

Revelation Pt 1

by Billy Strachan

Billy Strachan's sermon on Revelation emphasizes the importance of understanding the prophetic message of Christ and the urgency of evangelism in light of future events.

Duration: 1:10:24

Scripture: Revelation 1:3-6, Revelation 1:9-18, Revelation 1:20

Topics: "Revelation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as the key to understanding the book of Revelation. He highlights the three actions mentioned in Revelation 1:3 - reading, hearing, and keeping the words of prophecy. The preacher then goes on to describe the vision of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1, emphasizing his divine attributes and authority. He explains that the book of Revelation is not a mystery, but an open declaration of the last will and testament of Christ. The sermon concludes with a greeting to the seven churches in Asia and a reminder of the love and redemption found in Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Revelation chapter 1, reading the whole chapter. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. And he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John, who bore witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is at hand. John to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace be unto 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, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God and his Father.

To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him, and all kindred of the earth shall well because of him.

Even so, amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation,

and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

And I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia, unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me, and being turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands, one like the son of man, clothe with a garment down to the foot, and girded about the breasts with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire, and his feet like fine bronze, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of many waters.

And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead, and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of Hades and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which thou sawest are the seven churches. Here endeth the lesson.

Well, it's nice to be back again, and we've set ourselves a tall order, so as from next week we won't have a reading, because I'll be using as much of the time as possible, because I just don't know each week where we shall stop and start, and we've got to get all of these chapters into six weeks. So we're setting ourselves a great mammoth task. But tonight I want it in a way to be a setting of the entire scene, and hoping that what we say tonight will be in your heart and in your mind, so that we have the situation set, ready for the peeping into what some people consider to be a bit of a mystery.

But I want you to notice, first of all, the title of the last book of the Bible. The title is Revelation, and it's a word that means open. It is not a mystery.

It is an open declaration of the last will and testament of the risen Christ, and it's canonized into scripture to be the final portion of this word of God. And yet there are more people in the world consider it a mystery than any other book in the world. The man who isn't a Christian and does not possess Jesus Christ as his personal savior literally will go, in some cases, mentally insane trying to fathom this out.

Only those who have the Spirit of God and are not natural people still in sin, but possess the Spirit of God, are going to get the illumination to understand these spiritual truths. Because the word of God declares that the natural man cannot receive the things of God. They're foolishness to him, neither can he know them.

And there's one good way of testing the validity of your own experience with Christ in these days, and that is if week by week you go home with the conclusion that we're still boring you. But if you're beginning to understand what we're getting at, there is every indication that that is a proof of the presence of the Spirit of God in your heart, because you will not be able to really put it together if you don't know Jesus Christ as your personal savior. Now, I want to draw your attention to some things in the book before we begin.

Firstly, the first chapter is telling you who's writing and where he's getting the information from and what he's going to write about. But you'll notice that he says in verse three, blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep the things that are written therein, for the time is at hand. Three things, reading, hearing, keeping.

Now, you will note in there that there is not one word about understanding all of it. It is simply a request to read it, to hear what it's saying, and to keep it. And if people would open this book and just simply read it with a view to hearing what it's saying and then not try to alter it, but keep it as it is, there is a blessing in that.

And I know that for myself, each time I go through the revelation, I have found what to me has been the great blessing that I get from reading, hearing, and not playing with it. And that is, it makes me more determined to be more evangelistic than ever before. Because when I read in here what the unconverted and lost of this planet are going to go through in the latter days of this world's history, I want to see everybody saved before that happens.

But unfortunately, I'm just one person and I don't have the capacity to reach the whole of Great Britain. Therefore, I think one of the biggest blessings for the individual Christian is that more and more people, if they read it, hear it, and keep it, will get the main message that's coming through this book. And that is, go tell before it all happens.

So that people do not have to find themselves, go through these awful events, because the majority of the world's populace, I regret to say, will go through them. Next, I want you to notice how the book closes. In the very last chapter, chapter 22, in verse 18.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifies these things said, surely I come quickly.

Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Amen. So it's the only part of scripture that opens with a blessing if you read it, hear it, and keep it, but closes with a warning not to tamper with it, not to add to it or to attempt to take away from it, but to keep it as it is. Now that's something that we will aim to do in these weeks.

And remember that we are all human and none of us, not even myself, have a complete and total revelation of all truth. No pastor has, no Christian has. We're all learning new things year by year that we've never seen before.

