

Message to the Seven Churches

Revelation 1:1-7

Sermon Notes

- I. Wise reception of Bible teachings.
 - A. Acts 17:11 “...they received the word with all eagerness examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.’
- II. A word on “Dispensationalism”.
 - A. A man-made way of ordering things. A “system of theology”.
 - B. Two primary tenants of dispensationalism:
 1. A consistently literal interpretation of Scripture, especially Bible prophecy.
 2. The uniqueness of Israel as separate from the Church in God’s program.
- III. Revelation 1:4-7
 - A. **The Addressees**—The places to where this message is being sent.
 1. The seven churches of Asia—Modern day western Turkey.
 - a. One view—These seven churches correspond to different eras in church history.
 - b. My view—the seven churches were actual historical churches in the situation revealed by John—a message for all churches in all times.
 2. The importance of the number seven in Revelation.
 - a. Refers to completion or fullness.
 - b. The number seven is found no less than 54 times in Revelation.
 - B. **The Addressors**—Who the letter originated from.
 1. God the Father.
 2. The seven Spirits.
 - a. Angels?
 - b. The Holy Spirit?
 3. Jesus Christ.

- C. John's response. Our response?
 - 1. A doxology—A word of glory to God.
 - a. God created us to be a doxology!
- IV. The main purposes of the message.
 - A. To proclaim the second coming of Jesus Christ.
 - B. To proclaim the glorious character of the coming king.
- V. The beauty in verse 7.
 - A. Our responsibility is stated in the first word—“**Behold**”.
 - 1. *To perceive through sight or apprehension. To gaze upon or observe. To see, look upon, or regard. To hold in view.*
 - B. What is it about the clouds?
 - 1. Daniel 7:13—They represent the glory of God.
 - 2. Mathew 24:30.
 - C. The world-wide recognition of His coming.
 - 1. Every eye will see Him!
 - D. The special realization of the nation of Israel.
 - 1. “Even those who Pierced Him”
 - a. Zechariah 12:10

Message to the Seven Churches

Revelation 1:7

Pastoral Notes

Acts 17... The apostle Paul and Silas were told to get out of town... they had been in Thessalonica, teaching in the synagogue God's Word...that would have been the Old Testament... using the Old Testament they were revealing Jesus as the Messiah who came to suffer on the cross... and rise again...the death and resurrection as told in Biblical prophesy.

To do that they must have been teaching from the prophets... I would bet Isaiah...Acts 17 tells us that the Jews became "**jealous**"... they didn't like the teaching... and became very hostile towards Paul and Silas and the some other Christians...

They were encouraged to immediately flee Thessalonica and were sent to Berea in Macedonia on their way to Athens...what do you suppose Paul and Silas did when they got to Berea?... they go to the synagogue and preached the gospel to the Jews...the Bereans were receptive of their teaching.

In just one verse... verse 11 we learn a very good....actually essential practice for hearing preaching from God's Word from these Bereans.

11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness.... examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Paul preaches God's Word to them... they received the word with *eagerness*... *prothumia*...willingness...readiness... eager... their ears and minds are open to the teaching... they are eager to hear the teaching.....

BUT... not without wisdom... the took what Paul and Silas taught them... and personally examined them against the Scriptures... they opened their Bibles and confirmed that what Paul taught them was true.... It said they did this everyday...**daily**... they took this seriously!

My hope is that is the practice we all do through this series through the book of Revelation... that each one of you will be willing and eager each week to have this great book preached... AND then check out the words of the preacher to the words in your Bible... Pour over God's Word....examine the Scriptures to see if what I tell you matches....

If you do that...I am confident you will have great spiritual growth.... And I am fairly certain that you may come up with some ideas different than mine... I know this because I have seven or eight wonderful commentaries on Revelation by solid evangelical Bible Scholars.... And no two agree 100% with each other.... Some maybe only 50%.

I love what G.K Chesterton said... “*Though St. John the evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as his own commentators.*”

Revelation is not an easy book... there are verses nobody can be dogmatic about their meaning...we'll touch on one of those this morning....but the message of Revelation is clear...if you just read it.

I received several requests after last week to define what I meant when I said I was a “Dispensationalist”...Apparently this has alarmed some of you... *What is Dan dispensing to us?*...I think this is important... you all need to know where I'm at if you're going to listen to me...so this is a good place to start.

