

Revelation (Part 2)

September 3, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. We continue our Revelation series this week. Thank you to Rhonda, Ed, Mike, Dave, and Don for being in the video, and to Paul for his work behind the cameras. The scripture reading is Revelation 1:1-6. We want to keep Mary, Donna, and Kristin in our prayers as they're recuperating from various health issues. We pray also for the Ritchie family as they mourn Keith's passing.

Welcome and Prayer

Good morning. Good morning. I'm sure that even though we have no announcements, I'm sure that there are people who are hurting because of grief, because of physical pain, because of whatever, and our thoughts and prayers are with them. And let us go ahead and pray.

Dear God in heaven, we pray that our minds and hearts will be controlled by your spirit, and we pray that you'll reveal your truth to us today as we worship and as we praise you and glorify you. Lead us into your truth. In everything we do, in everything we say, we want to be your servants, and please give us faith. And whatever our troubles may be, the people who are sick, the people who are hurting, whatever our troubles are, we pray that we will patiently endure our hardships and our difficulties. And no matter what we're suffering through or no matter what we're doing, we pray that your name will be glorified through us and through our experience. Fill us with purity, fill us with knowledge, fill us with patience and kindness, no matter what our circumstance, and fill us with your righteousness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Communion

We're here because of this. This is a wafer and fruit of the vine which represents Jesus' sacrifice for us, for our sins, so that we didn't have to pay the price, and so that we may live with Him someday and with His Father and the Holy Spirit, and all that glory is seen up in heaven. I was looking around, we always say after church, there's always room at the table for someone to come and join. You might invite them after lunch or say, "There's room at the table." You never hear that, "Well, we don't have food for you," or, "We don't have enough plates," or, "Not enough chairs," or... You never get that, especially in a church of Christ. I found that out when I was on vacation. You're going to get fed and you're going to get a lot, and just as a fellowship and communion. And that's what communion is about. We get fed. We remember. We're thankful.

Well, I got thinking about passages in Romans that say how this all transpired," and how Paul makes the case where he says in Romans 3, "No one's righteous, no, not one." Doesn't matter what you've done in your life, it all depends upon Jesus and His blood and His resurrection. And, you know, Paul goes on to say, "For all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." But the gift of God is eternal life. And Paul then again says, you know, he's talking about, you know, "for just at the right time, while we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." He's talking about himself. He's talking to the Roman people that are Christians and are the Gentile world, the Jewish world. He's not leaving anybody out, and that includes you and I.

So I wonder why Paul had felt like what he was thinking. Now, remember, we got those verses, but when it was all written down, it was not written and divided into verses and chapters like we are so blessed with today. But Paul's got a train of thought here. He's like, basically, maybe he was thinking about the Lord's Supper and communion and the importance of it in the Christian church in the first century. We got to get more people at the table. And I think preaching those messages in our daily lives to others or mentioning them and gets more people to realize that how much they need God and how much their lives are void without God's salvation. And then when people start through friendships and that coming back, coming to church, or in some cases coming back to church, and coming back, and guess what? Our table gets a lot fuller around communion. It's a little sparse right now because the summer vacation and stuff, but they're at the table somewhere else this Sunday, sharing with other Christians.

So how do we get more people at our table, or communion table? We start preaching that message, living that message, letting people realize that their lives are null and void without Jesus. And that's what this is about, realizing a reminder that we are, we were null and void until Jesus pulled off the sacrifice and pulled out the resurrection. And for us, communion is a grateful time to be a time of thankfulness for every day that we get to live in His kingdom here on earth. And for John 17:3 says, "Possession of eternal life is here and now." It's not something that we're waiting for. It's a deposit inside of us. We're living it now. And we get the benefits of when the kingdom comes to fruition and heaven comes down. In the meantime, our job is to get more people at the table. But while we're at the table, each Sunday lets us remember and be grateful for the sacrifice that Jesus did for us and that we didn't have to go. Let's pray at this time.

Dear Heavenly Father, we're so grateful for Your table, Your banquet table, Your communion table, the table that we can all sit around and remind. Remind that we are so grateful and our lives are so enriched because we believe the promise. And someday, face to face, we'll sit at the table with Jesus and we'll sit with each other, all in happiness and faith. But in times like these, Father, in a tough world that we live in, we're grateful that we have communion and to take the time out and remember that You are still God over all and God of the world and God over us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

[music]

Reading

Revelation 1:1-6

I would invite you to take your Bible and turn to Revelation. We'll be reading from the first chapter, the first six verses. Revelation chapter 1, 1 to 6. The revelation of 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 these words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take it 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, 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 forever and ever. Say it with me. Amen.

