

Revisiting Revelation - discussion

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[0:00] I think John expected us to read the book more than once. Is there anything in what we read that would support that view?

! What I was thinking was this, and perhaps this is a little bit disturbing.

Here it said, Lord, there's nothing I can do to make you love me more, and there's nothing I can do to make you love me less.

Now then, I don't want to put a but, because I think that's true. Perhaps I'll put an and, or an and yet, or a but still. Jesus says some tough things to these churches, doesn't he?

And perhaps as we go through, we can just mull over how does Jesus actually relate to churches, and I guess to believers as well.

[1:16] Because, let's put it this way, I think it would be a mistake to think that the Lord Jesus just looks at our lives and says, you're just such wonderful people. I think you're so marvelous.

There's nothing that you could do to make me love you anymore, because you're just perfect. I mean, that would be a misreading of the Lord's love, wouldn't it?

So, just have that thought in the back of our minds. So, if we do those questions for five minutes, seven minutes, would that work?

And then we'll sort of bring it back together again. So, find a little group of people. Is there a general formula? I mean, or are they all just completely random and completely different?

Because I think there's something that's a general formula. Can we have the microphone for Jerome? We were talking, it's a bit like a kind of divine assessment.

[2:19] Oh, right. So, there's a sense in which the churches are being commended. Yeah. If a commendation is there, which most of them there is.

Okay. And there's also a challenge or a rebuke. And in some instances, there's also a kind of encouragement. Yeah.

That's as far as we got in terms of general formula. So, it reminded me in my job, we have to write assessments all the time. And we have to do strengths, vulnerabilities.

And then we have to do an analysis and a formulation with recommendations. And it's a kind of similar thing in a way. It is, isn't it? Yes. I mean, that would be a three-point thing.

Strengths, vulnerabilities, analysis. Because there's another one, a formula like that, isn't there? There's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, things like that.

[3:20] Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much. There's also a top and tail, of course. Right. It tells you who the assessor is, first of all. Okay. So, does it always start off with that? Yeah, I think so.

The words, the Hymn, the Heseid and Starrs. All right. So, what should we say? What did you say? Description? Or, I can't remember what you said. Well, I was picking up what Jerome said.

It tells you who the assessor is. Yeah. Okay. And where does the vocabulary for that description come from?

It comes from chapter one. It picks out bits from chapter one. It would be ever so neat if you could say there is a particular reason for the choice of that description for that church.

But I've never been able to make it as neat as that. So, as far as I can get it, it picks one of the descriptions or epithets from chapter one and says, these are the words of.

[4:35] Is it like that? These are the words of? The first one is, these are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand. Yeah. Okay. Excellent. Good. Right. Okay. Next thing.

You said tale. There's also a tale, isn't there? Yeah. It's a promise and this formula, hear his ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Sometimes they reverse in order. Yeah. Sometimes the hear comes first and then the promise and sometimes it's the other way around. Okay. Okay. So, at the end it says, he who has ears to hear. Yeah. Yeah. I didn't hear what this is.

It says whoever has ears to hear, of course. Yes. D-gendered. D-gendered. D-gendered. D-gendered. Yes. Yeah.

[5:38] I haven't got the Greek in front of me, but it probably does say he. And the advantage of the he is it pins it on a particular person, makes it singular.

D-gendered. So, in verse 11, I've got whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches, which sort of the them makes it quite wide, let them hear.

So, that way of translating it loses the fact that it says, let the person, the one, him who has ears, let him hear, which is sort of very specific and individual.

Yeah. Yeah. It's equally to ladies as well as gentlemen, but it's just using language to make it specific. I suppose you could say, let him or her hear.

It gets a bit clunky, doesn't it? And to whom is the Spirit speaking? To the church, we say, like every church, the angel has to be in one church. So, you've got the angel of, it could be the angel of the church of Paranormal, and the angel of the church of Tethara, and the angel of the church of Sarai.

