

Mount Pisgah A.M.E. Church

Rev. Jay B. Broadnax, Pastor

Bible Study, Wednesday, September 14, 2016

Survey of the Bible

Lesson 68: Revelation

The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation, also known as the book of “The Revelation,” or “The Revelation of John,” or “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” is the only book in the New Testament that focuses primarily on prophecy, and the only book in the Bible that focuses on primarily on prophecy about events that have yet to take place. The indication is that the book was originally intended to be an epistle to the churches of Asia Minor, however it has a broadened scope “he that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7) and the subject matter goes far beyond the affairs of individual churches. The word Revelation (Greek: *apokalypsis*, from which we get the word apocalypse) means “unveiling” or “disclosure.” The book is an unveiling of that which could not otherwise be known but by the Spirit of God revealing it.

Author

The style, symmetry, and plan of Revelation show that it was written by one author, who is four times referred to as “John” (1:1, 1:4, 1:9, 22:8). The most commonly accepted evidence suggests that the writer was the apostle John, the writer of the gospel and the three epistles. In all of these, John extensively uses the words (and themes) *lamb, the word, true (KJV verily)*. John also does a lot with conflicting themes, such as darkness versus light, love versus hatred, good versus evil). Some scholars argue that it was another John because (1) the Greek in John is “rougher”, there are differences in vocabulary, (3) differences in content and emphasis, and (4) John’s other writings avoid using his name. Those who defend the apostle’s authorship have explained these by the different circumstances under which the book was written, along with its very different intent and subject matter. Revelation was written while John was in exile (essentially imprisoned) on an island, without access to conveniences like a scribe to perhaps smooth out the language.

The Times and context of Revelation

John directed this prophetic word to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. The messages to these churches in chapters 2 and 3 begin with Ephesus, the most prominent, and continue in a clockwise direction until Laodicea is reached. John’s effective testimony for Christ let the Roman authorities to exile him to the small desolate island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. This island of volcanic rock was one of several places to which the Romans banished criminals and political offenders.

Revelation was written during a time when Roman hostility to Christianity was erupting into overt persecution. While there are differing opinions regarding which Emperor was in power, the prevailing view is that it was the Emperor Domitian, who reigned from 81 AD to 96 AD. John is thought to have left Jerusalem in about 67 AD to spend time in Asia Minor. He spent years evangelizing and developing relationships there. Domitian was the first emperor to demand that all who occupied Roman territories worship the emperor while he was still alive. This led to a greater clash between the state and the church, especially in Asia, where the worship of the emperor was widely practiced. The persecution of Christians under Domitian preceded even wider persecution later. Thus, it is likely that John wrote this book in 95 or 96 AD, the latter years of Domitian. Although John was eventually released, Revelation was completed beforehand.

Overview

Revelation is written in the form of much apocalyptic literature (such as Daniel and Zechariah). The four major movements in this profound unveiling are captured in 1:19: “write what you have seen (chapter 1), what is now (chapters 2 and 3), what will take place later (chapters 4-19) and the new vision (chapters 19-22).”

Outline

- I. What You Have Seen (1:1-1:20)**
 - A. Prologue (1:1-1:3)
 - B. Greetings and doxology (1:4-1:7)
 - C. The Vision of Christ (1:8-1:19)
 1. Description (1:8-1:16)
 2. Symbolism (1:17-1:20)
- II. What Is Now (2:1-3:22)**
 - A. The Church of Ephesus (2:1-2:7)
 - B. The Church in Smyrna (2:8-2:11)
 - C. The Church in Pargamum (2:12-2:17)
 - D. The Church in Thyatira (2:18-2:29)
 - E. The Church in Sardis (3:1-3:6)
 - F. The Church in Philadelphia (3:7-3:13)
 - G. The Church in Laodicea (3:14-3:22)
- III. What Will Take Place Later (4:1-22:21)**
 - A. The Person of the Judge (4:1-5:14)
 1. Scene of the Throne in Heaven (4:1-4:11)
 2. The Scroll with Seven Seals: Who is Worthy? (5:1-5:14)
 - B. The Great Tribulation
 1. The Opening of Seven Sealed Scroll (6:1-8:5)
 - a) First Seal (6:1-6:2)
 - b) Second Seal (6:3-6:4)
 - c) Third Seal (6:5-6:6)
 - d) Fourth Seal (6:7-6:8)
 - e) Fifth Seal (6:9-6:11)
 - f) Sixth Seal (6:12-6:17)
 - g) First Interlude (7:1-7:17)
 - i. The 144,000 Israelites (7:1-7:8)
 - ii. The great white robed multitude (7:9-7:17)
 - h) Seventh Seal and preparation of the trumpets (8:1-8:5)
 2. The Blowing of The Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)
 - a) First Trumpet (8:6-8:7)
 - b) Second Trumpet (8:8-8:9)
 - c) Third Trumpet (8:10-8:11)
 - d) Fourth Trumpet (8:12-8:13) and the three woes
 - e) Fifth Trumpet (9:1-9:12) a great battle with locusts led by Apollyon – the first woe
 - f) Sixth Trumpet (9:13-9:21) – angels released to kill a third of humankind
 - g) Second Interlude (10:1-11:14)
 - i. The little scroll (10:1-10:11)
 - ii. The two Witnesses (11:1-11:14) their prophecy, their death – the second woe
 - h) The Seventh Trumpet (11:15-11:19)
 3. Seven Signs (12:1-14:20)
 - a) The woman and the dragon (12:1-12:17)
 - b) The two beasts (13:1-13:18) – sea and earth
 - c) The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-14:5)
 - d) The Three Angels’ Warnings(14:6-14:13)
 - e) The harvest of the earth (14:14-14:20)

