

# Sermon #1: Stirred Not Shaken

21 Jan 24

## BREAKING THE ICE

- What excites you or intimidates you the most about a series on the book of Revelation?

## UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH

*Read the Passage (Revelation 1:1-8)*

1. The first verse provides the basis for the name of this book and some key ideas. Answer each of these questions to get started: Who does this verse tell us is being revealed? To whom did God first give this revelation? To whom is he being revealed? What is being revealed? When is it to happen?
2. How does verse 2 reveal how John would experience this revelation? (Note: Some form of the word “saw” is used 56x in Revelation. This tells us a lot about this book).
3. What blessings are promised in verse 3 and what must be done to receive them? (Note: this is the first of seven blessings promised in Revelation).
4. How should this affect you as we start this journey through Revelation?
5. To whom is John writing this letter, according to verse 4? How should this help us understand this letter?
6. How does John describe each member of the Trinity in verses 4 & 5 as he greets the churches? Why might these descriptions of each person of the Trinity be an encouragement to the churches? (Note: The early Church was under great persecution by Roman rulers (“kings”) when John wrote. Also, the use of numbers in prophetic and apocalyptic literature often carries symbolic meaning as well as value. Seven is a number of completion, so consider this when reading these verses).
7. How does the mini doxology of praise in the last part of verse 5 and verse 6 parallel what God did for Israel during the Exodus? (Read Exodus 19:6)
8. Verse 7 has been called the motto of Revelation. How does this verse summarize what this final book is all about? Why is this key summary so important to keep in mind as we read Revelation?
9. Verse 8 gives a beautiful, simple description of God. Since Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the alphabet, how would you summarize what God is telling us from His self-made description in this verse?

## SEEING JESUS CHRIST

*Just as was predicted for hundreds (& even thousands) of years prior (yet, was tragically missed by most), Jesus came to earth clothed in human flesh as a sacrificial Savior to set us free from the **power & punishment** of our sin. Now, we await His second coming when He will finish his plan and free us from the **presence** of sin. We will see the majesty of His glory, power, love and justice.*

- How should knowing Christ’s return is coming impact how you live today?

### **MAKING IT MATTER**

1. What similarities do we Christians have awaiting Christ's return to what Israelites had waiting for His first coming?
2. What in your attitude toward Jesus and His revelation needs to change in order to embrace this journey well?
3. How would truly seeing God and embracing Him as revealed in Revelation affect how our church might live in the current culture we do? (Try to be specific about scenarios)
4. How might our community be impacted if we were a church living in light of what Revelation reveals?

### **PRAYING FOR GOD'S POWER**

"This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him." 1 John 5:14-15

When we pray according to God's will it engages the power and guidance of God to bring about our transformation. If we apply these things in our own strength, then it is just legalistic obedience. But, when we humbly ask God to change us and empower us according to His will and by His Spirit, it becomes transformational AND it glorifies God.

1. Ask people to share one key, specific application from today's lesson that they want God to bring about in their life. Then take time to pray for each other in these areas.

## **The Book of Revelation – Perspective & Four Common Views**

The book of Revelation has challenged readers and scholars when it comes to interpretation and meaning. This book has more prophetic and apocalyptic literature than any other book in the Bible. This kind of literature (in particular apocalyptic) uses lots of symbols, metaphorical concepts and visions to communicate its truths. This opens the door to a variety of possible interpretations. Not all necessarily correct. However, few are without justifiable contradictions.

To help us on this journey I want to provide some perspective and a few of the most common viewpoints for interpreting this book. First, perspective.

There have been good and godly believers throughout history who believe all the core Christian truths we do but, have held to each of these differing views presented. Many of these believers are people you and I frequently quote, read and enjoy their devotionals, or have benefited tremendously from their contributions to Christian thought and ministry. People such as: John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, C.I. Scofield, John Walvoord, George Ladd, Robert Mounce, J.N. Darby, Hal Lindsey, Henry Morris, Charles Ryrie, Leon Morris, Michael Wilcock, William Hendriksen, H.H. Hobbs. These men do not all have the same interpretation or viewpoint on the book of Revelation. That is not to say they are all correct. It is simply to state that many good, godly people have studied this book extensively and come to differing conclusions.

This should allow us to graciously accept differing views within orthodox Christianity as we travel this journey. It should also allow us the freedom strengthen our views or tweak and change them as we study the Scriptures. Approach this journey with curiosity about what the Bible actually says and what it might mean.

Now the viewpoints. The presence of these for viewpoints does not mean we believe all are equal in support. These, however, are the most common views.

1. *The Historicist Approach:* This approach holds that Revelation surveys the whole of Church history. Thus, the 7 churches represent not only actual churches, but periods of time throughout Church history in which the Church was characterized by one type of church. The same is true of the rest of the book. The visions represent events that have happened throughout history up until today (and some still to come).
2. *The Preterist Approach:* This approach holds that the fulfillment of Revelation already happened shortly after the time of its writing. It was primarily for the people who lived after its writing and was fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem, or possibly included the fall of Rome.
3. *The Futurist Approach:* This approach holds that everything after chapter 3 awaits fulfillment in the future. This approach was popularized by Hal Lindsey's "The Late Great Planet Earth" as well as the "Left Behind" series.
4. *The Spiritual Approach:* This approach holds that there is no *single* fulfillment for the visions and predictions in Revelation, but rather, only transcendent principles and recurrent themes that occur in every generation until Christ returns.

As you read Revelation, keep these in mind to understand how people have interpreted this book. But, also, evaluate which best represents what is actually said and meant when understood in context and in light of other Scripture.