[6:52] They all have an angel. Yep. They've got an angel. So, whether the angel is meant to be a specific person, or whether it's just one of these sort of sign-type ways of speaking, but it's addressed to each particular church.

But I'm just noticing what it says at the end. It's plural at the end. It's singular at the beginning and plural at the end. Yeah. It's singular at the beginning and it's plural at the end. Let he who has ears to hear, so I was addressing very specifically, let him hear what the Spirit says to the church is.

And this is one of the factors about this. It isn't seven letters. It is one letter, which is a circular letter. It goes round to everybody. So, this is quite interesting.

It does have the form of a letter, because as Bethany was telling us this morning, she would sign a letter from Bethany, and this is signed, grace and peace to you, from him.

It's the form of a letter, and that tells us that it's meant to be relevant to the people you're writing to. It's a circular letter.

[8:03] Yeah. It's a circular letter for the churches where it's going on. Yeah. Exactly. Because it's a circular letter, all the churches hear what's being said to all the other churches.

And I think this helps us with the matter of application, in the sense that, although there's something specific to each church, they all hear what the issues are.

And I suppose it means, it's the way you read the Bible all the time, isn't it? You think, to what extent does that apply to me? To what extent is that something I should be encouraged by?

Or is that actually not me at all? Or to what extent should I be challenged by that? So, I remember this when preaching Isaiah. It starts off, you load of disobedient children.

An ox knows its master's crib, and a donkey knows its master's stable, but you don't know, I don't know, I can't read like that. But I think it would be incorrect to say, you people at Calvary Church, you're a load of disobedient children.

[9:22] An ox knows its master's crib, and a donkey knows its master's stable, but you don't know nothing. That would be, it wouldn't be fair to pin that on a particular congregation just because it's in the Bible.

Do you see what I mean? I mean, you say, I don't want to be like that. I can see what to avoid, but God isn't actually saying, whoever listens to this, this applies to you.

And I think with these seven churches, we say, well, to what extent does this apply to me? I certainly don't want those bad things to apply to me.

It gives me something to avoid. You know that song, Jesus is my lighthouse? Well, I'm sorry, I should be careful what I say.

But actually, Jesus isn't a lighthouse. A lighthouse is something you avoid, isn't it? And you steer clear of. He gives light, though.

[10:20] Hmm? He gives light. He gives light. The lighthouse, the cover of the lighthouse, is to highlight the nature of the garden of the tree. Yeah, that's right.

Well, it's not true. Yes, but that's not a lighthouse, is it? Yes. That's it. Okay, right. Well, generally speaking, lighthouses are things you avoid.

And there's the things in the Bible to tell you what to avoid. You know, the people who can, what are the names of Hymenaeus and somebody who made shipwreck of their faith?

Yeah, that's it. Alexander. And they're there as what to avoid. You know, you don't want to go anywhere near that. And I think some of these things in Revelation here, or these churches, it's things to avoid.

That's what the Spirit is saying. You want to avoid that. Okay. So... I just wanted to add something. It's not part of the chapter. It's not part of the chapter we've been studying, whether it's relevant.

[11:22] At the end of chapter 1, 11b, what you see right in the book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia. So they were truly meant to be sent to every single church.

Like you said, it was certainly the seven letters were meant to be sent everywhere. Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches. Yeah.

It is one scroll which goes round everywhere. Yeah. So it doesn't write it on seven scrolls and send one there and one there and one there. Yeah, yeah. It's one scroll that goes round and they will see it. And of course it's got copied so we can see it.

So, yeah. Yeah. We wondered if, I don't know, whether the angel was the guy who was... The guy who was... The job it was to read the thing out in the church. Well, there's a thought, isn't it?

Yes. Yeah, there's a thought. Yes. Whether the angel was the person whose job it was to read stuff out in church, like the church secretary or whatever it was.

[12:19] Let's go a little bit further in here. So we've got who the assessor is. That's the top of it. The tail of it. He who has ears to hear. Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The promise bit.

Shall we do a bit about the promise? How does the promise bit work? Yeah. To him who overcomes. Comes. Comes. And what?

