

A Reorientation To The Book Of Revelation

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[0:00] Here's how I want you to think about this morning's sermon. Think of it as like Google Maps or Apple Maps on your smartphone.

You know, this is the kind of thing where, you know, you're going to go on a trip, you type in the address where you're going, and you've got this route laid out for you to the destination, and the brilliance of an app like this is you know where you are all along the way.

It orients you. And this morning, I want to preach a sermon that's going to reorient you to the book of Revelation because we started studying the book of Revelation this past September, and we got through the first five chapters, then we took a break for Christmas, and this morning, we're going to get back into the book of Revelation, and what I want to do is give you a big picture of the book of Revelation.

I want to reorient you to the book of Revelation so that the book of Revelation orients you to God's plan for the fullness of time.

The book of Revelation is going to frame you. It's going to help you see right in order to live right. The book of Revelation shows us where we are along the way of God's plan for all time, and it has an intended effect.

[1:44] The Revelation is going to get something done in you. So this morning, I want to convince you of three truths, and these three truths are going to build off one another, and here they are.

The book of Revelation is for you, Christian, not just the specialists. And the book of Revelation is for you, Christian, to see.

It's designed to give you eyes of faith to see. It's very vivid. And then finally, the book of Revelation is for you, Christian, to see by faith in order to live a life worthy of Christ today and every day of your life to come.

This book is not optional for Christians. It's not above your pay grade. It's vital for you. We're living for Jesus in the trenches of everyday life.

So let's turn now to this point. If you haven't opened to the book of Revelation, please turn there. Just open to chapter one. We're going to be giving you wide, broad swaths of this book.

[3:08] The book of Revelation is for you, the everyday disciple of Jesus Christ. There's a tragic misconception out there about the book of Revelation.

It's thinking that the book of Revelation is only for the experts and the self-appointed end-time specialists. And when I was growing up in the church, the end-times specialists were usually guys with polyester leisure chutes and massive comb-overs in their hair.

It was striking. But this book isn't just for specialists. That would be a mistake to make. Let me give you a sample of what happens, and maybe you can identify with this.

When you start talking about the book of Revelation, what can happen is the language moves to technicalities. And what it starts feeling like is you start talking about the book of Revelation like it's some kind of technical manual for the end times.

And you've got to be up on all the language and the concepts before you have any chance of understanding what this book means. So just like if you start hearing of the schools of interpretation of the book of Revelation, you start hearing things like the historicist school, or the preterist school, or the futurist school, or the idealist school, or the I'm going to pick from one of each of these school.

[4:37] You can start feeling very distant from this book. Like, oh, I've got to be some kind of PhD in New Testament in order to understand the

book of Revelation.

Well, that's not true. Nor do you have to have this stated, very specific position on the millennial. The millennium.

In Revelation chapter 20, verses 1 through 10, are you a pre-millennialist? A post-millennialist? An all-millennialist? You've heard the joke, maybe you're a pan-millennialist.

You just think it all pans out in the end, kind of a thing. Or maybe, as the issue of pre-millennialism comes up, you're like thinking, hey, are you pre-trib, mid-trib, post-trib?

Maybe you're now going to AFib, hearing all this talk about the trib. Glossing over. All this kind of technical jargon can make you think that the book of Revelation is for the experts, for the specialists, for the people who write books about that.

[5:46] This is where the rocket mortgage commercials come in. Do you know these commercials? The comedian, Keegan-Michael Key, is in these commercials, and usually you have this couple who are witnessing something, and they're witnessing something that's highly technical, and they are feeling overwhelmed by that, and all of a sudden, Keegan-Michael Key's walk, kind of comes in from nowhere, and he says, hey, it's not that complicated.

Don't get lost in the jargon. It's really very simple. Jesus wins. All this technical language can make the everyday Christian in the trenches glaze over and falsely conclude that this book is above their pay grade.

You can start thinking things like, well, I don't get it. I don't get the 144,000. I don't get the 12, 260 days. I don't get the strange creatures.

I don't get the seven seals. I don't get the seven trumpets. I don't get the seven bulls of God's wrath. What is this dragon? What is the beast? What is the false prophet?