And God bit by bit reveals to his children that which they need to know for the present time. And if there are some things at the moment we do not know and we don't have answers to and we cannot see clearly, that is because for the moment it is none of our business. And that in God's good time he will declare to us what we need to know.

So we've had the warning at the end of the book not to add to it or take away from it. And we've had the opening of it warning us that if we just read, hear, and keep, there's a nice big blessing in that. Now I want you to note please that John is telling us exactly who he's getting this revelation from.

It's the risen glorified Lord Jesus Christ himself. And it began to come to him when he was in an exile in the isle of Patmos. And he was in the spirit on the Lord's day and he heard behind him a voice as of a trumpet.

Now that's an instrument that drowns out all other instruments in an orchestra. You can't miss it. So the voice is clear.

We are also told that it is a voice that is like the sound of many waters, verse 15. It drowns out all the other voices. So it's loud and clear and will drown out all other voices.

And you will notice that when he turned to see, this voice like a trumpet had said to him, in verse 11, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and what you see right in a book. Now you'll notice it did not say what you hear, but what you see. In other words, John is going to be limited in his earthly language and vocabulary to put down exactly what it is he's seeing, because he's been shown some 2,000 years ago things that are yet to happen in vision form.

Now, I'm not certain what John saw, but I'm certain of one thing that if, for instance, he suddenly saw a jumbo jet full of people hurtling through the sky, there would be no possible language and vocabulary of his day that he could use to describe that. And he would have to try to put into language, in the words that he's using, something futuristic that he can't explain. For example, you will find that he declares quite plainly in this revelation that there will come a time when there are two great witnesses of God, that shall be killed by the world, who've been trying to kill them for a long time, and they finally achieve it, and their bodies are lying dead in the streets of Jerusalem.

And it states there, the whole world will see this for three days, will see these bodies for three days in the streets. It will be declared an international holiday, and people will be sending gifts to each other to celebrate the death of these two men of God. And suddenly, on the third day, the whole world starts to fear and tremble when they suddenly find these two men standing up, coming back to life, and being caught up into heaven.

Now, even when I first became a Christian, the book of Revelation was the major weapon of the unconverted to prove to me that this Jesus business was a whole load of rubbish. And one of the main objections was that incident that they would bring out as a proof that you can't trust the Bible. And they would pick up an apple or an orange and say, would you say that if this was the globe of the world, Britain's up here? And I'd say, yes.

And that Israel's down round here, round the corner? Yes. And two men dead in the street of Jerusalem? Yes. How's everybody in the world going to see them? Stare through the earth and see them? Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

But since I got converted, men no longer use that argument, because we now sit in our lounge, switch on the television, and watch men coming back from outer space, from a visit to the moon, and when the cameras follow their capsule as they enter the atmosphere and land. We now watch a bomb going off in a bus in Jerusalem. Six o'clock news, it will be there.

Today, a bomb went off in Jerusalem in a bus, and we're going over live now to Jerusalem, and there's the dead lying in the streets of Jerusalem. You see, John did not have a vocabulary. It says, one day you'll see them on telly.

He didn't have that language. He didn't know about television, but he got the idea right of what he saw. You see, he has to describe what he sees, not what he hears.

So the first thing we have to learn is, it's not going to be a word-by-word dictation of something he's hearing, so that we have to start nitpicking with the words, and start digging under every word, and asking if every word was divinely inspired. He's a man that's in the spirit, certainly, but he's been given his vocabulary in his dictionary of 2,000 years ago to try to explain something futuristic that he's seen, not heard. Now, if you will keep that in your mind, it will help you as we go through it, so that you're not trying to understand every word as though it was a God-breathed declaration and dictation that he took down.

He is trying to explain what he saw, but he certainly got the meanings right. Every eye shall see him, but he couldn't tell us how. We now know how.

And so that's something that I want you to keep there in your mind. Now, if you look at the white piece of paper that I have brought, I've just very quickly drawn a line straight across the page, and put a little picture of the planet Earth at its commencement on the left-hand side. And right away at the far right-hand side is the new Earth hurtling and spinning its way into the eternal, endless ages yet to come.

Sort of midway, you will see the cross. Now, what I'm trying to do with this line is very speedily break down the whole history of scripture to show you roughly where the book of the revelation fits in. You'll see that we start from the Adamic age at the left-hand side, moving into the Noahic era, and then into the Abrahamic period of scripture, then into the patriarchal period of scripture, then into the judicial period with the book of the Judges.

