

Revelation of Jesus Christ - Part 1 of 10

by T. Austin-Sparks

The book of Revelation reveals the government of God's creation, which is the purpose of God in creation, redemption, and the ultimate government of the universe.

Duration: 47:03

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2, Malachi 4:2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:18-20, Ephesians 1:9-10, Revelation 1:3, Revelation 22:7

Topics: "Jesus Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the purpose of God in the eternal government of the universe and specifically the earth. The book of Revelation is seen as a summation of all the ages and the consummation of this age. It encompasses the entire Bible, including creation, redemption, and perdition, as well as the roles of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and Satan. The book is acknowledged as a bewildering one, often causing people to give up on understanding it, but the speaker encourages believers to persevere in studying and seeking to comprehend its message.

Transcript

The revelation of Jesus Christ. That is to be the object of our occupation at this time. And while it will come to us through the book which bears that name, it is not the book as such that we are to study, but that central, inclusive, underlying thing, the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We can drop out the article and say revelation of Jesus Christ. A subtitle might be the nature, the battle, and the victory of the inheritance of Jesus Christ. The one great triumphant cry which arises at a certain point in the procedure of the recorded here is, now is come the kingdom.

And in that phrase, everything that is in this book is government. His inheritance, his kingdom, his reign, his rights, his everything. That is the governing thing in the whole book.

It is a revelation of Jesus Christ in that sense. We hardly begin to read the book without the consciousness breaking upon us that we are moving into battle. Terrific battle.

Battle with many aspects, but with all the aspects of the battle, one issue, his kingdom. We are not, let me say here, going to try to go through this book. I think at most we shall be occupied, and that quite imperfectly, with the first chapters.

But I do want to indicate that inasmuch as those chapters particularly concern the people of God, the church, at this time, that is but one phase of this great question. His inheritance, his kingdom. We shall have to say some things about the book in general before we can come to the particular message which I feel the Lord has given for this time together.

And as to this book, there are these things to be said. Of course, it is a most bewildering book. And because it is so bewildering, many have given it up.

And after perhaps chapter five, they can't find their way any further. And it is a book that is greatly beloved of the Lord's people. It might be necessary to qualify that statement, but I repeat, it is certainly a bewildering book.

Someone said, and know that I agree with them, if you are not mad before you start reading it, you will be when you get to the end. That is only a way of saying that it is not an easy book to understand. And there are reasons for that.

But I want you to remember that right at the commencement, it is stated that there is a particular blessing attached to this book. Indeed, this is the only book in the Bible where it is so stated that there is a blessing. I don't mean that it is the only book that has a blessing.

It is definitely stated that there is a blessing to those who read and those who keep what is written therein. This is a blessing that is promised to the servants of the Lord. May the Lord give us that blessing, bring that blessing to us as we dwell in it.

Now there are two main reasons for the difficulty which is found in reading and studying this book. That is, the difficulty is due to two main things. First of all, it is method.

That is, it is symbolism. There are books in the Bible which have a lot of symbolism in them. There is no book to compare with this.

It is one vast system of symbols. If you want to do some close study, you can go through from beginning to end and see how many symbols you can find. What you will find is that everything in this created universe is taken hold of in some way or another symbolically.

That is, and used to symbolize some other thing, some spiritual thing. Heaven, earth, sea, all parts and departments of the creation. Every phenomenon.

Far too vast to comprehend in a few sentences. Book full of symbols. It is not easy to understand always the symbolism.

I will not even refer some of them. The numbers themselves. If we should touch any one of them, the symbolic aspects are tremendously significant and comprehensive.

From one through many particular numbers until you get to two hundred million. Ten thousand times ten thousand. All is symbolic and significant.

We pick out number seven. The number seven is the number fifty-four times number seven. Which must mean something.

You see what I mean? When all that constitutes a difficulty, you wonder why that was necessary? Well, one or two reasons, but for this particular reason, it was a necessity in a time of persecution. You will notice that when the hostile world rulers were in the ascendant over the people of God, symbolism was a particular feature of ministry. Take Ezekiel and Daniel.

Cram was symbolism. Nothing to compare with this. For here you have this time of unspeakable suffering for the people of God in which this book was written.

And because it was so dangerous to speak in plain language that the enemy could recognize and understand, symbolism was resorted to. And only the instructive would understand. That's significant in itself.

You see, Rome was the great hostile power. People of God were suffering at this time as they had never suffered. At the hands of Rome.