4. The Seven Bowls (15:1-19:6)
 - a) Preparation – Seven angels with the seven last plagues (15:1-15:8)
 - b) First Bowl (16:1-16:2)
 - c) Second Bowl (16:3)
 - d) Third Bowl (16:4-16:7)
 - e) Fourth Bowl (16:8-16:9)
 - f) Fifth Bowl (16:10-16:11)
 - g) Sixth bowl (16:12-16:15)
 - h) Armageddon (16:16)
 - i) Seventh Bowl (16:17-16:21)
 - j) Over throw of the woman and the beast (17:1-17:18)
 - k) The fall of Babylon (18:1-18:24)
 - l) Celebration for the fall of Babylon (19:1-19:5)
 - C. The Coming of Christ (19:6-19:21)
 1. The Marriage of The Lamb (19:6-19:10)
 2. The Coming of Christ (19:11-19:21)
 - D. The Millennium (20:1-20:10)
 1. The Binding of Satan and the 1000 year reign of Christ(20:1-20:6)
 - a) Satan is bound (20:1- 20:3)
 - b) The Saints reign (20:4- 20:6)
 2. The Satan’s release and doom (20:7-20:10)
 - E. The Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-20:15)
- IV. The New Vision (21:1-22:5)**
- A. New heaven and new earth created (21:1)
 - B. New Jerusalem (21:2-22:5)
- V. Conclusion (22:6-22:21)**

Keys to Understanding Revelation

- The churches, although they have their particularities, they each have something to say for the church of today. It’s clear that John wrote with vision beyond the particular situations.
- While John may have had particular opponents (such as Roman emperors, Babylon, etc.) in mind when he wrote the text, it is clear that these powers are typical of human powers and institutions that have existed through the ages.
- Revelation is written to assure the recipients of the writing of the ultimate triumph of Christ over all who rise up against Him and His saints. The readers at the time were facing dark times of persecution, and even worse times would follow. Therefore they needed to be encouraged to persevere by standing firm in Christ in view of God’s plan for the righteous and the wicked.
- Revelation was also written to challenge complacent Christians to stop compromising with the world.
- The timing of The Rapture, when Christ will come back for his own and they will go back and reign with him, is disputed:
 - Post tribulation: This doctrine holds that there is a resurrection of dead believers and rapture or translation (or a taking-up/catching-away) of living believers in Jesus Christ at the end of the age (or the "End time"). Post-tribulationists believe that Christians will remain on the Earth throughout the whole 7-year Tribulation period .
 - Pre tribulation: The rapture will take place BEFORE the seven year tribulation.
 - Mid tribulation: The rapture will take place midway through the tribulation, before the “Great tribulation
- The Dragon referred to in Revelation is Satan. He empowers the beasts, the false witness, and is the seductive power of Babylon and the adulterous woman depicted in the chapters of Revelation. The “lake of fire” was not created for people, but rather Satan and his angels. However those who he is able to successfully deceive will end up there as well

Some Lessons from Revelation

- Although studies about the end times are fascinating and important, they should not consume us (including the fears that they elicit). Jesus tells us not to concern ourselves with dates and times of when these things will take place, but focus on preparing ourselves.
- The means by which Satan takes people down is through deception. We must be careful about what we sign on to and whose teachings we follow. “The Beast” will be made to seem extremely appealing and persuasive, and what he offers people will seem extremely convenient. However his values will lead people away from worshipping Christ to pursuing other things. Sooner or later being engrossed in those things will make it seem impossible for people to function without them. We must always be watchful that the pursuit of things does not “mark” us and bend us away from pure worship of Christ.
- The purpose of end times studies is not to scare, but to encourage Christians to **KEEP THE FAITH!**
 - Be steadfast (1 Corinthians 15:58)
 - Stay faithfully ready at all times (Matthew 24:45-47)
 - Stay alert (Romans 13:11-12)
 - Live HOLY (2 Peter 3:11-12; Titus 2:11-13)
 - Live in hopeful expectation (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Revelation 21:20)
- Our testimony is important – what we confess. We overcome Satan by our testimony of Christ.
- When we become complacent and blasé about our faith or about how we love others, we do what the Lord told the Ephesian church and *renew our first love*. Remember the passion that we had in the beginning and do the things we used to do when we first found Christ.
- We must be careful not to evaluate ourselves by human standards. Many who people think are doing well, God doesn’t agree, while many who appear to be doing poorly, God is excited about. We must be careful to seek to see our reality through God’s eyes.
- We ought to be excited about the return of Christ – a time when our 24/7 occupation will be worship. God has given us the opportunity through worship to prepare for our eternal occupation.