Who's this lady, the prostitute, Babylon, and who's this other lady, the bride, the new Jerusalem? Who are these people? Who are these things?

[7:07] I don't get it. And maybe you've been raised in a school of thought that says, all you need to understand the book of Revelation is the book of Revelation and your newspaper.

This morning I want to tell you this. You need your revelation and your Old Testament. Because of all of these symbols, these numbers and figures, they're rooted in the Old Testament.

So as we get through the book of Revelation, you're going to build an instinct. So when you hit something that's like, whoa, what is the 144,000? Whoa, who is this prostitute?

Whoa, what is this? What are these plagues? They're all designed to make you go back to your Old Testament. It's not that hard.

This book is designed for you, Christian. God authored this for you. This is designed to give you perspective and strength to walk daily with Jesus.

[8:29] In fact, the language that the book of Revelation itself uses, you heard it when David was reading from Revelation chapter 1. This book is designed to bless you. Listen to Revelation chapter 1 verse 3.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy. David, I hope you felt the blessing of that this morning. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy.

And blessed are those who hear and keep what is written, for the time is near. Now flip to the end of the book of Revelation.

Revelation chapter 22 verse 7. We read, And behold, this is Jesus speaking, I am coming soon. And he says, Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

This whole book is to bless you, Christian, not to make you feel like you're out of kind of touch with these kind of pictures and symbols.

[9:33] It's for your good. It's for your good. This book is designed to bless you. So, if you're a parent in the room, and you got kids, and your desire, regardless of how old the kids are, you got little tykes, you got walkers, you got elementary school kids, middle school, high school, you got kids in college, and your desire is, I just want to live a life worthy of the Lamb.

This book will help you in your parenting. If you're a teenager wanting to live a life worthy of the Lamb, at Tremper High School, at CLS, at Indian Trail, Bradford, wherever it may be, at home, this book will help you live a life worthy of the Lamb.

If you've reached the, let's call it, the sunset years of your life, and you want to finish well, living for the glory of the Lamb, this book will help you close out your days well.

This book is not just for the specialists. This book is for you, Christian. You need to be convinced of that. We've looked at who this book is for.

It's for the everyday Christian. Now let's look at what this book is about. The book of Revelation is for you, so that you can see.

[11:16] This book is designed to help you see, to perceive, to see by faith. If you look at Revelation chapter 1, verse 1, the revelation of Jesus Christ, what that means is this.

Jesus is both the one revealing these things, and he's the one that this revelation is about. And if you want to follow me, track me.

You ready? This is who this is about. Revelation chapter 1, 12 through 16, we have a vision of the risen, radiant, and reigning Christ.

Chapter 5, verse 6, we have a vision of a Lamb who was slain, who is standing in the midst of the throne, being worshipped. Chapter 12, verse 5, we have a vision of a male child who will rule the nations.

Chapter 14, verse 14, we have a vision of a son of man seated in a cloud with a crown and a sickle to reap the great harvest of the earth.

[12:24] Revelation chapter 19, verses 11 through 16, we have one who is the rider of the white horse, and he's got four names, the last of which is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And in Revelation chapter 21 and 22, we have a vision of a Lamb at the center of the new heavens and the new earth in the middle of the new Jerusalem, and he is lighting up the place.

The book of Revelation is designed to make you see, to give you visions of Jesus. And it does so in a variety of ways.

It gives you a variety of displays of the glory of Jesus and his unmatched worth. The book of Revelation is for you to see.

Now, here's where we may get into a little, a little, I'm a little nervous to do this with you this morning. But, I want to help you get a sense of overview of the book.

[13:37] And so, you can divide the book of Revelation in a variety of ways, organizationally. Here's the most basic way. It's found in Revelation chapter 1, verse 19.

The risen Christ is speaking to John. He says to John, write therefore the things that you have seen. Remember, this is a book to help you to see right there for the things that you have seen. And then he says two things. Those that are and those that are to take place after this. The book of Revelation is a revelation of visions.

And it, you can split it along two lines. A vision of what has already been and then visions of what are going to happen.

Of the present, according to John's time, and of the future. And so, at its most basic level, this book can be divided into two parts.