But you don't find the word Rome mentioned. Rome has to be covered up with another name, Babylon. You see, it was necessary to speak amongst themselves in a way in which they would understand and the world would not.

And that should bring a sympathetic note in our approach to the word. It's a language amongst the Lord's people which only they understand. But they do understand.

The world does not understand. But then another difficulty which has risen since then and is with us today in relation to this book is the many schools of interpretation. There are at least six different schools of interpretation of this book.

I'm not even going to name them. That would only confuse many of you and would not be at all helpful at this time. But there they are.

Six at least different schools of interpretation and very few of them agreeing with each other on more than a point or two. Volumes upon volumes having been written saying this is the meaning or this is the meaning and all in conflict with one another. We find ourselves in these days in the midst of that kind of thing and it's exceedingly bewildering.

You might well give it up as Martin Luther did. He said this book is all rubbish, nonsense. No one will ever be able to understand it.

Well, alright. Throw the blessing away. However that is one of the difficulties in our taking up this book and not pursuing it.

You will not imagine that I am going to adopt any one of the six and I do trust that you will not think for a moment that I am going to give you an improvement upon them all or think that I can. You will have to go on patiently with me and see whether the way in which we approach it is a way of blessing, a way of spiritual helpfulness. And I would ask you this one thing.

Do you think that I am going to give you some private interpretation about seeking to get right through all this to the real blessing that is in this book? If we can come out at the end with that then we shall have been justified in tackling it. Well now, what about the nature and the purpose of the whole book? It is quite clear that this book contains or presents the consummation of all the ages. And the consummation of this

age.

I use that word carefully. I use that word carefully. The summation of the ages.

And the summation of this age. This book comprehends the whole Bible and bounds all history. It encompasses creation, redemption, and perdition.

It embraces God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit. It embraces man and his history and the purpose of his being. It embraces the history, work, and doom of Satan.

It will impress you I am sure that there are no less than 400 allusions to the Old Testament in this book. A little bit of study for you. I mention it in order to bear out what I have said.

This is a summation. This is a gathering up of everything unto the end. But when we have said that and all such things and have recognized it all as true, one question arises.

Is there, is there one thing that interprets and explains everything in this book? And the answer is yes. There is one all-inclusive issue running from beginning to end. It is the purpose of God as to the eternal government of this universe and this earth in particular.

The issue and question of the government of God's creation through eternal ages. That explains everything that is here. You have to read backward of course from the end of the book.

For all has moved toward that. Steady movement through every phase and aspect unto that one end. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven.

Here you have the metropolis, the center of government. That is the end. The government of everything established again in a symbolic representation, the holy city.

For that implies government. I say everything in the book moves toward that. And you have to read everything from beginning onward in the life of that final wonderful issue.

Who is going to govern God's created universe through all ages of eternity? How is that government going to be reached? And what is the nature of that government? Those are the questions that are answered in this book. How great it is. And when you come to the city, that is the realization of this great divine object, the government of all things, as from heaven, you find that that government is just as much a matter of character or nature as it is of power.

That is a very important thing to remember. It is not only official authority established at last. The iron hand of government and control.

It is the government of a certain kind of nature. That city is the embodiment not only of strength, but of character, of nature. Everything that is precious in the sight of God.

And those two things are brought together and they run through this whole book. Those two things are implicit in the first chapters. As we shall see in the presentation of the Son of Man himself.

And then in the messages to the churches. So they run on. It is a reaching of the place of ascendancy by conformity to a certain nature.

It is a tremendous thing to come to that nature, to that character. There is no less a question of issue in the nature of things than the government of this universe. What kind of thing will it be that governs at last? That is the big question.

And so page after page is dealing with that. Page after page, phase after phase. It is not just the crushing of something and ding, the mastery.

It is the getting rid of a certain character and nature and kind to put in its place another kind. From center to circumference. Remember it is a law always of God and of the word of God.

The power is by character and not by office. So it is here. It is a tremendous question this matter of ascendancy, the throne, the government, the dominion.

I say again it governs everything through this book. In a word it is the nature of God's Son as Son of Man. Standing over everything.

He in person and divinely appointed destiny but He particularly in character. That brings everything under it. Now this great issue of government.

Is it necessary for me to say here that if ever there was a time in the history of this cosmos when the conflict, the battle for the government of this universe was raging. That time is now. We are all very conscious of mighty forces at work to get the control of this world and all that has to do with it.