Then you're moving into the United Kingdom. That is your 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and including the divided kingdom where Israel separated after Solomon into two nations, Israel and then Judah. And you have then under the line there near the middle, Israel dispersed.

And then a little time later, you're having Judah captive. And from the time, if you look just under the line in the middle, I've drawn an arrow from Judah captive all the way across to after the rapture or day of grace. And it goes beyond that a little bit.

And that whole period is referred to as the times of the Gentiles that started prior to Christ's messianic visitation. Now you'll notice that under the line, under Judah captive, another line that you can trace up to the post captivity period. And then comes the line on top prior to the cross of the messianic visitation, which is Christ's birth, his 33 years ending at the cross.

And then he's risen and he's off ascended into heaven. But your day of grace and the calling out of the church is what we're in now, straight through to the rapture period. And your time of the Gentiles still continues a period after that, before you have God beginning to deal again with Israel.

Now from the rapture period, day of grace through to the end of the world in heavens. If you follow the line down from those arrows, you see it will state the last week of Daniel, the time of Jacob's trouble, the great tribulation. Now that entire period from the rapture or just before it, if there was just a little bit before it, right through to the destruction of the present world and the commencement of the new earth and new heavens, that is where your period of the book of the revelation fits in.

Now, one thing you have to understand is that the book of Daniel and the book of Zechariah are not understood, read by themselves, nor will they make sense unless they're read alongside revelation.

Similarly, revelation in itself is an incomplete piece of puzzle unless you see it fit in to the part in Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, some parts of Isaiah that was left out. And in Daniel, it's referred to his last week, the last week of Daniel.

And it fits into this entire book of revelation to that period. Now, I've just written down in a list chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, right down to the end. And you can use that as you come along just to look at, to see roughly where we are so that you get the idea of just where we are in our exploration of the book.

So it's fitting in. The whole thing is fitting in from just before the rapture to eternity. That's what the whole book of revelation is going to talk about.

Now, the other thing you have to watch in reading this book is that there are scenes on earth, and then you have parentheses or brackets where we leave what's happening on earth to suddenly take you up to let you see what's happening in heaven. And once we've seen what's happening in heaven at that time, that this is happening on earth, then it comes back down again to continue where it left off. So as you read the book of revelation, you have to learn to watch for when you leave the narrative of what's going to happen, to see what's going on upstairs in heaven at the moment, and then watch for when that stops and brings you back down to continue.

Because there are several times when we'll suddenly stop dealing with what's happening here on the earth to take you up for a visit to heaven to show you what's taking place up there, and then we'll come back down and continue. So you have to watch for that as you read the book and learn to just sort of sort these little bits out, and then the rest of it will begin to piece together nicely as a continual flow of one item into the other. Now there is a key to understanding, or as it were, seeing what John is being instructed to share with us.

And the key to revelation is in chapter one in verse 19. Now here is your key that opens the door to what you may have thought was a mystery. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

So he's going to write from chapter two verse one to the end of the book, he's going to write about three things. The things which thou hast seen, past tense. The things which are, present tense.

The things which shall be hereafter, future tense. So it's quite simple. All you have to do from chapter two verse one is to understand that chapter one has told you John's writing, I'm on an island, I am seeing visions given to me by the Lord, he's telling me to hear it, see it, describe it, and it's going to be the things past, things present, and things future.

Now that is your chapter one. So we have to watch now for past, present, and future. Now from chapter two verse one to chapter four verse one, you will find what is known in scripture as your seven letters to the seven churches.

A careful reading of each of these letters, and you will notice that the risen Christ is describing the past of each church, and then he declares the present, what it's like now. And you will find that that covers, in effect, the first two things that John was asked to write. Things that thou hast seen, and in each of the seven letters to the churches, he sees the past of those churches.

And the Lord shows him what the present condition of those churches are like, and then from chapter four verse one, right to the end of the book, everything is futuristic. And so the minute we get to chapter four

verse one, we never have to think in terms of yesterday or today. From there on, it is future.

Now in these letters to the churches, people tend to get bogged down about where was this church? Where was that church? Is it a type of today's church? Was it really a message to the churches or to the angels of those churches? Uh, is it seven ages of the church? Is it seven periods of the church? Is it seven churches? Or is it seven types of behaviorism in today's church? Well, I'm going to suggest that you don't even think like that at all. You've been asked to hear, read, and keep. And instead of trying to fathom out what's underneath, simply hear what he's saying to each church.

