

Session 3 The Theme of the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1)

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I. INTRODUCTION (REV. 1:1-2)

- A. The book of Revelation is called the *revelation of Jesus* because it first reveals the majesty of His heart and leadership in His plan to transition history to the age to come.

¹The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him [Jesus] to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. He sent and signified it by His angel to...John. (Rev. 1:1)

- B. Second, it is a book about events that will take place in His end-time plan to purify the Church, bring in the harvest, and replace all the evil governments on earth. God's purpose in this book is first to *reveal the Man* behind the plan. Many only see the plan, and miss the Man.

- C. In Revelation 1-3, John reports a visionary experience, highlighting **30 specific descriptions** of Jesus' majesty, ministry, and personality, along with 18 eternal rewards.

We can identify these 30 descriptions from Jesus' titles, names, appearance, actions, and clothing. For example, His garments show Him as a high priest. His eyes like fire reveal His passion, intensity, judgment, and full knowledge of every situation.

There are 24 descriptions in Revelation 1 plus 18 in Revelation 2-3, totaling 42. Since 12 are used in both Revelation 1 and Revelation 2-3, there are 30 distinct descriptions.

- D. John gave only abbreviated statements of each description and reward. Each phrase is significant and is but a *hint* that we are to search out more by using the rest of the Bible to get a greater picture of what the Spirit is saying about Jesus. It is like a *menu*, highlighting what the Holy Spirit desires to "feed" the Church related to the glory of Jesus.
- E. Each description and reward communicates a specific insight about Jesus that is necessary in equipping the Church to overcome compromise, endure persecution, and engage in partnership with Jesus in the great end-time drama.
- F. Revelation 1 is the most complete picture of Jesus in the Bible. It describes **who He is** (how He thinks and feels) and **what He does** in His end-time plan. If we read Revelation with the right perspective, it inspires us to adore Jesus and trust His leadership. Here we see what Jesus wants emphasized most about Himself to prepare His Church for the greatest release of His glory.
- G. Jesus gave us these insights into His heart and ministry to form the way we pray, prophesy, and serve Him in releasing His glory and warring against evil. With these insights, we will prophesy with a spirit of boldness, tenderness, and confidence, instead of harshness and fear.
- H. No aspect of God's grace more powerfully transforms our emotions or satisfies us than when God the Spirit reveals God to our hearts.

- I. *Is your life goal to enter into the power and pleasure of being obsessed with Jesus' magnificence? I want to be obsessed with His magnificence.*
- J. Paul gladly gave up everything as he saw the magnificence, or excellence, of Jesus! If we can see what Paul saw about Jesus, then we can live like he lived. Paul would have given up anything to position his heart to gain more insight into Jesus' magnificence and to feel the power of it.
⁸I count all things loss for the excellence [magnificence] of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:8)
- K. The Spirit was given to us to be our escort into the deep things of God's heart. He knows more about Jesus than we can imagine. He will reveal as much of Jesus as we are hungry for. He gives to us based on our hunger for more. He will not force-feed us. I pray, "Holy Spirit, let me see what You see and feel what You feel about Jesus—teach me about Him."
¹³"The Spirit...will guide [escort] you...¹⁴for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." (Jn. 16:13-14)
¹⁰The Spirit searches...the deep things of God...¹²We have received...the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Cor. 2:10-12)
- L. The Spirit is raising up those who will proclaim the riches of Jesus. The most neglected subject in the kingdom of God is God Himself. We must not only teach on topics such as leadership, relationships, economic principles, ministry skills, how to be happier, etc., but on Jesus Himself.
⁸To me...grace was given that I should preach...the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Eph. 3:8)
- M. In Revelation 1, Jesus is seen as the *Son of Man* who leads the Church through history as *Prophet, Priest, and King*. These truths are to equip the church (Rev. 2-3) to be faithful to Him.
¹³...One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet. (Rev. 1:13)
Jesus used the title *Son of Man* more than any other when speaking of Himself (85 references).
When He spoke of Himself as the Son of Man, He was proclaiming the two most important truths about Himself, that He was both fully God and fully human. In using this title, Jesus was saying, "I am fully God, yet fully human. I am one of you."
As the *Son of Man* He stood before the throne of God to be commissioned by the Father (Ancient of Days) to rule all the nations on earth (Dan. 7:13-14).
¹³"Behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven...¹⁴Then to Him was given dominion...His dominion is an everlasting dominion. (Dan. 7:13-14)
- N. In Revelation 1, Jesus' leadership in the Church is seen as the *righteous prophet, merciful priest, and sovereign king*. However, as the book unfolds, His leadership is openly revealed before all the nations at the end of the age in Revelation 19-22 as the *Bridegroom, King, and Judge*.
- O. In Revelation 19-22, the righteous prophet is seen in greater light as the *zealous judge*, the merciful priest as the *passionate Bridegroom*, and the *sovereign king* reigning on the throne.