Sermon

Good morning, everyone. Thank you so very much for being with us today. Today we want to start a preaching series from the book of Revelation. It's not the easiest book in the world to really grasp, and I'll do my best as we go through it all. Revelation is a beautiful word because it's revealing to us what God wants us to know. And Genesis is the beginning of all things, and Revelation is new beginnings.

The Bible really doesn't end. Just like our lives, it never really ends. God knew us before we were born. He knows us now, and he'll know us throughout eternity. So Revelation isn't so much about going to heaven, but it's heaven and earth coming together as one. And there are a lot of symbols in this amazing book. I love the fact that Genesis is the creation, the beginning, and Revelation is a continuation, this time of a new creation that we will all be part of. And there's a lot of symbolism in this book, similar to Daniel, even though symbolic and apocalyptic literature can be frightening sometimes, Revelation is primarily for the encouragement of all of us. It's really like going through an art museum, where some person says, "Oh, I see that in this picture." And someone else goes, "Really? I don't see that, but I see this." It's not always identifiable. What's being said? What's being spoken? But we have to think about the fact of new beginning and then a new creation. And it's really a profound word. And throughout some of the Old Testament books that we've looked at, there are several apocalyptic books in the Bible, Revelation, of course, that we'll look at, Daniel, Zechariah, and various people. And throughout the book of Revelation, there is a number that is used over and over and over again. Anyone know the number? Number seven, God's perfect number. Thank you, Jon. For example, the number seven is used 52 times in the book of Revelation, meaning it's complete.

There are seven Beatitudes in this book, there are seven churches in this book, there are seven spirits in this book, there are seven golden lampstands in this book, there are seven stars in this book, seven horns in this book, seven trumpets in this book, seven plagues in this book, seven golden bowls in this book, seven hills, seven kings. Kings. The overall theme of Revelation is meaning completeness, the fulfillment of all things. So just think of Genesis. All of a sudden there was nothing, now it's everything. And then you come to Revelation at the end and it's like, it's finished. Oh, no it's not. New beginnings, new heaven, a new earth. When heaven and earth come together as one, meaning complete. And even though it's difficult, I think that there's a happy feeling throughout this book. It creates a picture and as I've said it's like walking through a museum and trying to understand what all of this really means.

And angels are used often in this book some 53 times angels are mentioned. John sees this. He sees seven angels coming out of the temple in the presence of God and the angels are active. They do God's bidding and when God asks them to do something, it's done. Hebrews says the same thing. Are not angels ministering spirits sent by God to serve those who inherit salvation? If we could just see the angels that surround us, we never think of that. We never walk alone. Angels are in the presence of God and in the presence of all of us. One of my favorite scriptures in the entire Bible is found in Revelation chapter 12 and verse 11. And they overcame, meaning Christians, they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives so much even to shrink from death. Now when we went through some of the Old Testament books, there was a lot of gore, there was a lot of destruction, there was a lot of nasty things going on. In Revelation, it's breaking through all of that to say no even though life can be very very difficult, there is this promise from God, from Jesus and the Holy Spirit, a new creation, a new life. They overcame. There are seven trumpets in this book and there are seven angels blowing the trumpets, meaning the time has come to fulfill

all things in heaven and on earth. Okay, everybody got it? I don't, I keep reading through it and over and over again and trying to understand this beautiful dream, this beautiful revelation given to John, precious wonderful John showing us how much God loves us.

So we begin in Revelation chapter 1 and in verse 1. This is a revealing, the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show his servants what will take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who John testifies to everything that he saw. That is the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It's what God said to Jesus and Jesus is saying to John and for all of us. And he says blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, who reads this book and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it because the time is near. I think it was last week or maybe the week before I talked a little bit about the pictures that we can see through all of this. And I, my mind just wants to bring me back to the Wizard of Oz. How many remember watching that movie, The Wizard of Oz? So it creates these pictures and what do these pictures mean? And all throughout this journey that Dorothy has and our friends all around us, there's this evil thing that wants to keep coming, this evil witch that wants to destroy them. But all along, even though they didn't know it, there was a good angel. There was someone there and they just wanted to get to the Wizard of Oz because if they get to the Wizard of Oz, everything will be fine. And it's the understanding of that no matter how difficult life has been or is, God has overcome all of that through Jesus Christ and for each one of us. I think one of the faults that we sometimes have as Christians is not remembering how much God loves us and he promises that he'll never leave us, never forsake us. His promises, "I am always with you." Always. That means when we're sleeping, when we're working, when we're in church, when we're activities, when we're with family, I will always be with you. And that's important because all of us have gone through some really difficult times when we don't understand. We can't explain it. We don't know. But thank the Lord. He's with us. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am always with you.

