

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This evening, we are going to start a new study – we are going to start the Book of Revelation.

How many have sat through an entire study in the book of Revelation?

How many get it???

It can be a little confusing.

So, for the next couple of weeks, as we study the book of Revelation – I want to encourage you to read ahead, write down questions that you make have and then ask them during our Q/A session after the study.

I will do my best to try and answer them.

Let's pray...

[Rev 1:1-20 NKJV] 1 The **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,

When an artist or a sculpture has a public unveiling – one of the things he or she usually does is he covers the sculpture or the painting with a cloth or a screen so that no one can see it.

And then at the appropriate time, the veil is removed and people will have the opportunity to see it for themselves.

This book is the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

It pulls the cover off, revealing Him as He is today, and as He will be at His coming, and in eternity.

That is what the word “Revelation” means – the unveiling.

So as we go from chapter to chapter, we will see Jesus Christ in every section.

And as we saw in verse 1, God the Father "gave" Jesus this unveiling.

Jesus Christ is God, and equal with God, but in terms of function and the plan of salvation, He remains subordinate to His Father's will.

Jesus then gave the unveiling of Himself to an unnamed angel, who then gave it to John, for him to write it down for us.

This unveiling is to "show His servants." The Lord wants us to see Him, as He is now in Heaven, and as He will be at His Second Coming.

I asked you to make a note of where it says “shortly take place”

Because many people are going to say, “It’s been almost 2000 years since John was inspired to write this”

How is that “shortly take place?”

The word that is used here for shortly take place – is not the word that one would use referring to something that is going to happen very soon.

The word that is used here means quickly or suddenly – meaning that once things start happening – things will start to transpire rapidly.

And we also see that John lists himself as the author.

This is the same John that wrote the gospel of John and the three epistles.

I also had you make a note of the phrase signified it – this means through sign or symbols.

And that is what we have throughout the book of revelation: signs and symbols.

And as we will see, these signs and symbols will be either defined for us; or we can easily define them by their use elsewhere in the scriptures.

Remember what I have always said, the best tool to interpret the bible is the bible itself.

2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

Not only did John walk with Jesus during his earthly ministry (testimony) he also saw with his own two eyes that things that he is going to write about.

And that is why we have so many symbols and images – John is trying to describe what he saw – they didn't have helicopters back then or tanks or jet fighters -

3 Blessed [is] he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time [is] near.

Revelation is the only book in the bible that promises a blessing to those who read it.

And that promised is made twice.

Here in verse three and in chapter 22:6,7

A person can be blessed by reading it and can be cursed by tampering with it.

But the greatest blessing comes when a person obeys it.

Why the blessing?

Because, like I mentioned earlier, we will continue to see Jesus and be reassured that we will be victorious in the end.

4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn

from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

We will see who the seven churches are over the next two weeks.

That is who this letter is addressed to.

Notice the number seven –

There are a lot of groupings of 'sevens' in this book.

By the time it ends, we will encounter at least fifty-two of them

Seven is the number of completion.

In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth in six days then rested on the seventh day because His work was completed.

It is appropriate that sevens are prominent in the book of Revelation because it is the book that gives us the completion of God's plan for the human race.

Everything that began in Genesis ends and has its fulfillment in the Revelation.

The "seven churches" were all in the region we know as modern Turkey.

So John writes to the seven church and tells them that each person of the trinity greets them.

God the Father - "Him who is and who was and who is to come." That is what I AM or Yahweh mean.

The seven Spirits is a reference to the Holy Spirit. – this does not refer to seven different beings – Remember that 'seven' is the number of completion. The seven spirits refers to the fullness of God the Holy Spirit.

Turn with me to Isaiah 11 –

When describing the Holy Spirit's effects upon the Messiah, Isaiah wrote,

[Isa 11:2 NKJV] 2 The 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.

And then in verse five we have different descriptions of Jesus Christ.

You may have noticed the word "first born"

"Firstborn" is a word of preeminence.

It means Jesus rose from the dead as the first and preeminent Person to never die again.

There were others that were resuscitated or brought back to life – like Lazarus.

But Lazarus had to die again.

By Jesus being the firstborn from the dead - It means others will follow and rise as a result of His resurrection.

Church, we live presently in the power of His resurrection as we await His return.

6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him [be] glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Not only did Jesus Christ cleanse us from our sins, when He returns and establishes His Kingdom for one thousand years, we will be active in that Kingdom by serving God as kings and priests.

We are not going to be sitting around watching Netflix for a thousand years – we will be serving Him

7 Behold, 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. Even so, Amen.

This is in reference to His second coming –

Turn with me to Matt 24,

[Mat 24:29-31 NKJV] 29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 "Then the sign of the

Son of Man will appear in heaven, 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. 31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Coming with clouds doesn't mean that the weather is going to be overcast the day of His Second coming –

It can be a reference to His ascension – It could be a reference to the shekinah glory that we saw in the book of Exodus with the cloud that led them through the wilderness – and also it could be a reference to the saints that will return with Him.

In the book of Hebrews – the saints of God are described as a great cloud of witness.