And true to our reading of the word of God, we must always read it and end up by asking ourselves that although this may not be written to me, what am I hearing that is a challenge to my heart as a believer? And if you get the main stake on the plate, who cares whether underneath the plate there's an inscription to say that it's Wedgwood, Royal Doulton, or Alf's Pottery. But you will find the number of people that scoop the stake off the plate and sit down and have a 10-month archaeological breakdown and discovery of the grains of sand that made up the piece of pottery that created the plate to try and find out who made the plate. We're not interested.

There's one thing evident. We've got a giant of a message, a piece of filet mignon steak sitting on top of the plate. Let's not miss the stake and get sidetracked by the floral decoration on the plate or who made it stuck underneath.

And then we find in chapter 2, verse 1, to the angel of the church of Ephesus, write these things saith he that holds the seven stars in his right hand who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. And remember what these are. Verse 20 of chapter 1. The mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks.

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. The messengers are angels of the seven churches. The seven candlesticks you saw are the seven churches and they derive their light from the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

But when John turned, he heard the voice behind them as of a gate turnput and like anybody's coming up behind you out there in the dark tonight and shouting, hey, you're going to turn round. And as he turned round, he was blinded by a massive light. And what he saw was not the Lord.

In verse 12, I turned to see the voice that spoke with me and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. So when he turned round, it wasn't the Lord he saw. He saw the churches.

And it was only after he got used to the light of the churches that he began to see in the midst of them where they drew their light from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Now there is a message in that in itself. The stake is that you can turn on hearing a voice that speaks to your heart to know it's not any earthly voice, but a voice that could only be from heaven.

And when you turn to see who's speaking to you, you find it's the churches. And we read that only when you get used to the church, did he see that the source of life was Christ. And in verse 17, and when I saw him, I fainted.

I fell at his feet as dead. I fainted. And that is enough to make you faint.

That the world is going to hear a voice turn round and they're not going to see Christ. They're going to see you and I, the church. That's enough to make anybody faint.

It's enough to make you faint that the world will only see Christ as they see him in the church. Now, don't you forget that, that every day you walk around this neighborhood, you are a candlestick, a light, and you're meant to hold forth the word of life says Paul in Philippines in the midst of a nation of crooks and perverts as lights in the world. You'll know that Christ is your source, but it's you that the community is going to see.

They don't see him to see you. So get used to it because John fainted when he grabbed the message, but the Lord put him back in his feet and says, don't be afraid. I'm the first and the last.

I'm the one that's capable of upholding you and making you a light in your community so that people will hear about God and testimony of God and the word of God, but they're going to hear it from you. And eventually they'll find that your source of light is Christ himself. But the candlesticks are the churches.

And that's why in the second chapter, he says there that he is the one that walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, the churches. Now notice in verse two, I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience, how you cannot bear them that are evil. And you have tried them, which they, they are apostles and are not and found them liars.

Now he's describing the past of this church. Here is your record. I've been watching you and here is your record.

And you have borne and have had patience and for my name's sake has worked hard and you have not fainted nevertheless. And here he moves into the present of that church. I have somewhat against thee because you've left your first love.

Remember at this moment in the present tense, therefore, from whence thou art fallen in the past and repent and do the first works or else I'll come to you quickly and we'll remove your candlestick out of this place, except you repent. In other words, the light of that church will go out. Now the word repent here is used throughout these letters to the churches.

If you make a study of that word, you will find it was the first word John the Baptist ever preached. It is the first word that Christ ever preached. And it is a word that's preached to those who have light.

Nowhere in the Bible will you find the word repent ever being applied to the unconverted heathen pagan person in darkness. It is a word for believers only who have the light. The others who are really alienated from God cannot repent.

It is a practice of the church to repent and to repent constantly and daily of the things that are liable to put the light out. I think we've forgotten that. And these days we talk about the man in the gutter drunk.

I wish he'd repent. The people that are immoral in the community, I wish they'd repent and get their act put together. So at times somebody preached to the permissive British to repent.

No, they cannot. They are in the dark and they cannot. But those of us who acknowledge Jesus Christ as our personal savior have within us the illumination and the light and the knowledge of God and the word of God that constantly tells us, as you remind yourself in your Anglican church weekly, that if you come as

penitent sinners, confess the sins, the daily sins, the daily things that are displeasing to God, that he is faithful and just to forgive you for those sins and to cleanse you, to restore you and send you on your way again.

Now that is your practice of repentance constantly and persistently as believers. So here Christ is telling these churches before he moves into a future dealing with the pagans that they have to learn to repent. Now you will notice at the end of each of those letters, if you look in verse 6, but this thou hast, here is something to your credit.