So Revelation gives us these words and gives us these pictures. So in Revelation chapter one, he says, "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 the throne and from Jesus Christ who is a faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kingdoms of the earth." Wow. That's a lot of positive words. But then he says this, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by Jesus' blood and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father. To him be glory and power forever and forever." That's how this book begins. It begins with a punch. It begins in a powerful word of encouragement from Jesus Christ. And then he says this in verse seven, "Look, he's coming in the clouds and every eye will see him. Even those who pierced him, Jesus died on the cross and was pierced. Even those who pierced him and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be." In other words, when Christ comes, this victorious Christ gathers all of us up into his arms. But those who have pushed Christ away, those who have humiliated Christianities, those who've destroyed other people, sorry, this is not what God wanted us, how he wanted us to live. And so he says this, "I'm the beginning and I'm the end. I'm the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord, "who is, who was, and who is to come. I am the Almighty. It's God saying to us, I will never leave you. I am coming to take you to be with me." And it's different for different people. We've had loved ones in this church who've gone, where are they? With Jesus. And we will too. And that one day, that great uniting day, when all people in Christ will come together as one.

And so John, wonderful, loving, kind John says, "I, John, your brother and companion, in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that ours are in Jesus Christ, I was on the Isle of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." So he's on this island and he gets this wonderful vision and he explains it to us. "On the Lord's day," he said, "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 said it to the seven churches." You hear the seven churches, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea. What you see and what you hear, write it down. Because you'll forget, write it all down. Write everything down, absolutely everything, and send it to these churches. The seven churches could actually mean seven individual churches or seven churches mean all the churches that they can, meaning it's complete. Here is the message that Jesus wants us to have. Write this on a scroll and see it, send it to these churches. And I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me and then I turned and I saw seven golden lampstands and among the lampstands was someone, listen to this, like a son of man. Jesus looked like a son of man, son of God, absolutely, king of creation, absolutely, and a son of man, dressed in a robe, reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest, his head and hair were 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 out of his mouth came a double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance, divinity to the core. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, all of the angels, all those who've passed and are with God, all there, encouraging us, encouraging us. When I saw him, I fell at his feet. Then he placed his right hand on me and said, don't be afraid. I am the first, I am the last, I am the living one, I was dead, behold I'm alive forever and ever and I hold the keys of death and Hades.

There's a choice that we can make. We can live in the presence of God or we can just push him out of the way and live in selfishness or in evil, if you will. So he says, I have some things to say and I'm going to write these things, these letters to different churches. Imagine getting this amazing letter from Jesus and there are seven churches and there's different comments to each of these churches and we're going to begin in chapter two to this wonderful book, the church at Ephesus. And for those of us who remember reading the book of Ephesians, it's a powerful book and it's a happy book and it's a positive book and there's always a reminder in the New Testament churches, remember to stay lovingly true to Jesus Christ because Jesus does for you. So here's what he says to the church in Ephesus, these are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know the number seven is used all the way through and John is trying to say, it's perfect. The number seven is made right. This is right. I know your deeds, I know your hard work, I know your perseverance, I know that you can't tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles and are not and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and you haven't grown weary, even though maybe beaten down because the Christians over and over and over and over again, they said we will never leave this faith. And then he said, yet, yet I have this thing against you. You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen, repent and do things you did at first. If you don't don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place. Now, whether it's talking to individual Christians or an entire church, Jesus is not happy with them. He's explained everything to them. He says, I'm here for you. Here's what's going to happen to you, even though you've got to go through difficult times, you've been strong, you've been wonderful, you've lived a life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, but somehow you got pushed back from that. You're forgetting all of that. And so John has to say some things that are sometimes kind of strong and he makes it really strong. If you keep doing

what you're doing, your church will no longer exist. It will be gone and it won't come back again. These are not words that we hear very often. So it's the encouragement of John saying, keep moving closer to God. And then he says, listen, if you've got ears, listen to what Jesus is saying to the one who overcomes, I will give life and I will give him the right to eat from the tree of life. You remember that from Genesis eating from the tree of life, which is the paradise of God. So he writes to different churches. They've all had different problems, different challenges, and he's trying to make these words powerful so that they can change their life and encourage themselves all throughout.

So here's to the church in Smyrna, Revelation chapter two, verse eight to the angel of the church in Smyrna. These are the words of him who is the first and the last, meaning of course, Jesus, who died and came to life again. Jesus, I know your afflictions and I know your poverty, yet you are rich, maybe not financially, but you are wealthy spiritually. I know the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. There have been people that have crept in who have undermined the church. He says, I know that, but do not be afraid of what you're about to suffer. I tell you, the devil would put some of you in prison to test you and you will suffer persecution for 10 days, meaning period of time. So he says, even though it's going to be difficult, be faithful even to the point of death, and I will, anybody remember, I will give you the crown of life, an eternal life with Jesus. And so again, he says, are you listening to me? He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death, meaning that when we die, we go to be with God or else. So we want to be going with God and the encouragement that he gives. So John, I suppose out of all the apostles is the gentle one, the loving one, the kind one. And I wonder if that's why Jesus chose him to write this book and that Jesus showed him what to say. He pictured in his mind what to say. These are the words of Jesus. Speak Jesus words, speak Jesus thoughts, live Jesus ways. And now as he writes to the seven churches, he's encouraging them, always come back to your faith in Christ. And so there are difficulties in these book. In chapter two, verse seven, 17, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit of the churches says to him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it known only to him who receives it. These special promises of God.