To him who overcomes what? Various things. Various things. Yes, various things. Various things.

Tree of life which is in the paradise of God. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Let's come back to that a minute. So various things. And I notice the importance of overcoming.

So in my new NIV translation, it says him who is victorious. Yes. Oh, right.

[13:20] Okay. Is it the Greek word that you get the word Nike from? Yes, it is. Yeah. It's a, if I remember correctly, and you mustn't think that I always do remember it correctly.

I think it's Nikeo, which is to overcome. And is this why Nike shoes are called Nike? Because it's overcoming? It's because she was the goddess of victory or something.

Ah, right. Okay. Of course, the other thing about Nikeo is there's Nicolaitans, or however you pronounce it. So it may well be that they've got their own take on overcoming, and that's why they're called Nicolaitans, whatever they're called.

So there's a sort of, it may well be that they were being told a spurious version of overcoming. But this is the real overcoming.

And it says, sorry, I spilt your water, Steve. The, where was I? Doesn't Jesus say, I overcame, and I share my victory with you, or something of that, to that?

[14:37] Um, where does it say?

Doesn't Jesus say, I overcame, and share? Thank you. Thank you very much.

Yes. And, thank you. This is, this is, overcoming. Later on, it's going to say, they overcame, by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony.

Do not fear. The Lion of Judah has triumphed.

Yeah. That's five, verse five. When, when they couldn't open the scrolls, and he was, he was overcome with weeping. Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has, same word, triumphed, conquered, overcome.

[15:59] He is able to open the scroll, and it's seven seals. So there's no, you know, what conquering looks like. I think that's really quite

important to us, doesn't it? What does conquering look like? We, we'll see what conquering looked like for, for the Lord Jesus.

And then, you know, how, how are we to conquer? What does that look like for us? I was reading something by, John Stevens, on Facebook this week, where he, he was saying, you know, we haven't all got to have world famous ministries.

We haven't all got to institute revival. We haven't all got to, do all night, praying and fasting. We just have to walk with the Lord, every day, in, in repentance and faith.

And that, is what overcoming is, for us. You know, it's just the sort of, the daily fight, isn't it? To, to, to be praying, to be trusting the Lord, to be mortifying our sins, and, and, and, and walking with him. I think that would, that's the sort of thing, that, that conquering is. Anyway, is it, is it, is it a bit more than that though, isn't it? It's, resisting what the devil throws at you, whatever that might be.

[17:14] Yeah. In some cases, it's persecution, in other cases, the temptation of affluence. Yeah. Sometimes it's just, over familiarity, like in Ephesus, that you've been doing this too long, and you, yeah, you've lost your, you've, you've, you've, you've, yeah, yeah, thank you.

Yeah, I think that's absolutely right. Yes. I mean, in, in the, the, the fight with the devil, with the, the serpent, but if you're a Christian, surely, as Christians, we all know that, and we haven't got to be, persecuted in North Korea, to know, how Satan, tries to get us, through our, bodily, um, ups and downs, or mentally, or, whatever it is, uh, we're all, we're all fighting, against the evil one, aren't we? Uh, right. Is there anything, in the middle here? Um, I think there's one or two things, that, that, that are, are part of a pattern. Here. So, who are the accessories?

Pardon? You've got, you've got praise, for certain churches. Praise for certain churches. Not all of them. Yes. Um, could we, could we, could we, the one that is persecuted, and, uh, and Philadelphia.

Yeah, there are two that are not criticized. So, I mean, if I were to say, that, doesn't Jesus say that to all of them? I know something. I know.

[18:50] Is that, is it true that that's said to each one? I know your deeds. I know your afflictions. I know where you live. I know your deeds.

I know your deeds. I know your deeds. Yeah. Um, I know your deeds. Yeah. That's said of, of each of them, isn't it? that, that's part of the pattern.

This is, to my mind, this is both comforting and frightening. Yeah. Uh, I, I think I take tremendous comfort in that the Lord knows, you know, what your heartaches are, what your stresses are, what your situation is.