I had you make a note of where it says, “even they who pierced Him” –

That is a reference to the Jewish nation that rejected Jesus during His first coming but after going through the Great Tribulation, will be ready to receive Him as their Messiah and King.

– and will fulfill the words of the prophet Zechariah.

[Zec 12:10 NKJV] 10 "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look

on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for [his] only [son], and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, [the] Beginning and [the] End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

If your bible has the words of Christ in red – then verse 8 is in red.

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet –

So Jesus is declaring that He is eternal, He is boundless and powerful One.

9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Patmos was the Alcatraz of Rome.

And this is the location where John receives the revelation.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send [it] to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

On the Lord's Day, is not a reference to Sunday.

The Lord's day here is a reference to the Day of the Lord that is referred to in the Old Testament. The Day of Judgment.

So John was taken up and forward in time to the day of the Lord.

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

The seven lampstands represent not only the seven churches that we will see in Revelation but all the Christian churches.

Remember, a lampstand is not a light but a bearer of light.

Jesus Christ said He is the light of the World.

Therefore, it is the churches responsibility to shine His light into the darkness of this world.

Now, I find it odd that when John turned around, he didn't see Jesus first – he saw the seven lampstands???

Church, this is a strong reminder that Jesus is seen - He is unveiled to the world - as He lights-up His church.

13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands [One] like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

Jesus is demonstrating the role of the priest.

When we studied the Tabernacle, one of the role of the priests was to make sure that the lampstand (menorah) kept burning.

That is what Jesus is doing here.

The author of Hebrews calls Jesus our “High Priest” (Heb. 8:1)

He’s moving among the lampstands (His church) in the holy place, trimming the lamps, cleaning them out, refilling them, and lighting them on fire!

That’s what the letters to the churches are all about.

He’s the Inspector of the lampstands.

He’s the one working to help the churches burn brighter as lights in this world.

14 His head and hair [were] white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

Verse 14 shows us that in heaven, there is no “Just for Men”

His hair is white!

Actually, this is a reference to His holiness and purity.

In the Old Testament – Isaiah uses “white snow” as a picture of purity:

**(Is 1:18 NKJV) “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD,
“Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they
are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.**

His eyes like a flame of fire –

This speaks of Jesus’ knowledge of us (seeing right through us) and of His judgment.

To the church He was most upset with (Thyatira), Jesus used this very description:

**(Re 2:18 NKJV) “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things
says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine
brass:**

It’s to the unrepentant people of this church that Jesus says,

**(Re 2:23 NKJV) I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know
that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of
you according to your works.**

The “searching” of the eyes and the judgment of fire.

**15 His feet [were] like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the
sound of many waters;**

Since fire is connected with judgment, these feet like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace speak of someone who has been through the fires of judgment and has come forth with a refined purity.

Church, Jesus has been through the “Refiner’s Fire.” as He suffered the judgment that was meant for you and me.

16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance [was] like the sun shining in its strength.

We will see at the end of the chapter that that the seven stars are the leaders of the seven churches.

Now, let’s talk about this sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus.

Is this a literal sword or a symbolic sword?

[Heb 4:12 NKJV] 12 For the word of God [is] living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

What is coming out of the mouth of Jesus? The word of God.

That is His weapon.

When Jesus was tempted by satan for 40 days, what was Jesus’ weapon.

The word of God – “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”

“It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’ ”

“Away with you,[fn] Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”

And it should be our weapon of choice as well.

[Eph 6:17 NKJV] 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 "I [am] He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. 19 "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

This is what happens to people who catch a glimpse of glory.

We fall at his knees

If we are truly aware that we are in God’s presence, there ought to be a sense of awe and fear that should drive us humbly to the floor.

Notice the order:

John heard.

He saw.

He fell.

Then he was touched, revived, and commissioned into ministry to write “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”

John received a deeper understanding of who Jesus is –

And that, church, is what this book before us is all about.

Revelation is not given primarily to give us information about Bible prophecy, but to bring to us to a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Notice that Jesus is the one who has the keys of Hades and of Death.

Some imagine that the devil is somehow the “lord of Hell.” Some imagine that the devil has authority or power to determine life or death.

That is not biblical - clearly, they are wrong, for only Jesus holds the keys of Hades and of Death.

I want you to look at verse 19 again closely.

For those that don't understand the book of Revelation –

Jesus provides an outline

19 "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."

"Write the things which you have seen."

What John had seen was the vision of the risen Lord walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks with seven stars in His right hand. Chapter one is the record of the things John had seen.

Chapters two and three will contain the second division, "the things which are."

The seven churches, representing the entire church age, are the things which are.

Then from chapters four through the end of the book we read about "the things which will take place after this."

We'll see the church resurrected and raptured into Heaven; the seven years of the Great Tribulation; the Battle of Armageddon; the second coming of Jesus; the one-thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth (called the Millennium); the final judgment of Satan, the fallen angels, and nonbelieving humanity; the destruction of this universe; the creation of a new universe; and we'll get a glimpse at our lives in eternity with God.

20 "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Earlier I had mentioned that the seven stars were the seven leaders of the church – but here it says that they are the seven angels.

