

“REVELATION WRAP UP.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Revelation 1:1-8, 17-19

Introduction.

What is the main thing you will take away from our study of Revelation? What is the main truth, or encouragement or challenge or exhortation? What is different for you because of our study of this part of God’s Word?

Let’s reflect on this journey through this more remarkable book, a journey that began September 2014.

In that first sermon I said we would see and hear and feel things strange to our eyes and ears and senses. And indeed we have. We have seen the great throne room in the great celestial city of the New Jerusalem.

We encountered an explosion of symbols and graphic imagery to dazzle the eyes, a virtual cornucopia of music, color, texture, along with tastes and smells enough to engage all our senses.

We have heard angelic choruses and mighty trumpet blasts. We have trembled as we felt the violent clashes of great armies and giant beasts. The sizes and numbers of everything staggered our imaginations.

How fitting that the final book of the Bible that tells of final things yet to be revealed should stir and capture our imaginations and carry us into another dimension, well beyond our secular time-space existence.

This isn’t about the never-never land of Peter Pan and countless other fantasy stories, this is the ever-ever land of our majestic and sovereign God and His kingdom and realm, This is a picture of heavenly glory, of things yet to come.

What words would you use to describe Revelation? Exciting, amazing, stunning, confusing, mystifying, dramatic, strange, unbelievable, inspiring, and at times just plain weird.

We can hardly remember those early chapters that seem so normal after all we have seen since then. Remember the seven churches and their struggles and trials and persecutions. Their daily lives and ours seem pretty boring compared to what we have seen since then.

But it is good for us to be lifted up out of our normal routine of life to be reminded that we live in a world created by a huge and holy God and that our world and our history are part of a cosmic battle filled with principalities and powers beyond our vision and imagination. There is a world beyond ours of white horses and great beasts and angelic creatures and thrones.

It is good for us to reflect on real realities rather than our trivial realities, to move out of these shadowlands as C.S. Lewis call this earthly existence. It is good to move out of the shadows into John's vision and heavenly perspective, into the bright splendor of heaven and the glory of God and presence of Him who's eyes are like a flame of fire, who's feet are like burnished bronze refined in a furnace and who's voice is like the roar of many waters and who's face is like the sun shining in full strength (Revelation 1:14-16).

Revelation 1:1-8.

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.

What kind of book is this that promises a special blessing on all who read it. What has been the blessing? What have we heard, what have we learned, what stands out as most important about this book?

Let's consider four great revelations from the book of Revelation and the first comes from the very first five words, the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

First, The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

That word revelation translates the first Greek word of this book, apokalypsis, from which we get the word apocalyptic, which simply means to reveal, to uncover or unveil, to take what was previously hidden and make it known.

Revelation is first and foremost the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is reveal as the risen, glorified Son of God ministering among the churches (1:10ff.), as "the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth" (1:5), as "the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" (1:8), as the one "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (1:8), as the Son of Man (1:13), as the First and the Last (1:17), as the one who was dead, but now is alive forevermore (1:18), as the Son of God (2:18), as the one who is holy and true (3:7), as "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God" (3:14), as "the Root of David" (5:5), as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5), as the Lamb in heaven, with authority to open the title deed to the earth (6:1ff.), as the Lamb on the throne (7:17), as the Messiah who will reign forever (11:15), as the Word of God (19:13), as the majestic King of kings and Lord of lords, returning in glorious splendor to conquer His foes (19:11 ff.), and as "the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star" (22:16), as "the Lord Jesus" (22:21).

This great revelation of Jesus Christ reminds us that He is the sovereign Christ, God has given Him to rule and reign over all the earth. From the opening vision in chapter one Jesus is the glorified High Priest standing in the midst of the church having authority over all His church. Then in chapter five who is found who is worthy to open the seals of God's will? Only the Lamb, by virtue of His death and resurrection, can fulfil history and what is needed in history. In chapter 14 Jesus the triumphant Lamb stands atop Mount Zion with His victorious church. We see Him having all power and authority to judge the world and save His people.

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There is a throne in heaven and right now Jesus the Lamb is on it sovereignly ruling and reigning. He is without equal in all creation and He cannot be defeated or overpowered or overthrown.

In those immortal words of S.M. Lockridge: "He has no predecessor. He'll have no successor. You can't impeach Him and He's not going to resign."

He alone is worthy to be worshipped and to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

Second, The Revelation of Jesus Christ for the Church.

Revelation is relevant for today because it is written for the church of Jesus Christ, and while times and places and languages and cultures change, human nature doesn't and what's important for the church doesn't change.

Jesus is Head of His church and He is intimately concerned for His Church and intimately connected with His church. In John's vision in chapter 1 Jesus is seen standing among the lampstands which are the church, holding the stars which are the angels of the church.

Then follows seven personal letters from Jesus to the seven churches of Asia Minor.