Simply...**A dispensation is a way of ordering things—an administration, a system, or a management.** It is a man made thing...to help understand what God is telling us in His Word.... Dispensationalism is a theological system...a systematic theology that recognizes several ages ordained by God to order the affairs of the world.

As with most if not all things theological.... There are many different camps within this heading of Dispensationalism...[as there is coming out of Covenant Theology which is a counter view to Dispensationalism]

There's *classical dispensationalism*, if you have a Scofield Bible (1909) you will find the “seven dispensations...seven ages that God dispensed...Each dispensation includes a recognizable pattern of how God worked with people living in the dispensation. That pattern is 1) a responsibility, 2) a failure, 3) a judgment, and 4) grace to move on.

We are now in what is called the church age... and have been since the day of Pentecost and will be completed when Jesus raptures the church....*classic dispensationalism*.

Now there's *progressive dispensationalism... scholarly dispensationalism...pop-dispensationalism*...(Left Behind Series)

Ask John MacArthur if he is a dispensationalist and he will reply *I'm a leaky dispensationalist*... In other words... He's not so wrapped up into the different dispensations... what he is wrapped up in are the two great distinctions of classic dispensationalism... which is where I am currently.

1) **A consistently literal interpretation of Scripture, especially Bible prophecy**...the literal, historical and grammatical approach to God's word...I believe the Bible can be understood without someone having to tell me what it means... “*If the first sense makes sense seek no other sense*”

2) As a result of this “literal view”...is a view of **the uniqueness of Israel as separate from the Church in God's program**.... The church has not replaced Israel... I think that is very clear in the Bible... but you all need to be Bereans to see for yourself.

One of my goals in going through Revelation is for us not to divide over theological differences but to (3) **read and hear the words of prophesy and keep the things that are written in it... we will be blessed!...enough!**

Read Revelation 1:4-8

1. The Addressees... The places to where this message is being sent.

John is writing to the **seven churches in Asia...** we touched on that last week...Asia here is not the far east... it is the far west...today what is western Turkey... there are many more churches in this region... but these seven existed in what was the mail route for western Asia...

Many people say these seven churches correspond with eras in human history...they've put dates on each church through history...they represent times in church history... bringing it all the way to our time saying we are living in the time of the church of Laodicea...Maybe...but I think...

The seven churches were real churches... I believe they were characteristic of exactly what John said... but they still have meaning for us today.

Being the first time we encounter the number seven in Revelation...This is a good place to say something about the number seven.... If you are a Bible student you already know the number seven is an important number in the Bible...

We didn't have to go very far in our study of Genesis to find the number seven... God's creation of the cosmos was COMPLETED in seven days. You may have heard that seven is the number of *perfection*... that's not bad... but it really is the number of completion... or fullness...God COMPLETED creation in seven days... and it was good!...

We will encounter the number seven 54 times in Revelation... Now... I'm not a Bible Numerologist... I'm not one who tries to figure out numerical codes on every page of the Bible...

A few years ago a best seller book was *The Bible Code*... according to that book numbers were the key to understanding the Bible... the author had come up with a numerical "code"...something like *Open the Bible to any page... starting on the left... count every seventh word and write it on a piece of paper... take out every seventh letter then rewrite it backwards and you will learn the exact time and day of the rapture*... sold millions of books.

That was like figuring out that Ronald Reagan was the Antichrist... well... *Ronald Wilson Reagan... Ronald six letters... Wilson six letters.... Reagan.....!!!!!! 666*

You can take the number things way too far...I'm a cynic... but when in one book you find a number prominently repeated 54 times... you should take notice... it's important... and not a coincident or accident.

It could be that there are seven churches here...the number of fullness and completeness suggesting these churches represent all churches of all time.... John writes this to the seven churches....Bottom line... these were actual churches in John's day... they needed the message of Revelation just as we do today.

2. The Addressors—Who the letter originated from.

(4) Grace to you and peace from the One who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus , the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood...

Three individuals listed...

1. **The One who is and who was and who is to Come** Is of course God Himself... God the Father... the great "I AM" in Exodus 3:14... YAHWEH... the eternal God... the sovereign God...the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent God...the God who never did not exist.

I said this is obviously God the Father...He certainly is the *One who is and who was*... but is He the *One who is to come*?... I thought we are waiting for Jesus... the Son?... we will see other places in Revelation that what is true for the Father is true for the Son...

