**Book of Revelation Sermon I**

**Jesus: The Alpha and the Omega**

Revelation = unveiling. *apokalupsis* αποκαλυψισ vision as a literary device. The word is found in Rev 1:1

Purpose:

1. To show in dramatic fashion that God is in control.

“The purpose of these writings was to stress the virtue of loyalty and of stimulate faith by showing in vivid fashion the certain overthrow of evil and final victory for God’s righteous cause.” (Summers: Worthy is the Lamb)

Revelation is apocalyptic literature. Revelation = apokalupsis = apocalylptic

Characteristics of apocalyptic writing:

1. Generally produced in troubled times.

Isaiah: Destruction of Samaria

Ezekiel and Daniel: Captivity

Revelation: Roman persecution

2. Cryptic (coded) in style (ie. the message is not obvious to the uninitiated)

Why? These books have bad news for God’s enemies. To protect the recipients of the message from their enemies.

3. Prophecy vs Apocalyptic

Prophecy: Mainly preaching and secondarily prediction.

Apocalyptic: Mainly prediction and secondarily preaching.

4. Apocalyptic literature always has a historical setting and significance. Knowledge of the historical situation is very important to understanding the vision.

Daniel: Persecution of the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes 167-164 BC

Revelation: Domitian’s persecution 96/97 AD

7. Symbolic.

Most of scripture: Take literally unless the context demands a figurative interpretation. Ex: Jesus says, “Go tell that fox…” (Herod Antipas)

Apocalyptic: Take figuratively unless the context demands otherwise.

Ex: The seven churches are seven literal churches.

For the Jews, there was a more or less accepted use of certain symbols.

Numbers used symbolically extensively in Revelation.

2 = strength, courage, energy (two are better than one) (two witnesses in Revelation) (two beasts war against the saints = a strong enemy)

3 = divine number. Number of God.

4 = the world (four winds, four cardinal directions, four angels, four creatures in Revelation = the four divisions of the wild animals. Four horsemen = powers of mankind, destructive powers of the world.

6 = sinister, Satan 6 falls one short of seven. Doom. 666 in Revelation.

7 = perfection, completeness 4 + 3 = 7 world + God = perfection. 7 spirits, 7 churches, 7 golden lampstands, 7 stars, 7 sections of Revelation, each in seven parts (7 signs and 7 I Am statements in John)

3-1/2 = incomplete, imperfect. Restless longings unfulfilled, waiting. (time, times and half a time Daniel 7) 3-1/2 used a lot in Revelation 1260 days the church was in the wilderness. Daniel 7:25 12:7 Rev 11:2,3 12:6,14 Rev 13:5

10 = completeness (all your fingers or all your toes) 10 commandments are the whole duty of men. The dragon, the first beast and the scarlet beast all have 10 horns.

Multiples of 10 1000 = ultimate completeness

12 Number of religion. God’s people. 12 tribes, 12 apostles, 12 gates in New Jerusalem.

Ex. 144,000 is the full number of God’s people (12x12x10x10x10) and is certainly NOT literal! The ultimate complete number of God’s people.

Many other uses of stock symbols in apocalyptic literature.

The seas represent the peoples of the earth.

Horns = kings or powers

8. Dramatic. Apocalyptic literature is very dramatic, vivid, forceful. Uses the grotesque and the terrifying to catch our attention. Rivers of blood, hail, locusts, dragons, death riding a horse with the grave following behind. Animals with many heads and heads with many horns.

How to approach Revelation?

About the visions and imagery: get the big point and do not get caught up in the details.

[9. Involves end-times End-time theories (Eschatology):

Preterist a theologian who believes that the Scripture prophecies of the Apocalypse (the Book of Revelation) have already been fulfilled

Amillenialist Amillennialism (Latin: a- "no" + millennialism) is a view in Christian end-times theology named for its rejection of the theory that Jesus Christ will have a thousand-year long, [physical] reign on the earth. ...

Premillenialist The doctrine that the prophesied millennium of blessedness will begin with the imminent Second Coming of Christ.

Postmillenialist The doctrine that the Second Coming of Christ will be the culmination of the prophesied millennium of blessedness.]

Historical background/setting:

Revelation 1:9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

96/97 AD Domitian is emperor and he is about to begin an empire-wide persecution of the church for the first time. Trouble and new persecutions are coming on the church.

Theme of Revelation: Peel back the layers of history and even the terrible persecutions and what do we find? **The lamb is on the throne and God is in control.**

Message of Revelation: **Be encouraged and faithful to Jesus Christ. Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord.**

Objective: to comfort persecuted Christians.

Description of Revelation: A “divine picture-book”. “Spiritual cartoons,” representing the historical development of the early Christian church.

Romans appeals to the intellect/mind

Psalms appeals to the emotions

Revelation appeals to the imagination.

Outline of Revelation

Ch 1 Prologue

Ch 2-3 Letters to the Seven Churches

Ch 4-7 The Seven Seals

Ch 8-11 The Seven Trumpets

Ch 12-16 Seven Mystical Figures

Ch 15-16 The Seven Bowls

Ch 17-20 Enemies of the Church Overthrown

Ch 21-22 The Kingdom of God Revealed

**Revelation Ch 1**

Rev 1:1-3 The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him to show to his servants what ***must soon*** come to pass (things it is necessary to come to pass shortly).