[14:41] John's vision of how things are now. That's chapter 1, 9 through the end of chapter 3. The seven letters to the seven churches. And then, starting in chapter 4, 1, visions of what will happen.

And that takes place all the way to chapter 22, verse 5. That's the basic structure of the book. Present and future from John's perspective.

But what you need to know is the bulk of this book, then, is a series of visions of what will take place. And so, though this book is about what will happen, it's a book about what will happen to help us live for Christ now.

There's another way you can slice up this book. Not just in what has happened, and what will happen, it's according to visions. Let me walk you them through.

There are eight visions in this book. It forms kind of a structure. The first vision is chapters 1 through 3, a vision of the risen, radiant, and reigning Christ issuing seven letters to seven churches.

[16:07] The second vision takes place from heaven, the lamb who was slain. He starts breaking the seven seals of the scroll of God's plan for the fullness of time.

That's chapter 4 through chapter 8, verse 1. The third vision starts in heaven and consists of seven angels blowing seven trumpets, setting into motion a series of more judgments.

Chapter 8, verse 2 through chapter 11, verse 18. The fourth vision starts in heaven. Chapter 11, verse 19 through chapter 14 through verse 8.

It's the very heart of the book of Revelation. And at the very heart of the book of Revelation, we have a vision of a great cosmic conflict.

In chapter 12, we learn about the dragon, the serpent, the devil. We learn about the beast, chapter 13, the first half.

[17:04] We learn about a second beast, also known as the false prophet. That's the second half of chapter 13. And the way that you need to understand about the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet is that this is the anti-trinity.

The dragon is the anti-father. The first beast is the anti-Christ, who appeared to be slain and then raised. And then the false prophet is the anti-spirit.

And the false prophet uses all kinds of wonders and miracles in order to convince people to worship the anti-Christ. The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet is the anti-trinity.

And they are in conflict with God and His purposes and the Christ. And this fourth vision ends with Christ coming to earth with crown seated on a cloud with a sickle to reap the earth.

Conflict. The fifth vision, chapters 15 and 16, seven angels pouring out the seven bowls of God's wrath.

[18:25] They're also called the bowls of God's plagues. The sixth vision, chapter 17, verse 19, chapter 17 through chapter 19, verse 10, we have the great prostitute Babylon in all her worldly pleasure and power and prestige.

She finally is destroyed in chapter 18. And here's how you need to think about the great prostitute Babylon. She's the anti-bride.

She, those who are part of this people bear the mark of the beast. They worship the beast.

And the great prostitute is very purposefully put in contrast to the bride of the lamb, the church.

There's a contrast between the prostitute Babylon and the bride, the new Jerusalem.

There's a reason why this section, chapter 17 through 19, 10, it begins with the prostitute who then falls and culminates the section in the marriage supper of the lamb.

[19:51] The seventh vision is chapter 19, verse 11 through chapter 20 through 15. It starts with the coming of the rider of the white horse and ends with the great white throne judgment.

All the enemies of the lamb are conquered and the faithful are vindicated. People are thrown into the lake of fire. The enemies of Jesus, it's full and it's final.

The king of kings and lord of the lords, the lamb has conquered the king and the king of the king of the king. Another way you can say it is Jesus comes back and ties up all the loose ends.

And in the eighth vision, chapter 21, 1 through 22, 5, all things are made new. A new heaven and a new earth, new Jerusalem.

God is with us, wiping away every tear. At that point, we will have new resurrected bodies. new joy, new peace. These visions move together to build to a climax fullness of time.

[21:11] One of the ways you can think about these structures is think about the visions that will have taken place and the visions that will take place.

that's like the skeletal structure of the book. And then all of these visions, there are like eight different muscle groups on the skeleton and they make the book move.

But there's one more relationship that I want you to see. it's the relationship between four of four of the visions.

Four of these visions are what called judgment cycles. The first judgment cycle is the first vision. The seven letters to the seven churches.

The risen Christ judging the church. Remember, five out of the seven, he calls them to repent. And he calls all seven of these churches to overcome. And then the next judgment cycle is another judgment cycle of seven.

[22:21] Seven seals starting in heaven. The lamb breaks a seal and angels go into action. And what I really want you to see is this.