It is the perplexing truth of the Trinity that was revealed by Jesus when He said **I and the Father are One...** Yes... Jesus is the One who is to come... but when Jesus comes this time it is to judge... this judgement of all people will be both from God the Father and God the Son...

There is a theological term for this... for you Bible nerds... *Co-inheritance*

2. **The seven Spirits who are before His throne**...Our first controversy... who are/is the seven Spirits?...

1. ***Some say they are seven angels***...Main reason...verses like **3:1Read** **5:6 READ**...the argument is it was angels that were sent out in all the earth... they are the ones **before the throne**... **8:2 Read Read**

Maybe

2. ***The Holy Spirit***...Some point to the number seven and conclude this represents the complete work of the Spirit... Isaiah chapter 11:1-2 is used for this argument... I'm not going to spend time on that...

I think it does make sense that in that it is from these three that **Grace and peace** is being offered ... In the Bible... Grace and Peace are never said to have come from a human being... Not even Paul or John, anyone... nor from an angel... **Grace and Peace** is only offered by God... check it out!...examine my words!

[Philippians 1:2 **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**]

So I think the seven Spirits refer to the Holy Spirit... third person of the Trinity....[Plus... My Bible has Spirit with the capital “S”...] This has no bearing on the Revelation really.... But it is a good example of not being able to be dogmatic about some things in Revelation... and that is ok.

3. **Jesus Christ, the faithful witness , The faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood...** He is why we are here this morning.

The faithful witness—Always speaks and represents the truth... the perfect witness to the nature of God.

The Firstborn of the dead—being the **first born** in Hebrew culture designated privilege and responsibility... Paul wrote something similar in Colossians 1:18 **And He (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.** Firstborn a place of privilege.

Firstborn of the dead... not the first one to die then come back to life... there have been several of those.... Lazarus... [what a bummer for Lazarus... if 2 Corinthians is right when it tells us that when we die we are immediately in heaven with Jesus... Lazarus dies... goes to heaven.... Then Jesus brings him back to life on earth!] *leave me dead Jesus!*

There have been a few resuscitations... but only Jesus rose again never to die again!... only Jesus conquered death....

Jesus ruler of the kings of earth...King of Kings!

Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood Who died on a cross on our behalf...we read all of these...what do you think?...I hope for some of you...you haven't been in church so long this has lost its awesomeness...

John obviously gets overwhelmed and he just started writing...(6) **He has made us to be a kingdom, priest to His God and Father... to Him be the glory and the might forever. Amen.**

This should be our response...this is a “Doxology”...a Greek word meaning “*A word of Glory to God*”... there are fourteen doxologies in Revelation...4:11 **Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created...**

Words that are a pause in thought... being overwhelmed by the glory of God... has that ever happened to you?... you're singing a hymn and the words strike you and the world stops... you might choke up a bit.... But that moment the glory of God is so vivid!.

God created us to be a doxology! He created us so that our lives would be a testimony...a statement of His glory... ever think of your life that way?...the Psalmist said in 115:1 **Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth.**

We are to be a “doxology to the Lord”... a life that speaks... shouts the glory of our God so all can see....I’ve got a long way to go!!

5:13 To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be the blessing and honor and the glory and the might forever and ever...

7:12 Saying, “Amen, the blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength, **be to our God forever and ever, Amen....”**

They should write a hymn based on that verse!.... oh... they did!...That great new hymn ***Salvation Belongs To Our God*** based on this verse:

*Salvation belongs to our God
who sits upon the throne
and unto the lamb:
praise and glory, wisdom and thanks
honor, and power, and strength
be to our God forever and ever
be to our God forever and ever*

Doxology isn’t just a short ditty we sing at the end of a service because lunch is getting cold...it is an expression of spilling out wonder and awe of our God.

I think one of the main points in the book of Revelation is to bring praise and honor and thanksgiving to Almighty God and His Son Jesus Christ.... AND the Holy Spirit... the holy Trinity.

- The Address-- The places to which this message was sent
- The Addressees-- The persons of whom the message was giving.
- The main purpose of the message

The main purpose of the message

To proclaim the second coming of Jesus Christ...

To proclaim the glorious character of the coming king.

Read verse 7

This is a revelation of Jesus Christ...regarding the second coming of Jesus Christ... I’d like to point out a few things in verse 7...

1. Our responsibility is stated in the first word.... Behold.

Behold is a transitive verb that means: *To perceive through sight or apprehension .To gaze upon or observe. To see, look upon, or regard. To hold in view...* **Behold...**used 30 times in Revelation!