What is the book about? Things that will soon take place.

*Dei*  δει morally necessary. In other words, God’s justice requires that these prophecies must be fulfilled soon.

Jesus: It is *necessary* that I go to Jerusalem to die Matt 16:21

Jesus to the church: This WILL HAPPEN.

En taxeos εν ταχέως quickly

Rev 1:1, 22:6 must soon take place

Rev 1:3, 22:10 is at hand (right near by)

Compare to Daniel 9:26 which concerns “the distant future.” (written 550 BC about 167 BC)

Could this be some time two thousand or more years in the future?

1:3 First of seven “beatitudes.”

1. Blessed is he who reads aloud this prophecy and takes it to heart. 1:3

2. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. 14:13

3. Blessed is he who watches and is prepared for the Lord’s coming 16:15

4. Blessed are those who are invited to the Lamb’s wedding supper 19:9

5. Blessed are those who have part in the first resurrection 20:6

6. Blessed is he who keeps the words of this book. 22:7

7. Blessed are those who wash their robes in the blood of the lamb. 22:14

Guess what: You are blessed.

Rev 1:4-8,11 Who is it from? God, the Holy Spirit (the seven spirits) and Jesus Christ. Why 7?

Who was the letter to? “to the seven churches…” Rev. 1:4

Rev 1:11 Specifically, to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

Why them? Because these were the churches, more or less, that John himself was shepherd of.

Rev 1:3 To all who hear.

Rev 2:7 Hear what the Spirit says *to the churches*. To us!

v. 8 It is from the alpha and the omega. The beginning and the end. The uncreated Creator… The Almighty.

Rev 1:9-11 John can totally relate to the terrible persecutions that the church is about to undergo.

Why was he on Patmos? Because of the Word of God. (blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake)

If you ever get in trouble, hopefully it will be because of the Word of God. I almost got fired because of the Word of God (Marian College)

We are about to get a look at Jesus. Before you do, form a mental image of Jesus. what do you see?

We will look at three different Jesuses in Revelation. One of them will probably be like the mental image you formed.

Rev 1:12-16 Q: Is this the picture one gets of Jesus in the gospels? Definitely not!!!

The principle picture of Jesus in Revelation (although there are other pictures) is of mind-blowing power. (rod of iron 19:15, winepress of his wrath 19:15, terrible in anger 6:16f, etc.)

A voice “like a trumpet” v 10 (a loud and clear message)

Description of Jesus here similar to Daniel 7:9-10 The “Ancient of Days.” And Daniel 10:4-9.

Blazing eyes see everything very clearly. Nothing escapes his notice!

White hair, etc. purity

Bronze feet = strength

Double-edged sword coming from his mouth Literal? NO! = his absolute authority and power to judge by what he speaks (John 12:48 the very words I spoke will judge at the last day)

To sum up the image: Jesus is authoritative, holy, majestic, omniscient, powerful. He stands among the churches, he holds their fate in his hands. This should have been very reassuring.

Why? Because God’s purpose is to reassure the saints that God is in control.

Q: Are we living in troubled times? Do we need an extra dose of assurance that God is in control—that what he says MUST happen?

Q: (in view of our typical picture of Jesus) How does this picture make you feel?

Rev 5:4-6 Another picture of Jesus

Jesus takes the scroll, which is the message of Revelation to the saints.

Jesus is a lion (a powerful ruler)

Gen 49:8-12 the lion of Judah-of God’s people

Jesus is majestic.

Jesus is triumphant

Jesus is king

Jesus is a ruler

Jesus is fierce.

Jesus is the Root of David (Messiah) Isaiah 11:1-10

Rev 5:6 Jesus is a Lamb who looks as if he had been slain.

Jesus is humble, Jesus is submissive, Jesus is sacrificial “A bruised reed he did not break.

Jesus is a lion to God’s enemies

Jesus is a lamb to God’s people, to the outcast, the poor, the meek

Jesus a lamb “as if it had been were slain” Rev 13:8 Jesus is a lamb who has been slain from the creation of the world”!!!

A lamb with seven horns (perfect power) and seven eyes (omniscient). Bizarre. Not literal.

Jesus as a lamb: John 8:11 then neither do I condemn you. Matthew 9:35-38 When he saw the crowds he had compassion on them.

Jesus as a lion: Matthew 16:23 Get behind me, Satan, Matthew 23, esp. v. 29-37 whitewashed tombs,

but notice right after he is a lamb again Mat 23:37-39 Jerusalem, Jerusalem)

Which is the real Jesus?

Is it the powerful image of Rev 1, the lion of Rev 5 or the lamb of Rev 5?

Rev 1:17-20

Jesus: Do not be afraid. Covid, recession, social injustice,

I am the beginning (the alpha) and the end (the omega)

Rev 1:18 Jesus holds the keys to death and Hades (the place we go when we die).

I hold your fate in my hand!!!

1:19-20 seven stars is the seven messengers symbolically is the perfect messengers

Seven golden lampstands is the seven churches. Symbolically, is the church in its perfection.

Summary:

Jesus, the alpha and the omega

Jesus the uber-powerful superhero

Jesus the lion

Jesus the lamb

God is in control. Do not fear.