Of a tremendous battle raging as to who and what is going to have the dominion here. That only needs to be said to draw out a response and an ascent of recognition. It is on.

And the point of the concentration of this conflict is the church. The people of God. In some parts from without in an outward way.

They are in it. But if it is not by authority of the church by outward persecution spiritual people are conscious of tremendous spiritual pressure of conflict in these days which is increasing. Yes it is quite patent that this is the issue.

What is going to emerge on top at last? What kind of a thing will it be? That is the question to be answered. But this issue, take up the whole book again. This issue is shown to be related to five things.

First of all to the very purpose of God in creation. The purpose of God in creation there should be something answering to his heart and to his mind to his thought for his full satisfaction in the works of his hands. Chapter four takes up as you know that creational aspect of the great song in heaven which bursts forth.

In that connection is for thou createst or didst create all things for thyself for thy pleasure the song of a redeemed creation showing that it is all centered in the throne now. That chapter brings you right up into heaven. Everything is up there and the throne is set.

Everything is around that throne and the song in the first instance is the song of a redeemed creation centered in the throne. That is the meaning of the creation. A kind of creation absolutely throne united with a throne at its center.

That is the purpose of creation. And then the book moves to show that this issue, this great issue, government, is God's purpose in redemption. Chapter five carries the theme further.

It is still the theme in heaven but here the emphasis is upon redemption and the second great song breaks out. Thou hast redeemed. Thou hast redeemed.

And the throne is at the center of redemption. Redemption in heaven. Has brought the throne to its place.

Government by redemption. There is more to say about this as we go on. The third place, this great purpose of world and universal government is shown to be God's purpose concerning his son.

The place that he occupies throughout is supreme and everything is working toward that end where he, he is Lord of all and in all things has the preeminence and the book is seeing him riding forth in majesty. Ruling and as we shall see his very title indicate universal lordship. God's purpose in redemption.

Concerning his son, the government of this world and of this universe. In the fourth place this great purpose of dominion is shown to be God's purpose in choosing and raising up Israel as a nation. That in an earthly way Israel should set forth the principles of heavenly government and all that focused in God's son.

That is why Israel was raised up and that is touched upon here. But Israel put the son out and Israel in turn was put out. The place that Israel occupies today most tragically you could think of is simply this.

They failed in the purpose of God concerning his son. His absolute kingship and lordship. And then in the fifth connection the book shows that this great issue of dominion is bound up with the church.

The church. Church comes in here, it is not Christ in solitary isolation. The church with him in government eventually.

Well you see how comprehensive the issue is. This book gathering all that up is the book of final recovery of God's eternal intention. And it shows that it will be.

It will be done. The last place as you know given to prophecy in this book. And right at the end, right at the end it is gathered up in this way.

The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets has sent his angel and signified these things. The God of the spirits of the prophets. Then there is this.

The keeping of the prophecy of this book. Now most of you know that prophetic ministry always had one thing in view. Recovery of God's thought.

Recovery. And in as much as this book has so much of the prophetic aspect in it, it indicates that that is what is in view. It is recovery.

Something has been lost. Something has been lost and that is going to be recovered. Something of divine purpose and intention has been lost.

And God in this book is seen as set and giving himself to the recovery of that which has been lost. Of his intention and will concerning this creation. And the church.

It is a mighty, mighty issue that is being fought out, shall we say, through the pages of this book. Just to take a few minutes on that point alone. We will leave it for the morning.

A revelation had been given. A revelation had been given by God in the Old Dispensation, in the Old Testament. And it does not need that anyone be very well instructed to see that as you read the Old Testament from the beginning of Genesis right to the last chapter of the book of Malachi, there is one thing that is involved in the whole story.

It is this question of government. Dominion, rulership, sovereignty, control of this world. Isn't that patent? Everywhere it is said.

It is one continuous battle raging. The ups and downs and fluctuations. Sometimes one power in the ascendant and sometimes another.

Sometimes the Lord's people in their right place of dominion and other times they are in subjugation. And sometimes the Lord's people in their right place of dominion and other times they are in subjugation. And antagonistic powers are in ranges and swathes through all those Old Testament generations.

But God had left no one in doubt as to what His mind about it was and His purpose. All there, a revelation had been given. It had been given in the New Testament.

Mark you, we come to the book of the Revelation, we are at the end of the first Christian century. The book in all probability was written in the 90's of the first century. And the revelation had been given in the New Testament.