I wouldn't bring it up unless it is so blatantly put in front of our face.... "Look!, Look!,, Look!"... John is constantly telling us to "*look at this!*"...it is time to pay attention...what are we to "behold"? **Jesus is coming with the clouds!**...are you "beholding"?

Are you anticipating the second coming of Jesus Christ?...

2. What is it about the clouds?... **Behold He is coming WITH the clouds**...not "in the clouds"... but "with" the clouds... You can imagine the ideas circulating around "clouds"... This is where if I don't quite understand something... I don't go to some man's explanation but to the Bible itself..

It doesn't take long to discover none of this is new... Go to Daniel 7...we quickly find out this verse is quoting Daniel 7:13...

**"I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a son of man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.**

He came...with the clouds of heaven... **The book of Revelation quotes more than any other book in the New Testament... the Old Testament**... depending on who's doing the counting... it is around 400 times the book of Revelation quotes from the Old Testament...400 times!

These are not exact word for word quotations... but there is no disputing these references are from the Old Testament.

I tried to count them... I can only find 398 times...all these quotes come from 24 O.T. books...27 times from the book of Exodus...22 from Jeremiah... 43 from Psalms...43 Ezekiel...79 times from the prophet Isaiah...15 from Zechariah... and 53 times from Daniel... but get this...

From just the 7th chapter of Daniel... it is quoted in Revelation 31 times!... and here is one of them....**Behold he is coming with the clouds...** this is also quoted in Matthew 24... **Clouds in the Bible represent the glory and majesty and presence of God...**

In the Old Testament... in the tabernacle over the Holy of Holies...a cloud came down... we call it the "Shekinah" glory of God... the dwelling of God... now our bodies have become the dwelling place of God...

The Shekinah glory of God would present itself in a cloud that would settle over the Holy of Holies... a visible presentation of the glory of God.

In Matthew 24:30 **And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn**, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

The clouds represent the majesty and glory of God... Luke 21:27...quotations from Daniel... 27 **And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."**

[This might be a good time to share another point of view about the clouds... emphasizes the wording... it doesn't say **He's coming IN the clouds...** John writes **He's coming WITH the clouds...**

So clouds are coming with Him... which refers to the raptured church returning with Christ on His second coming... This view sights Hebrews 12:1 right after that great faith chapter 11... it says **Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us...** all those of great faith... I like that but I don't think that is specifically what John was referring to... I think it is a direct reference to Daniel 7 representing the majesty and glory of God.

The clouds are a part of His visible coming in Revelation... quite a sight that will be!!...**this will not be something that CANNOT NOT be observed...** the whole world will see it... remember what Jesus warned?...

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. Matthew 24:23

If they say the Messiah lives out in the wilderness... don't believe them... If they say the Messiah lives in Coeur D Alene... don't believe it!... how do we know they aren't the Son of Man?... because it will be so pronounced and obvious... so world-wide vivid... there will be no doubt! [One reason I can't accept that all this has taken place prior to 70AD]

1. (1:7) Our responsibility is to "Behold"

2. Clouds remind us of the prophecy in Daniel 7:13 revealing God's glory

3. The world-wide recognition of His coming.

Reread verse 7

Every eye will see Him.

Sunday night class discusses things like this... one of the atheist arguments against this idea that the whole world will see the return of Christ goes like this...it is the issue of light... even if God DID create light...it travels 186000 miles per second...for light to travel from our nearest star is over 4 light years...

We know that there are galaxies upon galaxies upon our Milky Way...it is ridiculous to believe the Bible's account because of the speed of light it would take 20 to 24 billions of years for any image of Christ to float down the solar system and arrive at our planet... so the Bible is ridiculous...

Here's where Science theory and the Bible perhaps have a "misunderstanding"... the Bible says that God is so mighty... so Almighty that He simply "spoke" the world into existence... we wouldn't have to "wait" for light to reach us...

The Christ coming down from heaven...Our God is not hung up on Scientific theory...Our God could diffuse light through the entire solar system at one moment in time...LET THERE BE LIGHT AND ZOOM!!!! THERE'S LIGHT EVERYWHERE... ZOOM!!!!... THERE JESUS!

Genesis 1 solves so many problems... **IN THE BEGINNING GOD.....BAM**

The entire world will see Jesus coming with the clouds.

