: revelation of Jesus Christ
- word used is word *apocalypse*, which simply means an unveiling, a revealing
- the glorified, reigning Christ is made know
- God's sovereign rule over all things throughout history since Christ's ascension is unveiled

2) Vision

- Rev 1.1 — “to show”
- normally, in NT, the key verb is “to hear”
- but here, John's most frequently occurring verb is “to see”
- and I saw
- so we must be geared to visions

3) Prophecy

- Rev. 1.1 — what must soon take place
- now, you know that prophecy is not just about what is to come in the future
- it is also a forth-telling of God's Word
- and that's what we see in Rev 1.1–2
- yes, it's that which must take place soon
- but it is also the very Word of God
- and it is meant for a present purpose
- this word tells us of God's glorious justice and steadfast mercy which strengthens us to live lives of worship and patient endurance by faith in Jesus until He comes

4) Letter

- we mustn't forget that this book is actually a letter; a letter to seven churches
- but as we've already seen, with significance of number seven: it is to all church completely
- so, read it as such: letter from heavenly Father about His dear Son
- who through His precious Holy Spirit will see all of us through to Christ's return

2. Who we've seen so far

- the number three is a great number in this book
- it is the number of the Triune God
- and we see Him everywhere

1) Jesus Christ glorified

- right from the very beginning chapter, we see the risen, ascended, glorified & reigning Christ
- He is Lord over His churches and His Church
- He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah: strong and mighty and able to deliver us
- He is the root of Jesse, of David's lineage, the Once and Future King for all time
- we saw also, at end of ch. 5, that He is worthy
- the only One worthy to take scroll of God's history & open it & carry it out

2) God the all-glorious Ruler

- did we not rejoice and sing praises to our God in ch. 4?
- He is there, seated upon His throne, ruling every thing and every one and every event
- nothing escapes His gaze; nothing is outside His sovereign rule
- and He is holy, holy, holy, and the only way we can approach Him is thru Christ
- otherwise, He comes in judgment against the unholy

3) Holy Spirit actively working

- this is what the Spirit does, from Genesis 1 onward: He works
- He carries out the will of the Father
- He brings to fruition the work of Jesus Christ
- and He works now within the church, guiding, guarding, giving strength to endure by faith

Now, that's just a fast overview of chapters 1–5; let's consider, for just a moment...

II. WHAT WE'RE ABOUT TO SEE

- there is much yet to come in chapter 6
- Lord willing, we'll examine 6.1–8 next Lord's Day
- I challenge you to read chapter 6, once each day, for the next six days
- familiarize yourself with the wording, the language, the images
- then, as we take the next three Sundays to consider this chapter, you'll understand
- you'll understand what God has for us
- you'll understand how Christ reigns over His enemies
- you'll understand how we, His church, can endure by faith, in the midst of these open seals

1. Remember who Christ is

- and by remembering who Christ is, you'll be reminded of who we are: His church
- remember: He walks among the lampstands — His church
- He is with us, through the Holy Spirit
- His ministering angels watch over each true church, whose light shines the gospel outwardly
- His triumph washes over us and keeps us close
- this is why, to the church, Jesus says, "Nike!" —greek word for victory, overcome
- we are to overcome, by faith, thru the Holy Spirit, because Christ is already victorious
- so as we see these judgments of God against the wicked
- as we consider the horrors of some of the righteous judgment of God
- we will persevere, endure, overcome, conquer, and then ultimately reign with Jesus Christ
- even if some end up giving their lives as witnesses — martyrs — they overcome
- this is all part of God's plan for history

- and Christ is ruling over it all

2. See God's people preserved through tribulation

- we'll see God's people, who are sealed by the Holy Spirit, kept safe from the wrath of God
- God's wrath is poured out in judgment upon the wicked
- this has been happening in times past
- I believe we're seeing some of it right now, as God gives our nation over to its sinful desires
- there will be an intensification of this as Christ's return draws nearer
- but we *have been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it*
- the possession of that comes when Jesus comes and we reign and dwell with Him thru all eternity

That's just some of what is coming in the next several Sundays; but there is more, so think, just a couple of minutes on...

III. WHAT WE WILL SEE

- Revelation, in many ways, is written like much of OT wisdom and poetry
- there are parallels, both in statements and in its images
- in the Psalms, this happens frequently, as it does in the book of Proverbs
- what usually takes place is that a statement is made
- then, in the next line, a restatement is made, but with intensification
- sometimes it is subtle; other times, it is a serious intensifying of the truth made
- this happens in Revelation as well
- in ch. 6, we'll see the seven seals being opened by the One who is worthy to open them: Christ
- then, will come the seven trumpets, which are nearly like the seven seals
- except that they are more intense in their judgment, as well as in their mercy
- seven signs will come along, doing much the same thing
- and when the seven bowls of the judgment of God's wrath are poured out...same thing
- except this will be the most intense of them all, leading up to Christ's ultimate return
- Revelation is not a chronological timeline, written to tell us step by step of future history
- there are these parallels that repeat the theme once given
- there is a recapitulation of events and judgments, an incredible intensification taking place

1. Intensified justice

- God's wrath is and will be poured out upon the wicked
- none who rebel against Him will escape His wrath
- neither in this lifetime or throughout all eternity
- God's justice will be vindicated & His children will praise Him for this

2. Intensified mercy

- every announcement about God's wrath to come is a mercy
- it is a call of warning to the unrepentant to "Repent and believe"
- to turn from the wrath to come
- but it is an even larger mercy to those who have repented and have believed
- we are covered, protected and kept from that wrath
- not by way of escape, but by God's merciful hand

3. Intensified Christian living

- we must seek to live more holy lives, more godly lives

- the Lord uses us as His agents on this earth to cry out with His gospel mercy
- but the world won't pay attention if we live just like they do
- so, our Christian living must look radically different
- now for some, maybe even some of us, this might come with a high cost
- that's what the fifth of seven seals is all about, as we'll see

4. The need for Nike!

- the promise held out to each of the seven churches is this
- to the one who overcomes — to those who *nike* — are victorious
- this is a major piece of the whole song of this book
- we are to overcome in Christ
- and because of Christ...we WILL overcome

Conclusion – Revelation is many things

- a revealing of Christ & God's will for all history's consummation
- a vision of what is to come, using images, symbols, numbers and more to help us see
- it is a prophecy, both foretelling and forth telling the will of God
- and it is a book of worship; most just ch 4 & 5
- we'll keep seeing worship throughout the rest of this book
- but as a book of worship, it has a song
- and here is the song we'll keep singing as we walk thru Revelation
- song of Revelation is seeing God's glorious justice and steadfast mercy strengthening us to live lives of worship and patient endurance by faith in Jesus until He comes.