II. A SUMMARY OF THE THEME OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION (REV. 1:1-8)

- A. The Father’s commission to make known specific truths about Jesus (Rev. 1:1).

¹The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John. (Rev. 1:1)

Things: Jesus revealed “things,” or events, yet to come. The Father selected these events to emphasize; He revealed just a few of the events that will occur in the generation in which Jesus returns—the ones He considered especially strategic.

God gave to Jesus: The Father “gave” revelation to Jesus, and mandated that He show His servants these events. Jesus commissioned His angel to show the events to John; thus we know that the Father wants His servants to be familiar with them. We are to talk about them and not ignore them. This is itself a mandate to study the book of Revelation.

- B. Scripture promises a blessing for anyone who reads or hears this prophecy (Rev. 1:3). This blessing is within reach of all, but it is one of the most neglected blessings in the Church today.

*³**Blessed** is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy. (Rev. 1:3)*

- C. This information was given to John to give to the churches (Rev. 1:4). John was commanded twelve times to write this prophecy for the benefit of the Church (Rev. 1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 4, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). This was to be taught in the churches. It can be understood by all.

*⁴**John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: grace to you and peace from Him...** (Rev. 1:4)*

- D. **Grace and peace**: Using the truths in the book of Revelation, God will impart peace to overcome fear and grace to resist compromise. Fear and compromise are two temptations in the book.

III. THE FATHER IS COMING TO THE EARTH (REV. 1:4)

- A. A key to living with confidence is to see the Father’s involvement and commitment to the earth. The phrase “[He] who is and who was and who is to come” depicts God’s relationship to the earth, though it includes far more than that. The Father is coming to the earth.

*⁴**...peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come.** (Rev. 1:4)*

*³**The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them** [on the earth]. (Rev. 21:3)*

- B. The Father is committed to the earth. This is our hope. Our life focus and confidence is that He is coming to the earth and that what we are doing contributes to that in a small yet real way.

- C. **Who was**: The Father has been deeply involved with the earth from before its foundations in Genesis 1. He has worked out His plans from the beginning and has been involved all along the way. He has been deeply involved, in the present tense, throughout every hour of human history.

- D. **Who is**: The Father is currently involved in human history. History is on course; it is not aimless. It is on a purposeful trajectory, moving steadily to fulfill God’s ultimate purposes.

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS BEFORE THE FATHER (REV. 1:4)

- A. The Holy Spirit is described in His great diversity, position of honor, and posture of humility.
⁴...peace from Him...and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne. (Rev. 1:4)
- B. **Seven Spirits**: The one Holy Spirit is described as the seven Spirits to emphasize His great diversity in function and ability (Isa. 11:2; Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6; cf. Zech. 3:9; 4:10).
²The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. (Isa. 11:2)
- C. **Before the throne**: The Holy Spirit is “before” the throne, speaking of His position of supreme honor and power as God, and of His posture of serving the Father’s plan with humility.

V. THREE FOUNDATIONAL TITLES OF JESUS (REV. 1:5)

- A. John highlighted three primary truths about Jesus (v. 5) and elaborated on them (v. 10-20). This description of Jesus is foundational to understanding and responding to God’s plan in Revelation.
⁵...from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. (Rev. 1:5)
- B. **Faithful witness**: Jesus told the truth about God, man, Israel, culture, the end times, etc. Jesus embodied truth in His life and courageously spoke truth out of loyal love to His Father. This is Jesus’ first title in the book, and imitating Him in this is one of our more important challenges.

Jesus was the faithful witness in His earthly ministry (Rev. 1:5; 3:7, 14; 19:11). He revealed the truth and took a stand for it, regardless of the cost. It resulted in His death.

Jesus did not hold back the negative (rebukes or declarations of judgment) or exaggerate the positive (affirmations or promises). He spoke without regard for criticism or loss.
- C. **Firstborn among the dead**: Jesus is preeminent in authority over the supernatural realm as its human heir. He occupies the first place of authority and honor as the firstborn of creation. This does not mean He was the first one created, but rather that He is first in *cause and authority*. Power over creation “begins” with Him. He is the first man with a resurrected body, and is in the position of the firstborn son as the unique heir of God. He is the *firstborn* from the dead and the *firstfruits* of those who have died (1 Cor. 15:23).
¹⁵He is...the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶By Him all things were created...¹⁸He...is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Col. 1:15-18)
- D. **Ruler of the kings of the earth**: Jesus is preeminent in authority over the earthly realm of government. The theme of the book of Revelation is that Jesus is returning to earth to rule all the nations as King of all kings (Rev. 1:5, 7; 11:15; 15:3; 19:16; 21:24). In the Millennium, all the kings of the earth will be saved and worship Him (Ps. 72:11; 102:15; 138:4; 148:11; Isa. 62:2).
¹¹All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. (Ps. 72:11)

VI. JESUS, LOVED US AND MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS (REV. 1:5-6)

- A. Jesus uses His position of honor as heir in the realm of the spirit and ruler of the earth to express love to us by qualifying us to draw close to God and by exalting us to rule with Him.

