



"DEAR CHURCH", PART 1 JESUS AND HIS CHURCH

July 14th, 2019
Randy Remington

BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

"Whatever your Island of Patmos, your island of rejection, is called—whether "relationship", "family" "spouse", or "children", whether "finances" or even "despair"—whatever it is, there's a greater revelation of Jesus coming. 'Don't be afraid.'"

—Pastor Randy

MAIN TEXT:

The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

John,

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

"Look, he is coming with the clouds,"

and "every eye will see him,

even those who pierced him";

and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him."

So shall it be! Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. (Revelation 1:1-20)

ADDITIONAL TEXTS:

As I looked, thrones were set in place,

and the Ancient of Days took his seat.

His clothing was as white as snow;

the hair of his head was white like wool.

*His throne was flaming with fire,
and its wheels were all ablaze.*

*A river of fire was flowing,
coming out from before him.*

*Thousands upon thousands attended him;
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.*

*The court was seated,
and the books were opened.*

Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Daniel 7:9-14)

MESSAGE SUMMARY

The book of Revelation is a revelation of Jesus; this is the key to interpreting the Scripture. This is a revelation that Jesus is giving (v 1). The word revelation is the word apocalypse, which means an unveiling, or revealing the unseen. "Apocalyptic" has come to mean the disastrous ending of the world, but while revelation has to do with that which is to come, it primarily has to do with revealing.

In both the New and Old Testament, we are told to trust God with our future. Revelation is not a cryptogram, allowing us to know the future. Divination, or an obsession to know the future through the divine, is forbidden in the Bible. If you were to have knowledge of the future, you would be in control. We are not meant to know that which is outside of the boundaries of knowledge which God has established for us. The Scripture doesn't disallow being a discerning person, but it does prohibit preoccupation with divining the future to control our own destinies.

Revelation is a prophetic book in that there is a word from God to us. Revelation says that this world as we know it is going to end. From a Biblical perspective, there's purpose in the now because this life is preparation for that which is coming. There will always be a part of this life that is unsatisfying, because it is not all that there is, and this book gives us a beautiful glimpse of the completeness and order that is to come. Jesus is coming, and he will establish his kingdom, and there will be no end to it.

Revelation is also a letter to the churches in Asia Minor, or what is now modern Turkey. The book of Revelation is for us as the church, but it was to them. The important question we have to ask about a real letter written to particular people in a specific time, is "how would they have read and understood this letter?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. Have you ever felt isolated and shunned? What happened?
2. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear "Don't be afraid"?
3. What example or story stood out to you in the sermon? Why was it significant to you?
4. Last time we met, we talked about [whatever you talked about]. Has anyone had a chance to put that lesson into practice? Has it has an impact on your life in anyway?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Based on the first three verses of Revelation 1, how would you summarize what the book of Revelation is about?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONT.

2. What are Jesus's first words in chapter 1? Why do you think Jesus would have said that first?
3. There is a promise in these opening verses that we don't find elsewhere in Scripture. Blessed is the one who reads it aloud, who hears it, and who takes it to heart. Why do you suppose this is?
4. Randy mentioned that the picture of Jesus is him among his church (the seven lampstands). Why do you think Jesus is depicted this way in the symbolic imagery of Revelation 1?
5. Daniel 7:9-14 speaks of the "Ancient of Days" having hair that was "white like wool." Read Revelation 1:13-14 and discuss the similarities and differences between the two passages.

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Randy mentioned that while earthly rulers have a sword in their hand, and a message in their mouth, it is the opposite with Jesus. We see him here with a double-edged sword coming from his mouth, and with a message in his hand. What does the difference tell us about Jesus's rule compared or contrasted to earthly rulers?
2. Randy mentioned that there have been several books published in which the authors have attempted to predict various events using the book of Revelation. Why do you think our human tendency is to grasp for knowledge of the future?
3. The Bible specifically prohibits divination, or attempting to know the future through supernatural means. In the Greco-Roman world, people were consumed with consulting oracles as knowledge was power. What forms of divination do you see today?
4. Why do you think God instructs His people to not engage in divination?
5. Randy explained that the genre of novels is fairly recent. People in ancient times would not have had the framework to understand a story told as though it is true, outside of maybe a play. Similarly, Revelation is written in a way that is unfamiliar to most of us today. Describe some features in Revelation that may be helpful to understanding the book as you read on.
6. The Roman Emperor at the time John wrote Revelation was Domitian. While his persecution was not as devastating as that of Emperor Nero, in certain regional areas, Christians suffered persecution and external pressure. The churches named in this letter were some of those churches who were under severe pressure. While Revelation does concern future events, what does it mean to you that the letter is also about how the church should persevere in times of distress?

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Revelation gives us a glimpse into seeing Jesus in a way not elsewhere described. How does the description of him in vv. 12-16 alter your understanding of who Jesus is?
2. The seven lampstands represent the church, and Jesus is among them. Randy mentioned that Jesus cannot be known apart from his church, and that often the church is how people are introduced to Jesus. How might a more active awareness of this effect how you live?
3. Jesus appeared in a vision to John although he was in isolation as an exile on an island. Describe a time in your life when you have been isolated and the Holy Spirit found you.

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS,
CONT.**

4. When life is difficult all seems hopeless, how does knowing the final result is God's victory help you to remain faithful?
5. If a blessing is promised for those who read, hear, and take to heart this book, will you?
6. If the world were to end up in nothingness (as those without God would say), what would that mean for your life? From where would you derive meaning and purpose? How does knowing that there is an eternal future with God help you to endure trials and suffering you experience today?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What is something from Revelation 1 you could apply to your life now?
2. What did you learn in Revelation 1 that will alter the way you interact with God and others?