What a revelation of God's intention, God's purpose, God's thought for the government of this world. And that revelation had been in a particular and peculiar way concentrated in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Had come through Paul in a full and shall we say a consummate way.

But if you want to know about the ages of the ages and God's thought concerning Jesus Christ therein and the church, it's to Paul you go. It's been given. It's been given.

And significantly enough it was given in the name to the churches in Asia. To the churches in Asia. We have Ephesians, Colossians.

It had been given. It had been lost. It had been let go.

Said Paul all day which be in Asia return from me, be let go. God had given the deposit of a full revelation of his intention from eternity concerning his son, concerning the church in the government, the ultimate government of this universe. There, let go.

Now the book of the revelation comes in to show God's reaction to that. To recover. And significantly enough he will begin with the churches in Asia.

Where the greatest responsibility rests. Where the greatest life has been given. Where the knowledge of God's will has been most fully revealed.

There God will begin. He always does. He always does begin there.

The point of the greatest responsibility. To recover. To recover.

And while I anticipate a little, let me point out to you at this point that he's going to have that which does represent his recovery. In the churches he may not find a full, complete response by all the people of God. But he will have there that which does answer.

To him that overcomer. What God may not have in the whole, he will have in a part. I'm reading a book by Michael New Testament Scholar this week.

Not one we would call a spiritually minded person but one of profound knowledge of things as to the Bible. And I came on this. I think it's worth reading at this point.

He says, we have made reference to the thought of a remnant. He's speaking about the faith of Israel. The history of Israel.

The community as a whole could be narrowed down to a part which could represent the whole and continue its inheritance. This idea of a remnant is found throughout the whole Bible. It is not confined to the prophets.

Though they say much about it. In the story of the flood, Noah and his family constitute a remnant in whom the divine creative purpose is concentrated and preserved. The blessing promised to Abraham and his seed was limited to one of his sons, Isaac.

In the time of Elijah, we will read of a righteous remnant of 7,000 which had not bowed the knee to Baal. This idea is found in Isaiah, in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, in Ammon and in the promise in Micah. Sometimes the remnant is thought of as bringing about the sparing of the whole community.

Note that. That's tremendous. Sometimes the remnant is thought of as bringing about the sparing of the whole community.

If God could have found ten righteous in Sodom, the whole community would have been saved. Sometimes the remnant itself is spared to convey to a future generation the knowledge of God's will. It is always thought of as a corporate body and not just so many individuals.

Wherever it appears, the remnant is thought of as, for that moment, the people of God. Heirs of the promises and heirs of the revelation of God's purpose. Don't you think that's magnificent? Carry that over here.

See it gathered into the overcomers at the end. See on the one side what a responsibility. What a responsibility rests upon them.

What a need the Lord has for such. What a tremendous thing is bound up with them. No less an issue than God's eternal intention concerning His Son, concerning the Church, in the government of this universe.

It seems perhaps presumptuous to think that we here, as a little company, insignificant people in this world, might, as a part of others and the larger, be in that line of divine purpose. It might be, dear friends, I put it this way, it might be that that is why we are here at this very time. If we were to speak of the conflict that has preceded this time, the raging of the forces of evil, and all the determination that has seemed to make the continuance of this testimony and ministry possible, we are driven to ask one question.

What can it mean? What can it mean? What are we? What do we amount to? And the answer must be this. Has God abandoned His intention? And if not, He will still seek to have those who know what that is, and who come into line with it, and forgive me. And I know that I'll need a lot of forgiveness in some realms for saying it, but it is just possible that the gathering of just a handful here in these days has no lesser significance in it than God's desire to make known to His people that He's not given up His original purpose concerning His Son and the Church.

If I should be right, may the Lord give to us a due sense of the tremendous significance of any time like this, when He chooses to speak to us again about this matter of supreme and paramount importance, His inheritance in His Son, the Kingdom of His Son, and His Son's place in this universe for all eternity, and of an instrument to His hand for the expression of His government and the administering of His Kingdom. Now, I have not said, and I'm not thinking or saying, but we are the people for that. But that is the Lord's thought for as many of the Church, universal, as will give Him the response that He seeks when He says, He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the church.

So I venture to say to you, dear friends, that we are gathered in no small matter. May the Lord give us eyes to see as we go on how this is to be, how He works it out, and how on what ground, in the revelation of the Lord.

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