Now you'll notice that the Lord just doesn't see their past, point out their errors, give them their present warning to adjust, but he also, if it's possible, sees the good and commends the good that they've done. But this thou hast, and he has already said, I know your works, your labor, your patience, I know the good you've had, but here's something that needs to be attended to, that you, this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds in the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. So he knows that they hate those too, but you've left your first love.

And he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Now notice that phrase there. Now that phrase will be the phrase that will be used to end each letter to the seven churches.

He that hath ears to hear, hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. But from chapter 4 verse 1, you don't read that phrase again until almost the end of the book of Revelation, when he's back talking about the church again. From chapter 4 verse 1, you will find the language changes to simply state, he that hath ears to hear, hear.

Because from 4 1, his remarks about what's going to happen in the future on the earth are not to the Christians, because they're not going to be there. Those remarks will be being stated to those that are on the earth that did not become Christians during the day of grace. But these letters are written specifically to the churches.

And the first piece of steak was make sure that your first love is still your main love, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Verse 8, unto the angel of the church of Smyrna, write these things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich.

And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shall suffer. And here the risen Christ is indicating that there will be those that will be called to do that.

Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. And this is the first mention of that. It will come up again in the end of the book, in chapter 20.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos, write these things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges. I know thy works, and where you dwell, even where Satan's seat is. Now would you please note that the word seat there is a Greek word for throne, and it is the same Greek word that is used to describe Christ's throne.

And what you have to understand here is that Satan, the prince of this world, the god of the earth, still has a throne. He's going to lose. He's going to be destroyed.

But try to keep in mind that he's still a very powerful personage, angelic being in a body that is a prince of the power of the air, a prince of darkness, that is Satan. The translators made it seat because I have a feeling in my heart that they felt it was not worthy of Satan to be referred to as one that had a throne. But it's exactly the same word in Greek as is used for the throne of Christ.

Both of them are vying for control of this world. Satan wants his throne to be in control. Christ is going to see to it that his throne is the only one in existence.

But here we're being told that this church is dwelling even where Satan's seat is. They must have been having such awful time with much evil being wrought in their midst. And you hold fast my name, and you've not denied my faith, even in those days where in Antipas was my faithful martyr who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth.

But I have a few things against you, because you are there, you have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balaam to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. When Balaam was refused permission by God in Numbers 22, 3 and 4 to curse God's people so that the Moabites could overcome them, he very subtly told the Moabites how to undermine the people of God, and that was to send their women in to intermarry with God's people. And yet God had made it very plain that God's people should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, and that Christians who are already converted and not yet married should be seeking for partnerships with those who are of the household of God.

It's a different kettle of fish if you're already married as unconverted people, and one gets converted. There are New Testament instructions about allowing the unconverted one to remain with you if they're happy to remain. Don't leave them.

There's a chance they may come to know Christ. But that wasn't the problem back in the days of Balaam. They had already been given their commission only to, as people of God--and they were all people of God--marry within the family of God, but they were going and taking these Moabitish women, Canaanitish women, and marrying them, and they were the ones that stole their heart away and brought them back to idolatry, because it was a divided house.

A divided house. And it wasn't always that the believer managed to win the unbeliever, because if you go contrary to God's word and move into an unholy union with your eyes open, then you cannot expect the power of the Lord to enable you to make that marriage work, because you're disobeying by doing a thing like that. But if you're a couple that are already married and one gets converted, that's a different issue altogether.

But for the converted to say, I'm deliberately going into an unholy union, and God will just have to understand, then you're asking for trouble. And this is the fornication that he's pointing out. It's the one thing he says in your church that is upsetting me.

You permitted this unequally yoked marriages and a return to a little bit of what the other partner wanted in idolatrous worship. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate? Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He

that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write, These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass. I know thy works, your love, your service, your faith, your patience, your works, and the last to be more than the first, your works, even more than your love.

Notwithstanding, I have a few things against you, because you sufferest that woman Jezebel that called herself a prophetess to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. Now to whom that referred we don't know, but just simply get the message of the steak that's on the plate.

You were permitting knowingly this personage to come in and to usurp authority and to be a teacher, and the teaching she was teaching was false, that was taking you away from God and reinstating things that were not of faith, and also encouraging this act of intermarriage with the unbelievers. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts, and will give in to every one of you according to your works.

But unto you, I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden than that which ye have already. Hold fast till I come. But that judgment upon that church will not affect the godly in it that are still walking with the Lord.

