

Revelation

Lesson 4 – Revelation 1:1-8

Prologue (1:1-3)

1. Verse 1 begins with the title of the book. This entire book is the revelation (αποκαλυψις) of Jesus Christ. So what is the book of Revelation about? It's about Jesus.
2. God is the direct source of this revelation of Jesus Christ.
3. God is revealing Jesus through an angel to John about Jesus.
God→Jesus→Angel→John→Church
4. Now, how can these events be said to take place “soon” if we've already had 2,000 years of church history pass? Because we live in “the last days” (Acts 2:16-17; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:2; 1 John 2:18). The final phase of God's plan of redemption has begun in the first coming of Jesus Christ. There are no more phases to come. We're simply waiting for the end of this phase. So these things can be said to be “soon” because the final phase it's here. In the OT, they were waiting for the last days, but now we are living in “the last days.”
5. In verse 2, we see that John is qualified to receive and distribute this revelation because he was one of the apostles who walked with Jesus in His earthly ministry and was an eyewitness to His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. But John didn't keep all that to himself. He has already been bearing witness and testifying to Jesus Christ. So this is another way John is going to bear witness about Jesus and testify to Him.
6. Finally, in verse 3, the Church is blessed by reading this book and the church is blessed by hearing this book. Tonight and during this whole series, God promises that this time together will be a blessing to you. But hearing is not enough: it is hearing and keeping what is written in this book.
7. “The Apocalypse was revealed so that believers would be blessed by having a heavenly perspective on redemptive history and consequently obeying the commands of the Lord of history.” –Greg Beale

Greetings and Praise (1:4-6)

1. These 7 churches that John addresses in chapters 2 and 3 are said to be in Asia. We're talking about Asia Minor or modern day Turkey.
2. Notice God is ascribed as “him who is and who was and who is to come.” We see this again in several spots in Revelation: 1:8, 11:17 (short form), 16:5 (short form). This designation reflects the Old Testament name of God as Yahweh which could mean either “I am who I am” or “I will be who I will be.” God is Lord over time – past, present and future – and He is the one who will bring about the end and the consummation of His kingdom. So we can expect this book to be moving toward the 2nd Coming when God will consummate the kingdom through Jesus Christ and it sets up our expectation to wait and endure/persevere because our King is coming!
3. But who are these 7 spirits? It's a reference to the Holy Spirit. How do we know this? Because this is a Trinitarian greeting. Grace and peace from the Father (“who is...”) and the Son (v.5) and the Spirit (the seven spirits who are before His throne).

4. We see the Spirit referenced in 7-fold completeness/fullness in Rev. 4:5 and also in Zechariah 4:2-6. In Zechariah, the prophet sees “7 lamps on a lampstand” but then in explanation what these 7 lamps are, God says “by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.”
5. “The expression ‘the seven spirits’ refers to the Holy Spirit in the fullness of His operations and influences in the world and in the Church.” –William Hendricksen
6. And then Jesus is referenced here in verse 5 with regard to His earthly ministry (faithful witness), His death & resurrection (firstborn of the dead) and to His present exaltation to the Davidic throne (ruler of kings on earth).
7. Verse 5 through 6 is a doxology. In it we see who Christ is and what He has done, John bursts out in praise and praises Jesus for loving us and freeing us from our sins through His blood. And based on this work of Jesus, He has made you and me a kingdom (OT language), priests to His God and Father (OT language) and ascribes glory and dominion for eternity.
8. Here we see that OT Israel continues as the NT church. I’m going to harp on this until the day I die. There is only 1 people of God throughout all Scripture and the Church is the continuation and fulfillment of OT Israel.

The Second Coming (1:7-8)

1. Jesus’ coming with the clouds harkens us back to Daniel 7 where the Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days on the clouds of heaven. At the Transfiguration, a cloud takes Jesus up in glory and the angel says that He will return in exactly the same way. Jesus says as much in Matthew 24:30 when “they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”
2. Notice that a particular group of unbelievers is described as “those who pierced Him.” This harkens us back to Zechariah 12:10 – “when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him...”
3. And then we have a declaration of who God is. He is the beginning and the end and there’s our phrase again that we saw earlier, “who is and who was and who is to come.” Earlier it referred to the Father, but here it refers to the Son which shows both their distinct persons but also their unity as 1 God. Jesus is the complete and perfect and eternal revelation of the Lord God Almighty.

Message for Us

1. God calls us to pay attention to the Book of Revelation for therein is great blessing for hearing, reading, and obeying the book.
2. We see what Christ has done for us in His earthly ministry: freed us from our sins to be a kingdom of priests to Him and the Father
3. We see who our God is: The Triune God – Father, Son, and Spirit – who is eternal, sovereign, almighty, and omnipotent
4. We are assured that He is coming and that this coming is “soon” or “near” so we are encouraged to persevere and to be watchful and ready