That the fourth rider, death on a pale horse, he's given authority over one-fourth of the earth. That's chapter 6, verse 8. One-fourth of the earth. The third judgment cycle of seven are the seven trumpets.

Starts in heaven, chapter 8, verse 2, and then angels are put into action and judgment falls on one-third of the earth, one-third of the sea, one-third of all waters, one-third of heavens.

And so you have an intensifying of judgment from one-fourth of the seal judgments to one-third of the earth and the trumpet judgments.

[23:32] And then the fourth judgment cycle are the bowls of God's wrath. And what we read in chapter 15, verse 1, is that these are, this is the final movement of God's judgment.

It too is enacted by angels and it completes God's wrath poured out on the earth. And instead of being one-quarter of the earth, moving to one-third of the earth, these bowl judgments are poured out on all the earth, all the inhabitants of the earth.

And so what you see here is a progression. And the way to think about it is, think about a series of telescoping judgments. Starting with the church, chapters 2 and 3, click out to chapters 4 through 6, the seals, click out chapters 8 through 11 for the trumpets, click out to chapters 15 and 16 for the bowls of God's wrath.

Increasing judgment poured out on the earth. It's designed for us to see it. To see the effect progressively.

God is in control and He is gradually pouring out His wrath in greater and greater measures of the earth.

[25:07] All these things I want to put before you to help you understand what this book is about. It's designed to help you see by faith, to orient you to where we are right now.

What God is doing. God is at work. It's designed to orient you to live, to see, in order to live for Christ today.

So we've looked at who this is for. This is for you. We've looked at what this is about. We've seen a variety of different things. Mainly, these are eight visions in the book of Revelation for you to see. And they're to have an effect. There's an intended effect that we don't go to the book of Revelation in order to fill our brains with interesting facts.

The book of Revelation is to have an effect on us, to compel us to live lives worthy of Jesus.

[26:17] Let me share with you some of the intended effects that this book should have on you. The first effect is that the book of Revelation, when you see what Revelation reveals, it should make you awe.

It should awe us as a church. the scope of God's plan, the scale of his progressive wrath, what he would do for sinners and saving them through the blood of Jesus, spectacular visions of Christ. Out of an awe-filled heart, the mouth sings. When you're experiencing awe, the way that will culminate is through worship.

worship. What this book will do for us as a church is it will make us sing. All throughout the book of Revelation, we have worship chorus after worship chorus of the Lamb.

This book is full of awe, it's full of worship, and one of the intended effects is to make you feel of awe, make you worship. another effect is to warn us.

[27:49] Particularly in that first vision of the seven letters to the seven churches, that first judgment cycle, we see these churches threatened by physical violence because they're followers of Jesus, we see them threatened by false teaching, we see them threatened by moral compromise, and all of these should serve for us followers of Jesus as warnings, because the threat exists and persists today.

There can be a cost to life and livelihood for being a follower of Jesus today. There are certainly temptations to blur the biblical distinctions we find in God's word, and just kind of drift into false

teaching.

There are temptations abound to indulge the flesh in sexual immorality and greed, to go to bed with Babylon. These are warnings in the book of Revelation, and the effect is for us to take stock of our lives so that we can walk faithfully, to stay true to the Lamb.

There's going to be the ongoing threat of violence, the threat of false teaching, the threat of moral compromise, but because of this book, we see it in our able to stay true to the Lamb.

Another effect of the book of Revelation is to sober us as a church. And here's what I mean by this. I don't know what was going on inside of you when I was describing these judgment cycles on greater and greater measures of the earth, but it's really sobering to see God gradually pouring out His wrath on His creation.

[29:51] He's not sparing creation. And what's even more sobering as you read through the book of Revelation, you might want to scratch these verses down.

Chapter 1 verse 7, chapter 9 verses 20 and 21, chapter 14, 9 through 11, chapter 16 verse 9, 16 verse 11, 16 verses 20 and 21.

And what all of these verses point to is as God's wrath is poured out, you would think humanity would repent. But what these passages show is that even in the midst of progressive pouring out of God's wrath, there are a majority of people who are like, whatever, God, we curse you.