And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of Potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I have received of my father. And I will give him the morning star, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. And unto the angel of the church of Sardis write, These things said he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars, I know thy works, that thou hast a name that ye live, but ye are dead.

Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. They might be acceptable before each other, but not acceptable to me. Beware of having men's standards, and living up to men's standards.

Remember, I have my absolute standard. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come on thee.

Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, that have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. So there's no one that's faithful that's going to be abused or punished with those that are being wicked. God is very just.

That's the stake that's coming through in both of those letters. Don't fear if you're faithful in a church with unfaithful people, that you will be judged with the faithless. I make a difference, and I will deal with each individual person according to their living.

He that overcome the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father and before his angels. He that adheres to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write these things, saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that openeth, no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth.

I know thy works. Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it. For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

It's the church that he's commending in these letters. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Yes, it's coming. It's future.

It's coming. We're getting near it as we move through this chapter. Behold, I come quickly.

Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out. And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God.

And I will write upon him my new name. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. And unto the church of the Laodiceans write these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that thou wert cold or hot. And here Christ says, you know, I have a preference for cold people.

I prefer cold believers or hot believers, but the thing I can't stick is the lukewarm ones, the people in the middle, that you never know if they're cooling down or heating up. You just never see which direction they're going in. They're always in the middle.

So then, because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. In other words, that kind just make me, the risen Christ, sick, the indifferent. Because thou sayest, I'm rich and increased with goods and of need of nothing.

That would certainly put a smack in the eye to prosperity gospel. That if people end up saying, oh, I must be greatly blessed of God because you see how I've prospered. He said, look, in these letters to that church, there's a piece of steak that would be well to note today on the plate.

Because you say, I'm rich and increased with goods and of need of nothing. And you don't even know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked because materialism is temporary. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in a fire that you may be rich and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear and anoint thine eyes with salve that you may see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock one of the most misused verses in the whole of scripture.

Always given out as an evangelistic text to the unconverted, but put it here where it should be in revelation. It's a verse for the church. Incredible as it is, here is the risen Christ saying, I stand at the door of the church, my body on the earth made up of living people in whom I live by the Holy Spirit.

And I'm knocking. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and sup with him and he with me. Incredible to think that the risen Christ has had to knock at the door of not only the individual in the church, but the church itself to ask to come in.

Indicative of the fact that it's possible for churches to exist, to have their function, their ministries, but Christ is not there. Not in their company. He's left out of it and not in the midst.

And he's asking, may I come back in before it's too late? May I come in to the individual Christian heart as well as to the body locals heart and be once again the master of my own home and have fellowship with the believers. And I have often said it and make no apologies for saying it. That if there was a fire in heaven tonight and we had to announce that we've just received the message that in last night in heaven, there was a fire and the whole of heaven burned down and the father, son, and Holy Spirit died in the flames.

It wouldn't make any difference to next Sunday morning. All over the world, the doors would open at the same time and people would still hold their services and go through their religious routine because it wouldn't matter whether God was alive or dead because for a long time, they'd never known him to be alive. They're used to running the place just as a function, a religious function, but no deep awareness of a living savior, fellowshiping with these people within the church of God.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne even as I also overcame and I'm set down with my father in his throne. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches. The past of these churches, the present that he observed and a warning about future, commending them, rebuking them, chastening them, warning them.

And it's all to the churches. And next week when we commence, we'll start at chapter four, verse one and see that from there on in, he has no more to say to the churches. He's now going to begin to reveal the future awfulness of what's going to take place here in the earth once the church is no longer here.

To the people that remain that did not receive Christ as their personal savior in time. But for us tonight, it's enough to see what we've seen. And may it not be said of us on the opening night of going into this book that we are going to be hard-hearted in these days.

May we be prepared to be a people that watch our past, consider our present and repent and keep a wide open door to our churches and to our own personal lives as Christians, that the Lord may fellowship with us so that none of that awfulness of what he's warned for the future may involve us. Well, I'm going to stop there and just ask if there's any question for the moment. And I'm trusting that by the end of the six weeks, we'll have seen enough to get you digging into it for yourself, but it won't be adequate nor will it be complete in any way, because six visits is really not enough to do all of it in depth.

But it'll be enough to start you with your own investigations and close readings, and perhaps the other booklets will help as well when we bring those. But any questions on tonight? Seven, because he's only writing to seven of them. He's just writing to seven churches, and so they numbered seven.