"There are three main concerns in these letters. *First* is the *doctrinal purity* of His church. "I hold a few things against you," Jesus told the church in Pergamum, and then chastised them for tolerating "the teaching of Balaam," and "the teaching of the Nicolaitans" (Rev. 2:14-15). *Second*, Jesus cared deeply about the *moral purity* of His church, threatening severe judgment on those who were given over to sexual immorality and idolatry (Rev. 2:14, 2:20, 3:4). *Third*, Jesus spoke fervently about the need of his people to *maintain their zeal for ministry* in His name. He wrote to Laodicea: "because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16). Revelation should cause us to take seriously our obligation

to lead faithful, godly, and zealous lives for Jesus' sake" (Richard Phillips, blog, Place for Truth).

Third, The Revelation of Jesus Christ for the Persecuted Church.

As we made our way through the book of Revelation, I repeatedly warned about false interpretations. One of the most common errors taught about Revelation is that Christians and the church would be raptured up from earth before the tribulation. I reminded us again and again that all through Revelation there is clear teaching that Christians and the church will suffer, will be persecuted, will be martyred.

Revelation is an exhortation to the church to remain faithful even in the face of the fiercest persecution. Why? One simple reason. Jesus's promise to the one who conquers, to the one who stands with Christ, who resists evil governments and evil men and evil passions, who resists the enemy and his temptations and his mark and his counterfeits, who remains loyal to the end.

The promise? Victory, no second death, paradise with God, eating from the tree of life, authority over the nations, being clothed in white garments, crowned with golden crowns, eternal live in the holy city filled with the glory of God's presence.

How do we conquer?

Revelation 12:11 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.

The suffering and persecution of the church is one of the dominant themes of Revelation, but you could one of the keys to interpreting Revelation is "Do not be afraid."

As John's visions lifted the spirits of the early church, so they should lift our spirits and comfort our souls. "Do not be afraid."

Revelation 2:10 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.

This last book of the Bible was written for the church living in the last days in the shadow of the Second Coming. All through the book we were reminded that we are living in the midst of a great spiritual war filled with principalities and powers, with devils and counterfeits to God and the Trinity and the church.

God is showing us the whole course of the warfare beforehand. God tells us everything that is going to happen. Just like Jesus told the disciples everything that would happen to Him before it did so they wouldn't be caught off guard or taken by surprised or thrown into doubt.

Fourth, The Revelation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him.

Revelation 11:15 The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

Revelation 22:12-13 Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Have you heard the taunt at a basketball game, check the score, check the score board? It is yelled often when the team that is behind does something good and is excited, but then deflated by the mocking words, check the score.

Check the score, Satan, Jesus is winning and Jesus will win. He will kill the dragon and rescue the girl.

Jesus came to earth the first time as a lamb, He will return as the triumphant lion, as the Judge and King.

Implications and application.

“In 1952 thirty-four year old Florence Chadwick stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island, determined to be the first woman to swim the 26 miles to the shore of mainland California. She had already been the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways, but on that morning the weather was very foggy and it was chilly. She could hardly see the boats accompanying her, and still she swam for 15 hours constantly. Eventually she became exhausted emotionally, mentally and physically, and she begged to be taken out of the water. Her mother said: 'No, keep going, you're close, you're nearly at the end, you can make it'. Finally her physique, her emotions just gave up, and she stopped swimming. She was pulled out of the water, and it wasn't until she was in the boat and the fog lifted a little that she saw that she was only half a mile away. At the news conference the next day, she said these words - now listen carefully: 'All I could see was the fog. I think if I could have seen the shore I would have made it'” (story from many places on the internet).

“All I could see was the fog, but I think if I could have seen the shore I could have made it.”

“Two months later, she tried again. This time, despite the same dense fog, she swam with her faith intact and her goal clearly pictured in her mind. She knew that somewhere behind that fog was land and this time she made it! Florence Chadwick became the first woman to swim the Catalina Channel, eclipsing the men's record by two hours!”

That's what the book of Revelation is about, a vision of that distant shore, giving us strength for today and a bright hope for tomorrow.

Life is hard. God is good. Glory is coming, and what a glory it will be. It will make everything worth it.

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.

May you have been blessed.

Conclude with *Psalm 46*.

Psalm 46:1-11 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,

though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,

3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.

6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth.

9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire.

10 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Prayer: Glory to you, O God, in the highest. All glory, praise and honor belong to you, O Lord God almighty. No man can behold your face and live, yet you have made it possible for us to glimpse your glory by sending your Son. You have revealed yourself to us, you have first loved us, you have saved us and you have once again brought us to the day of our dear Savior's birth, and we worship and adore you.

You are the one we desire, grant us the desire of our hearts.

You are the one we seek, grant that we may find you.

You are the one we love, receive our love.

Grant, O God, that the Spirit of Christ Himself may be born afresh in our hearts and that we might joyfully welcome Christ to reign over us as our King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Maranatha, even so, come, Lord Jesus Christ. Glory to you in the highest. Amen and Amen.