That's sobering. And furthermore, you start realizing what are the stakes for stuff like that. And then you read a passage like Revelation chapter 12, 17, which talks about the devil being thrown down to earth as a result of the cross work of Jesus, and he is enraged.

We've got an enemy prowling around like a lion seeking for someone to devour. It should sober us.

[31:15] We live in a spiritual war zone with eternally high stakes. So when we see through the book of Revelation, when it orients us, we start feeling the weight of how high the stakes are and the kinds of enemies we have.

It's what Martin Luther wrote about. Our ancient foe seeks to work us woe. But boy, our great God. Another effect is this. revelation will motivate us to witness. To witness.

Our glorious God is giving all the inhabitants of the earth time to repent. That's what you see with this progressive pouring out of God's wrath.

He is giving everyone opportunity to repent. To turn from their sins and turn to Christ. Christ. Like I said, there will be many who refuse to repent, but there will be a definite few who will respond in repentance and faith upon hearing the chapter 14, 7, the eternal gospel proclaimed, fear God and give him glory because the hour of his judgment has come and worship him who made heaven and earth and the sea and the springs of water.

[32:42] We get to tell people, come, worship the lamb who was slain for you. Escape the wrath to come. When you are oriented by the book of Revelation, it's going to compel you to go make disciples of the nations.

The stakes are high. Another effect is that it's to assure us.

this book of Revelation assures us that our great triune God is not only reigning on high, not only in full control, but he is bringing about his purposes.

And so the words of chapter 17, verse 14, should ring in your ears. They, the enemies of the lamb, will make war on the lamb, and the lamb will conquer them.

he must win. He will win. Not only will the dragon be thrown down, not only has he been thrown down by the cross of Christ, but when Jesus come back, he's going to grab the dragon by the scruff of its neck and throw it into the lake of fire forever.

[34:06] Forever. The second death. be assured of it. We win.

Jesus comes back, ties up all the loose ends. What this does is convinced of God's sovereignty, despite the raging of the devil, we remain faithful in the face of hardship, because it's worth it.

Jesus is worth it. this book will make you see that the lamb will conquer finally and forever.

The last effect. It makes you long. This book, when you are oriented by it, it will stir longing in your heart for the lamb, to see Jesus, to be with him.

I've already shown you that the book of Revelation is packed full of these glorious visions of Jesus, and those are designed to make you long for him. Revelation closes with an epilogue.

[35:33] It's chapter 22, verse 6 through 21, and in that epilogue, the risen, radiant, reigning lamb who was slain, he says three times, 22-7, 22-12, 22-20.

He says to his waiting bride, I am coming soon, baby. Hold on. And in chapter 22, verse 20, John responds, and it's the response of all of our hearts, amen.

Come, Lord Jesus, longing, longing for the lamb. This book is for you to see by faith in order to long for Jesus.

Jesus. When a church is seeing by faith what God has revealed through the book of Revelation, and they experience greater measures of all worship, they sense God's ongoing warning, so they steer clear of the threats, they are sober, they understand the stakes, they witness because they see God's patient mercy, and they see the opportunity to call people to worship the lamb.

when we are assured that Jesus will win, and when we have this growing longing in our hearts, do you know what all these do together?

[37:05] They give you strength to endure. It's the one big intended effect of the book of Revelation, and it's in chapter 13, verse 10.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. To live life worthy of the lamb.

Until you breathe your last, or until he comes back. This morning, I've tried to convince you of three things. I've tried to convince you that the book of Revelation is not just for the specialists, it's for you.

And secondly, it's not just for the specialists, it's for you to see by faith. And it's for you to see by faith in order to live a life worthy of the lamb today.

When you're oriented by the book of Revelation, the book of Revelation will orient you to the way things really are, and you live a life worthy of the lamb, with joy in your heart, all the way through.

[38:26] Next week, we will see the risen lamb opening the seven seals.

Let me pray. God in heaven, press this into our hearts.

God help us to press on together, to be faithful to you, Lord Jesus. You are worthy. You have won the victory, and you will come back and tie up all the loose ends, and we will see you face to face, and you will wipe away every tear.

Put strength in our hearts now, in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.