The Lord knows. That's the comforting bit. But, but the Lord also knows, you know, our secret sins, our, uh, our failures, uh, where we put on a face on the outside, but inside is quite different.

Um, so it's comforting and, and, and frightening, challenging. But I, I, I'm happy with that. You know, the, the, the Savior knows me. And, uh, I'm happy with that.

[19:57] So I know, and the sum of it is praise. Um, and there's also some yes, buts, isn't there? Um, but this I have against you.

Does that, is that right? Yeah. Uh, but, but this I have against you.

Uh, and, uh, they're all a little bit, some of them are the same. Some of them are different. Um, if there is a but, what's the next thing that follows after that?

A rebuke. A rebuke. A rebuke. Yes. And then there's a call to repent, isn't there? Sorry.

I think. Oh, right. Um, I, I, yes, that's right. I praise you for this. I know your deeds, but I have this against you.

[20:59] For example, uh, you have forsaken the love you have at first, or, but, um, yeah, yeah.

Uh, uh, 2, 14. I have a few things against you. Uh, verse 20. Nevertheless, I have this against you. Um, I think it's more or less like that.

And, you came up with two exceptions. Which was? Smyrna and Philadelphia.

And what, how are they exceptions? In what way are they exceptions? There's no criticism. There's nothing that, so they're not, are they told to repent anyway?

Or is the, yes. that said, be faithful. Is it the same for both of them? Be faithful. Or hold on to what you have, or something like that.

[22:05] Do we ever have a case? I'll keep you from the suffering that is coming.

Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Sorry.

Could you give us the verse for that? Yes. That's the chapter three and, um, uh, uh, 10. Yes. I'll keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. Thank you. Uh, one of the threads that I started to, to pull with holding and keeping, because Jesus holds the seven stars in his hands.

And does he hold, um, there's something else that he holds. And then he tells other people about holding. You, you have held my word.

[23:15] Sorry, I haven't got this in the top of my mind. Um, um, but there's quite a few holding things going on. I'll see if I can get that straight by next week. But these two, um, rather lovely, um, exceptions.

All of these are told to repent for one reason or another. With those two exceptions, you're doing okay. about Smyrna. Smyrna. There's something that he must say, what was the reason about Smyrna and Smyrna?

About Smyrna? I know your afflictions and your poverty, yet you are rich. Sardis. Sardis and Daudetier. Smyrna. Do you want to use the mic?

So that's number four and number five. I would like to look for patterns in this. So you think that number four and number five are the least positive.

Five and seven, isn't it? Five and seven. Sardis. Sardis and Daudetier. Yeah, Laodicea. Yes. Yeah.

[24:24] So Sardis is the, so you're saying that Sardis, that's that one, isn't it? Least positive and that's, and that's least positive. Yeah. Be nice if there was a pattern, but probably there isn't.

Yeah. Yes, please. Yes. We were just discussing how Smyrna, I've lost it now. Um, yeah.

So verse nine to nine, I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you were rich. And then if you look at Philadelphia, it says, I know your works.

Oh, where am I? Um, it says that you have that little power. So characteristics of the church is where they're lacking or they're poor.

Um, I thought it was interesting how it says, I know your poverty, but you are rich. Then, uh, a church that's rebuked, is it Laodicea? It's a rebuke for thinking they are rich. Yeah.

[25:18] They're the mega church of the seven. Yeah. Yeah. But all the, all the, they probably got the band and the, they got the band. The smoke screen. That's right. And all the Teslas in the car park and the, uh, yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Sorry? My version, the NLB, New King James put a title for every church.

Uh-huh. And you've got the loveless church, which is the physicist. Then you've got the compromising church, which is the government. You've got the corrupt church, the power of the dead church, which is public.

Mm-hmm. The physical church, the identity of God, and the new world of churches. Yeah, those are reasonable summaries, aren't they? I mean, yeah, yes, yeah. Thank you.