And so the last church that we'll look at for today anyway, is to the church Thyatira beginning in verse 18 of chapter two to the angel of the church in Thyatira. So before I read that, it says to the angel at this church. Have you noticed the common theme throughout to the angel at that church to the angel at this church? How many angels surround us right now? Are not angels ministering spirits sent by God to serve salvation, to give us salvation? How many angels are around us even today? So the church at Thyatira to the angel, these are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire, whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds. I know your love. I know your faith. I know your perseverance and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Nevertheless, I have this against you. You tolerate that woman Jezebel and you may remember her story, very immoral woman. And he said she misleads my servants into immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I've given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So is that a physical demonstration or a spiritual demonstration? Maybe it was both. Maybe she was living a life of immorality, but maybe the church wasn't really living up to their responsibilities to God as well. I've given her time to repent, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering and make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensity unless they repent of their ways. I think they're talking about spiritual negativity here. I will strike her children dead. See, I really didn't want to read that. Sometimes there are things in the Bible I

just don't want to read, but it's the Bible. It's Jesus. And it's so important, so important that in Revelation we see God wants us to come together as one, but he doesn't want us playing leapfrog where I'm on God's side, but I'm also on Satan's side. No, no, no, no, no, no. I chose you to be with me. And then in this Thyatira, he talks about these food sacrificed to idols and everything else, but on a positive note on chapter two, he says this in verse 26, "to him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations." Watch this. "He will rule them with an iron scepter. He will dash them to pieces like pottery. Just as I have received authority from my Father, I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

And then in chapter three, to this church at Sardis, to the angel of the church in Sardis, I write these words. These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds. You have a reputation of being alive. Okay, this will be great, but not really. You have a reputation of being alive, but I know better, Jesus said. You have a reputation of being alive, but you're dead. Wake up, he says. Strengthen what remains and is about to die for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard and obey it and repent. I think all of us have had times in our life where we just need to sit alone and ask God for forgiveness. About my attitude, about some of the things I've said, about some of the things that I've done, about living a life that maybe isn't worthy of Jesus Christ. The great thing about Jesus is when we confess all that to him, he just wraps his arms around us, even tighter, loving us, saying, I know, I know, Satan is strong, but my love for you is stronger. Come back to me. Come back to me. And if you do, he overcomes will like them be dressed in white. I will never blot out his or her name from the book of life, never, but will acknowledge him or her before my father and the angels. So he says, he who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches.

So we've just started in this book of Revelation and I'm going to close now. And we just, if you have time this week, if you have time, you may just want to look at some of these words that are written in Revelation to the various churches and how does it affect us? Where are we part of this? Even though it was written 2000 years ago, it's still relevant for today. Do we not have angels ministering to us? You bet. Do we not have God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, Jesus surrounding us every minute of the day? Yes. God said, I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. Is that right? Yes. But there are promises and some of those promises are precious for us. And as we go through this book, it's just going to be a, maybe a little bit of a discipline to some of the churches, encouragement for others. And then as we leave those churches, now the journey really begins and it becomes profound. I think for all of us, let's pray.

Dear Jesus, we so thank you for this wonderful opportunity of looking at some incredible things in your scripture, reminding us of your love, God, and your love, Jesus, and your love, Holy Spirit, and all of our loved ones who have passed who are with God, encouraging us on that we're never alone, that your love is so profound. And we pray as we go through this book that we will be encouraged, that we'll be hopeful, that we'll be helpful, that we'll be loving and kind. Thank you for all these promises through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Song Leader Comment

So we have this faith journey that we're involved in individually and as a group of people. Essentially, it comes down to making a decision to believe. And that decision to believe creates consequences, how

we go about believing and acting and behaving. So I think of it as more that's not just a decision, it's a resolve. I'm resolved through all of the information that I've had and through thinking it through and praying about it and looking at scriptures, I have decided I am resolved. So we're going to sing a song about being resolved. And it's an encouragement to all of us to make that make these various decisions. And the song talks about several things that we could be resolved about. I would invite you to stand as we sing, please.

Closing Prayer

And thank you all for coming in. Let us pray. God, we want to love you and we want to live for your glory. We want you to be supreme in our lives. May we be people who always put you first this week and may we have nothing that is more important than you. And we pray that we will continue to grow in that with that in mind. In Jesus name. Amen.

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