And that's why in dealing with the book of Revelation, we always refer to the letters to the seven churches, because he never mentioned an eighth, nor did he stop at six. He went on to mention seven specific churches, and therefore there are seven letters. And seven, of course, in scripture is the number of perfection.

So whether he was showing that this is the perfect number of situations within a church of praise or deterioration, that I'm showing you the different problems, and that within the number of perfection, these are the possibilities of problems or praise, we don't know. But that doesn't mean to say there is no answer. It means that I, for one, have no answer beyond that.

But all I do know is I see what the warnings are saying, and I say to myself, am I like that? Have I left my first love? Am I tolerating a lower standard? Am I encouraging false doctrine? Am I watching the church? Am I indifferent? Am I cold? Am I hot? And am I shutting the door of my life and not letting them into certain areas? I see the stake, and it's that that, to me, is the thing that makes me say, no, make sure I'm still walking with my Lord. Yes, ma'am. Well, I think that for an answer to that, we could quite simply turn to Mark's Gospel and chapter 4 and verse 11, where he said to his disciples, unto you, my disciples that know me, it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom.

And there Christ is declaring the things of the kingdom is a mystery. But to my disciples, it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God. But unto those that are outside of it, all these things are done in parable, in picture, in illustration, to what end? That seeing, yeah, they can see it, and yet not get through to the deep meaning.

And hearing, yes, they hear it, but somehow or other, they can never quite get through to understanding it, lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them. Yes. Okay, but then you see, your church has been sensible in that it understands that the list of the gifts of the Spirit to the church includes in that list of the gifts a teacher.

And that not every vicar or pastor has all of the gifts embodied in him. And that there are those who are good evangelists, but not necessarily good pastors. You can have a good pastor who may not be an evangelist.

You can have a good church that has a teaching priest and minister of God in it that's a good Bible teacher, but you know, he can't get his nose out of the book to even come and pay you a visit when you're sick because he's just wrapped up in teaching and he's not a good pastor or he's not a good evangelist. And a church understands that in order for the church body to get everything that it needs for its maturity, if the pastor or vicar or leader of a group sees what his gift is and understands that, well, I don't think I am the person that can do that, then let me find somebody with a gift to do that. And here in this church, this is exactly what's happening here, as it were.

I've been invited as a teacher of the Bible to come and perhaps help in this fashion by doing what perhaps some others might not find that they could clearly do. And this way you're using another member of the body with another kind of gift, because I'm not an evangelist. I wouldn't classify myself an evangelist, nor would I say that I'm a great pastoral person, but I'm a person who's the principal of a Bible college whose art is in to open the page and help people to understand it.

Therefore, in these weeks, that's what I've invited here to do, to be a person that enacts my gift, to give to you what in a hundred years you wouldn't get by yourself, because just by sitting reading it by yourself, if

you could get it by yourself, God wouldn't need to create a teacher. He would just eliminate that from the list and say, well, we don't need a gift of teaching because people will be able to sit at home, read it and get it by themselves. Well, no, you won't.

That's why he has set some in the church aside to help you to understand so that you know you need each other. I need the evangelist. I can't have a Bible school unless the evangelists go around and lead people to Christ that want to come and get taught the Bible.

It would be senseless. I need the pastors who can take care and nurture and feed up the students and then send them to me to teach. And that's the cooperative system that we work on.

So I say hallelujah to every mission that reaches people for Christ, because every young teenager that gets converted in a mission this year, in 10 years time, who knows, they might be in my Bible school. Well, this one does be thankful for that. You'll be thankful for a church that has seen down these years.

I think this is my fourth or fifth year of coming. And I think that it's commendable that there is a church that is prepared to invite me. Yes.

And I think that's to your credit. And there's lots of churches don't do it because they feel threatened by a person like myself, because they feel they ought to have known everything. But I'm thankful for this church, for the people that come and allow me to exercise my gift.

And I'm thankful for that. Any other? Yes. Well, you can, you could get all of that information in any commentary.

Yes, there are. There are the scholars that have sorted out the Nicolaitan teaching. Well, for the speed that we are going to have to go through the book, I didn't want to get sidetracked onto a discussion on the Nicolaitan doctrine and stuff like that.

But it's there. You get any good commentary on the scripture, look it up and it will detail it. And it's a study on its own.

And we don't have the time for that. But it was just the crime was there. Yeah.

Yes. All sorts of events happening in there. Well, you will see that during that time.