Just go back, what were you saying? Because something came to my mind. I was just struck at how the two churches that were commended wouldn't be seemingly in the strongest place.

[26:21] You might look at them and think they're weak. Yes. And one's noted for being, and your poverty, Smyrna, and the other one for, what was it, for having little strength.

I do just want to take back what I said then, because we need to be careful not to be negative or judgmental of, there are good mega churches. So one has to be careful to have a kind of inverted, being small.

In purpose, not great. Yeah, because we're small and struggling, that automatically means we're doing something right. And mega churches are not, because that's not right either. No. Actually. There is a real temptation.

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, you find these big churches, how often the, I mean, it happens in small churches as well, of course, but particularly in big churches, how the leadership often falls into the trap of thinking they can't do anything wrong.

That they, you know, that they're driving around in their Mercedes or their testers, if that's what they have nowadays. And, you know, you think that that's success?

[27:30] Yes. Because it depends how you measure success. It certainly does. It's a question, isn't it? Yeah, that's right. And as well, they tend to, the pastors of the church, I noticed, they tend to attract attention to themselves.

Yeah, could we have the mic? Yeah. Yeah, the pastors of these big churches tend to draw attention to themselves. To themselves, and as well, they draw very little from the Bible. Very little.

The one I've checked. Well, yeah. If at all. We don't want to generalize too much, but I think there is an example here of a church which is very pleased with itself and is completely mistaken about how pleased it ought to be.

So I think that, yeah, I mean, let's be careful. That's the Laodicea. You say, I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing, but you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

The comment I was going to make was that I belong to a chat group and a lot of ministers on it. And they say, sometimes they say, oh, we've got some people coming to university at such and such a place.

[28:40] Can you recommend a church? And quite often people say, oh, you should go to so-and-so's or such and such. It's a great church. And I think, I don't know whether I would dare say that.

It's a great church. It's a big church. Or maybe it's a small church where it has good teaching. But to say it's a great church, I would hesitate. Do you see what I mean?

Because, yeah, just. Yeah, if Jesus says it, I'm happy with that. Yes, exactly. Exactly. Right. Now, where were we going with this?

So, oh, yes. Right. So, we've got the formula of it. Who the assessor is. So, it's Jesus who is described with some selection of the descriptions in chapter one.

The Lord, with the eyes of blazing fire, he says, I know you. I know your deeds. And this is what I commend.

[29:44] And this is where I have a but. And if there's a but. Because I love you, I tell you to repent. I mean, that's where the love comes in. Those whom I love, I rebuke and chasten.

So, sometimes the Lord's love is not saying, you're just so wonderful, I can hardly get over it. But he's saying, because I love you. I'm going to make it uncomfortable for you and say, you need to change.

And that's one way his love shows. The father loves his children and disciplines, doesn't he? And you could almost turn it on its head and say, if I'm not being disciplined, then actually, does God actually love me?

You know, if he's just stopped putting his finger on anything or making life difficult for me or making me just think again. I mean, those are the signs of his love.

Yeah. Ask Sema. I just remembered the scripture where it says, the father disciplines those whom he loves.

[30:56] Yes. Yeah. Amen to that. It's just really worth remembering, isn't it, that? And what else was I going to say? Yes.

The repent. And those two churches where he doesn't put it that way. He says, hold on to what you've got. You're doing okay. Just be encouraged. Just keep on. Be faithful. And that, so this last one, I don't know, maybe I'm going off on a bit of a tangent here.

Did it, did nothing strike you when you went, when you went through it to think, oh, he must have expected me to have read through to the end before I read this?

Okay. Well, what's the second death? What's the second death? It is. How do you know that? And which part of the Bible?

And which part of Revelation? It's a chapter at the end. And actually, a lot of these promises come from the end chapters.

[32:04] These come from the beginning chapters. These come from the end chapters. And I think it either makes you think, well, what is the second death? I'd better read on because the second death is described really

towards the end.

I mean, what is this about the temple? What are the other promises? The paradise of God. That's at the end. The, what else?