We won't need to tune into Fox News or CNN... to see what's going on... we will see it for ourselves!... when the Son of Man comes... He's going to fill the sky... there will be no doubt what's going on!

Crazy speculations out there... one said He's coming soon because finally there is a mechanism in place that the entire world can see His arrival... cell phones...GPS...X... seriously?... don't you think the God who spoke the world into existence can make an entrance that the entire world will see?... WAM!...I'M HERE!another thing in this verse... subtle...

4. The special realization of the nation of Israel...

I think God has a distinct plan for Israel.... That's not popular today among many evangelicals... It may not be in some of your theologies... I think the Bible is clear on this...God's not done with Israel...Paul in Romans says **God has not cast away His people...**

Verse 7 says **Behold He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him...EVEN THOSE WHO PIERCED HIM**...to be clear.... All of us pierced Jesus Christ on the cross...Jesus died for all, gentile and Jew... we are all guilty...

All of were there at the crucifixion... Pilot wasn't a Jew he was involved...Annas, Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin... the Jews... the Romans put Him on the cross... it was a joint effort... all of us were there...

But this is a phrase for Israel...how do I know?... another Old Testament reference... this is from Zechariah 12:

10 "And I will pour out on the house of David (The Jews)and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace (God giving you what you don't deserve) and of pleading, so that they will look at Me whom they pierced; and they will mourn for Him, like one

mourning for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. 11 On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be great,

Who's talking here?... The Lord (verse 7)... the Lord Jesus Christ is the one saying **they will look upon Me...what they've done...**they pierced me... they nailed my body on that cross... My people.....My people.

Paul wrote **all Israel will be saved...** Israel... the remnant... will turn to the Lord... Zechariah 12.... The Jews and the gentiles are all saved the same way... through faith and the saving grace of Jesus Christ... there's not two programs of salvation... one of works and one of faith.... There's only one....you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ ALONE...you are saved!

5. The overwhelming reaction of the entire world

Verse 7 **...and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him...AMEN.** [This can't be referring to 70AD... there would be only one tribe mourning...Israel... it is ALL the tribes of the earth.

I like the King James... **the tribes of the earth will wail over Him**...some think this means they are repenting... they see their sinful life and so they are wailing... what we know here is that **“all the tribes of the earth”**... ALL PEOPLE ON EARTH...will lament the fact that everything they were living for...if not Christ was wrong...

It's like the light bulb went on... I remember back in the late seventies... Steve Martin was the comedian to go to He did a sketch about the Bible... **What if everything they taught us in Sunday School was actually true.... Oh _____** fill in the expletive...

Jesus is coming back... not one person will not witness this... and there will be many... this is not a joke.... Lamenting that everything they learned in Sunday School was true.... There will be those in great agony on that day...

All the tribes of the earth... EVERYONE...

Now...what is interesting here... and it could just fly right on by without notice... bit let's stop and think about it... John says **Yes, Amen.**

He's not even to the end of his passage... John can't help it... he explodes in an “Amen”... the “Yes” is not insignificant... It is an affirmation of what has been said is true!... YES!.... but then it is emphasized with an AMEN!

The word AMEN... is primarily a Hebrew word Ameen... so this is what we call a “double affirmation” when John's heart is ready to explode with all that is being shown to him.... It is all so clear to him... everything that he has been observing and participating in for the last 60-70 years is all so clear to him.

Yes! Amen!

Amen doesn't mean we're done... like at the end of a blessing before a meal... or a end of a prayer... or an end of a sermon... Amen does not mean... *finally it's all over and you can leave now...*

SO... when you are standing there... and HE's coming in the clouds... what do you say?... AMEN... Interesting here though... **is that Jesus Himself takes the title AMEN**... look at this...the end of verse 6 **Amen**...the end of verse 7 **Amen**... 5:14 **the four living creatures kept saying "Amen"** Here in the Greek it is called the "perfect tense" meaning it goes on and on... **and the elders fell down and worshipped...**

The worship leaders of heaven are saying all the time... AMEN! AMEN!... throughout the book of Revelation is AMEN...

So many more... but in revelation 3:14 **"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Origin of the creation of God, says this: JESUS IS THE GREAT AMEN.**

2 Corinthians 1:20 **For as many as the promises of God are, in Him they are yes; therefore through Him also is our Amen to the glory of God through us.**

AMEN is not just some religious word to show you are "religious"... it is a term of deep devotion and worship of the Lord....AMEN?