And it would appear to be that the sealed of Israel become the evangelist, because in the midst of that event, they suddenly get converted. And they are the ones then that are going around the world, turning people back to a faith in God. And it does indicate that during that tribulation period, there are many that come out of that tribulation with a faith in God, but they are not in the church.

You see, there is a specific body of people called the Bride of Christ, the church. Now, all your Old Testament saints from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, David, all of these people right down to even John the Baptist. And Jesus said there is no greater prophet than John the Baptist.

But the least in the kingdom of Christ is bigger than him or greater than he. Because if somebody gets converted one minute before the rapture, that person is placed by the spirit of God into the church, into Christ, into the body. John the Baptist was never in the body of Christ that started at Pentecost.

That was an Old Testament saint. So on that, we will see by the end of revelation that in the new world and the new heavens and atmosphere, there's going to be three classifications of people. There's going to be God and his myriad of angelic hosts.

But then there's going to be all your Old Testament believers that were waiting for that great event. There is this special group of people called the Bride of Christ, the church. Then there are the other ordinary people that have come to know God by faith through the tribulation.

So those three groups end up on the new world. But all through eternity, both those that were before Christ and the church and those after will always see us walking around that new world and know that's what he did all those years. Or as Paul put it in Ephesians, we are to display the great glory and riches of Christ to the endless ages yet to come.

And they will forever look at this conglomeration of people of every nation, kindred, tribe, tongue that enjoyed the special privilege of being Christ's special treasure. I think that's marvelous. All right.

Anything else? Yes, ma'am. If a person is a pure pagan and he's living out there in Manchester, he knows nothing about God. Nobody's ever reached him with God.

He's been brought up in a home, told that there isn't any. He's never even looked for it. I mean, I grew up in the city of Glasgow and I think it was a matter of three or four years ago, I was invited back to speak in the Adelaide Street Baptist Church.

And after the service, I thought to myself, I wonder where this place is. And so I saw down the bottom of the hill, I mean thoroughfare. So I walked down there to see what that main street was.

And to my horror and shock, it was Sockey Hall Street and just around the corner was the flat where I live. And I remembered saying to one of the elders of the church, how long has that place been there? He says, nearly a hundred years. And I thought, well, where was it when I was there? It was there.

But you see, I had no light. I never even knew there was a church around the corner. I lived in such total darkness that I had no light.

Billy Graham had an eight-week Tell Scotland crusade in Kelton Hall. Just along the end of the same street was the door to Kelton Hall. He must have had advertising known, the Graham Association.

There must have been Billy's coming on every notice board all over the city. I never knew there was a crusade. I lived through all of that period and didn't know that Billy Graham had been to Scotland.

I knew nothing about Christianity to the extent that when I got converted in England, I thought I was the first Scottish Christian. Now, a person like that, that's in total darkness, cannot repent of what they're doing because they're in darkness. But a person brought up in a church, taken in by godly parents, made constantly aware of the light, of the fact that there is a Savior.

You've got the information that he died on the cross. You've got the information he rose again from the dead, and you're hearing it in your Sunday school. You're being taught it.

You're being given all the light thrown at you that I never got. You are then a person that's responsible to act on that light. And from the minute you are able to give your catechism, as it were, to your vicar and say, I believe in God the Father Almighty, make him heaven and earth, to get confirmed by a bishop and

then go out and live like a pig, then that's wrong because you have light.

You have understanding, therefore you can repent. But the people like myself that had nothing, we couldn't because we didn't have it. It's the wrong way around.

We are deliverers of good news, not news that they're incapable of acting on. So you don't say repent. You simply introduce a person to the Lord Jesus who's the answer to whatever dilemma they're going through at the present time.

Give them the milk of the word, which is there is a Savior from your problem, whatever it is. Jesus Christ is the answer. He's died to take care of all of this, and he's risen to come into your heart.

And once they say they understand that, then there is an invitation to change your mind. I mean, if you see Christ, he did it that way. He came and preached, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

I have something to offer you. It is now, present tense, it is good news, so change your mind and receive it. On the day of Pentecost, the Jews said to Peter, what shall we do? He had presented Christ and his kingdom.

They heard it. They now were illumined, and they said, repent, believe, receive. But he had preached to them first.

He'd given them the news, invited an action, and gave them the consequences they would receive. And that is the method that we should be applying to people. Sitting down with them, sharing with them the news of Christ, and when they say, yes, I see that, then you have a right to say, now you must take action.

You've received light. And if they say, well, I don't want it, that is their business. They are not repenting.

Fine, well, it's half past, and we'll hand back to the vicar.

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