Well, it's certainly, it's in Genesis, but it's, and it also comes at the end. The book of life, that comes at the end.

The morning star. Yeah, that's a wonderful one, isn't it? Yes, I don't think I've ever got to the bottom of that one. The, dashing them to pieces with a, like pottery.

That comes from Psalm 2. I think that's also at the end. It just makes, I mean, maybe, maybe I'm not putting it right, but it, some of those verses, you'd have to read to the end to understand them.

[33:13] And then if you'd read to the end, you'd go back to the beginning and say, oh, yeah, I see what, see what you mean by this. I think he expects people to read it over and over again. You know, when it, when they'd read it in, in Laodicea or whatever it was, somebody would have said, could you just go back to the beginning and read it again?

Because I'd like to hear it all over again. I think you tricked us. No, I didn't. I think so, you didn't. Did you not think when you read, when you read, will not be hurt by the second death, did you not think, oh, what does that mean then?

Did you not think that? Oh, really? Okay. All right. Well, yes, one of those, one of those, I don't think it was.

Too much of a tricky question. Steve. The thing I've never noticed before about that structure is it starts with the words of Jesus.

Yeah. But at the end, he says what the Spirit says to the churches. Yeah. Is there some significance in that, do you think? I don't know. But, I mean, it's the right observation, isn't it?

[34:26] I suppose it's saying the coinciding of the words of Jesus and the Spirit of Jesus. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. If Jesus is speaking, the Spirit is speaking. The Trinity operates inseparably. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Have the microphone. It's also the Holy Spirit that guides you and, what you said, yeah, sorry, disciplines you.

He's going to point out some stuff. He's going to tell you, well, you know, this one did happen to me. So, surely it does happen to other people. I'm missing some of that. You're saying that it's the Spirit's discipline. When you want to progress, when you want to question yourself and ask yourself, am I doing right, and you dare ask God, show me what's wrong, is the Holy Spirit going to do it?

Yeah. Well, we talk about the conviction of the Spirit, don't we? Yeah. Yeah, the reassurance of the Spirit. Because that's the only way to progress. That's the only way to progress. We can't always see in ourselves.

[35:40] Of course, everybody wants to be great, right? But be honest, and it's difficult, it's challenging to be, the standard at high is Christ. Yeah.

So, trying to see what's wrong in you, you can't do that unless somebody shows you. Yeah. And that's the purpose of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit can see in us.

Yeah. And deeper than we can see ourselves, because sometimes we can't see in ourselves what's going on. But the Lord Jesus does, and therefore the Spirit does. Yeah.

And when we were talking about discipline, we actually talked about the Father. So, we've got the Father and the Son and the Spirit all working together. Yeah. Yeah. Shall we stop? I mean, it's, I think it's quite exciting, actually.

I hope it's not just me, but it's a great book, and I think it is challenging, and there's a lot of rich material there. There's a lot to take in.

[36:39] There's a lot to take in. There's a lot to take in. Yeah. There's a lot. The guy who wrote Peanuts also wrote some theological cartoons.

And there's one of them says, I used to consider myself an expert on the book of Revelation, but then I met somebody who had actually read it. Okay. Yes. Well, that's an interesting thought.

Yeah. Okay. Let's stop. Will you close in prayer for us, please? Almighty God and Father, thank you so much for the meditation that we've had this evening on the book of Revelation and how Jesus speaks today to the church.

And thank you so much that this word is an eternal word and so applicable and so rich and so penetrating and so real and so deeply helpful.

Lord, I pray that this would be an interesting exercise in looking at how prophecy is and the structure of the book and so forth.

[38:01] Lord, I pray that this would really be applied to us as a church to consider your assessment of us. And may we take to heart the promises and the encouragements and even the rebukes as well, if they apply, Lord.

Lord, we pray that the spirit would work in us as a church and that we would be attentive and have ears to really hear what you would have to say. Do bless us as we go on with our weeks this week, Lord.

We so need your strengthening and help and be with each and every one of us. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thanks, everybody.