The word angels means messengers –

But the fact that John was supposed to give this revelation to these messengers to give to their churches tells me that they are human –

Angels are God's messengers – not ours.

It makes more sense that these messengers were the pastors of the seven churches.

And that is what we are going to see in the next two chapters, as Jesus tells the churches what they were doing right and what they were doing wrong.

Church, I want to end our study with the image of Jesus standing in the midst of the lampstands.

I want to remind you that Jesus is our Great High Priest.

Your body is the temple of God on the earth today - the temple of the Holy Spirit. But so is the church, the body of Jesus Christ, His temple on the earth.

In the earthly Temple, the Jewish priest would refill the bowl of the lampstand with oil, and trim the wicks.

As far as the oil, Jesus has promised His church the unending flow of His Holy Spirit.

A wick needs to be kept trimmed in order for the lamp to burn its brightest.

Is there a hint in this that in our tribulations Jesus is trimming us, to light-up the darkness?

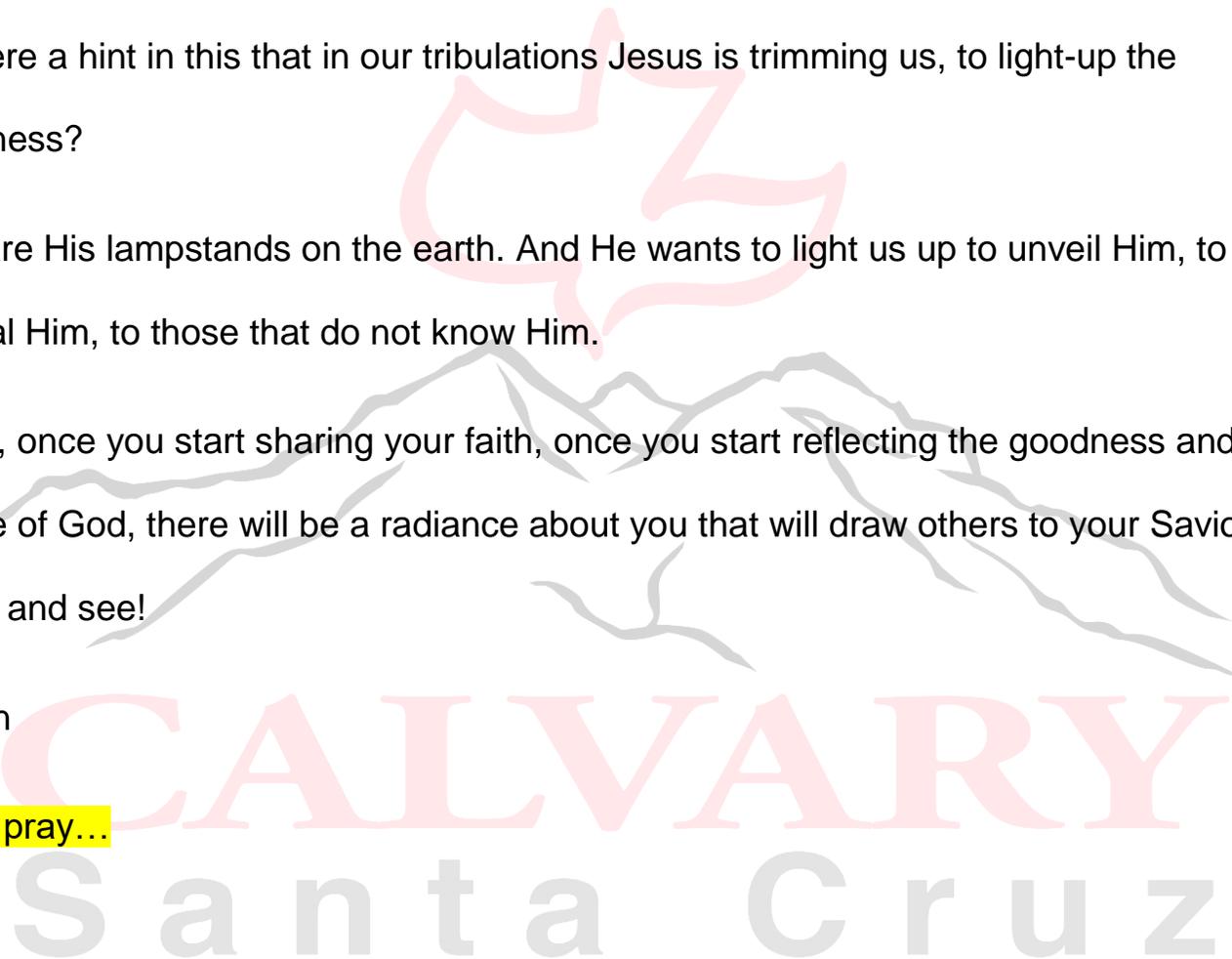
We are His lampstands on the earth. And He wants to light us up to unveil Him, to reveal Him, to those that do not know Him.

Truly, once you start sharing your faith, once you start reflecting the goodness and grace of God, there will be a radiance about you that will draw others to your Savior.

Try it and see!

Amen

Let's pray...



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