⁵To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father... (Rev. 1:5-6)

- B. We see a threefold description of His high priestly ministry for us. He loved us—desired us as His Bride. He washed us—cleansed and qualified us—to relate closely to God as priests. He exalted us by including us as kings in His reign.

- C. Jesus will govern the earth in partnership with resurrected saints (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5; cf. Mt. 19:28; 20:21-23; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 6:2-3).

⁴I saw thrones, and they sat on them...and reigned with Christ for a thousand years...⁶They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4-6)

VII. JESUS IS COMING TO THE EARTH (REV. 1:7-8)

- A. The primary theme and storyline in the book of Revelation is Jesus coming to the earth on the clouds to be received as king. His kingship will be announced and asserted over every nation as His royal procession in the sky is seen by every eye (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7). Jesus will come to the earth to create the context for the Father to come (Rev. 1:4, 8; 21:3).

⁷Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. (Rev. 1:7)

³⁰“And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Mt. 24:30)

- B. All unbelievers in all the nations will see Him. Mourning describes either their repentance unto salvation (Zech. 12:10) or remorse over their coming judgment (Rev. 1:7; 16:9, 11, 21).

VIII. JESUS, THE SON OF MAN: LIVING FASCINATED (REV. 1:9-20)

- A. John was not focused on his limitations and tribulations; he was awestruck. The Body of Christ is so familiar with “the God that we hardly know” that we are tempted to stay focused on our lonely “prison island” instead of turning to hear the voice of the Man who alone can fascinate us.

⁹I, John...was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God...¹²I turned to see the voice that spoke...and having turned I saw...¹³One like the Son of Man. (Rev. 1:9-13)

- B. Jesus revealed His majesty as the Son of Man who is Prophet, Priest, and King (Rev. 1:13-17).

¹⁴His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters...¹⁶out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. ¹⁷When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. (Rev. 1:14-17)

- C. **Jesus' eyes**: His “eyes like fire” speak of His burning desire of love, His intensity, and His knowledge that penetrate all things as fire penetrates metal. They speak of His ability to *see* everything, to *feel* love for us, to *impart* love to us, and to *destroy* all that hinders love.
¹⁴...His eyes like a flame of fire. (Rev. 1:14)
- D. **Jesus' voice**: He speaks to gather His people, warn of judgment, and announce His return.
¹⁰A loud voice, as of a trumpet...¹⁵His voice as the sound of many waters. (Rev. 1:10, 15)
- E. **Jesus' hair**: Jesus' head and hair are white as wool and snow, indicating the Father's glory. God's white garments and hair speak of His eternal existence, purity, and wisdom (Dan. 7:9).
¹⁴His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow. (Rev. 1:14)
- F. **Jesus' garments**: Jesus is seen as our High Priest, being clothed in priestly robes. Jesus, the glorious Son of Man, is also the sympathetic, tender High Priest who understands us (Heb. 4:15).
¹³...clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded...with a golden band. (Rev. 1:13)
- G. **Jesus' right hand**: Jesus holding the seven stars (His leaders) speaks of His promise to anoint, direct, and protect them. He is tender towards us even when we feel inadequate.
¹⁶In His right hand seven stars...²⁰The seven stars are the angels [messengers]... (Rev. 1:16, 20)
- H. **Jesus' feet and sword**: As King He puts all things under His feet and uses His sword to remove all resistance to His rule (Rev. 19:15-16). His Word is compared to a sword (Eph. 6:17).
¹⁵His feet were like fine brass...¹⁶Out of His mouth went a two-edged sword... (Rev. 1:15-16)
- I. **Jesus' countenance**: Jesus' glorious radiance exhilarates the saints and destroys His enemies.
¹⁶His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (Rev. 1:16)
- J. **A-R-K**: We apply the truths about Jesus in Revelation 1 to our lives in three ways:
Agreement: Make *declarations of agreement* to Jesus as the faithful witness. Pray, “Jesus, You are the faithful witness. You took a stand with courage and love. I believe You.”
Revelation: “Reveal Yourself to me and show me Your glory as the faithful witness.”
Keep the prophecy: Respond in faith and obedience to the specific truth of Jesus as the faithful witness. Pray, “I will stand for truth regardless what it costs me. Help me.”
⁷Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. (Rev. 22:7)

IX. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (e.g., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?