

BOOK OF
REVELATION



**MASTER/TEACHER MODEL AT
LOUISIANA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

**REVELATION BIBLE STUDY MATERIAL
FALL SEMESTER 2022**

Text of Revelation 1:1–8

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. 4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. 7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Summary

The opening of a book or letter is often viewed as insignificant or skipped over when reading because we think it simply introduces the author or adds nothing of importance. However, letter introductions in the New Testament are crucial to understanding what that letter or book is all about. This is no different with Revelation. Revelation 1:1–8 (the letter opening) not only introduces the author (John) and the audience (the seven churches), but it clearly presents to us the main character of the whole book: Jesus Christ.

As we will see, Revelation contains a whole host of weird images, beasts, numbers, and difficult passages, but the letter opening should remind us that regardless of what is happening in the book, Jesus is the central focus. Revelation is a book that recounts the vision John received while in prison for his faith. He was given a vision of the mission of God’s people (the church) and how God remains in control of all things even when they seem to be spiraling out of control. As you read and study Revelation throughout this academic school year, keep Jesus as the center of your reading and discussion and you’ll be less likely to misunderstand what this book is teaching us about faith and obedience.

Questions for Discussion

- Revelation 1:6 says that Jesus has made his people “a kingdom and priests to serve God.” What does it look like for us to live in this world under the one true King? Being a “priest” simply means to represent God to the world around us...how do we best do that? What character traits should define us as believers?
- In Revelation 1:3 speaks of blessing for obedience to God’s word/instruction by reading, hearing, and then doing. How specifically can you apply this opening of Revelation to your own life? In what ways can you be obedient to God as a student? As a friend? As an employee? As a member of society?

Text of Revelation 2:1-11

1 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. 4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. 5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. 6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

8 To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

“These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. 9 I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown. 11 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.”

Summary

Revelation 1–3 is quite different from Revelation 4–22. Revelation 4–22 is apocalyptic literature which means these chapters are shockingly different from what we typically read. Revelation 1–3, in contrast, sounds a lot like the rest of the New Testament. In Revelation 2, John begins his series of seven short epistles. Like the epistles earlier in the New Testament, these short letters are addressed to local congregations and deal with specific issues.

Our passage for today contains the first two of John’s seven short epistles. First, we have the letter to the church in Ephesus. John was quite possibly a member of the church at Ephesus, so he is probably writing a letter to his home church. Perhaps the most famous line in this first letter is verse 4: “You have forsaken the love you had at first.” John calls the church at Ephesus to return to the fervor they had at their salvation. Second, we have the letter to the church in Smyrna. Smyrna’s letter is more positive as John encourages them to continue being faithful even as persecution comes.

Questions for Discussion

- John writes short letters to seven different congregations. If John were to write a letter to you, what might that letter say? What about if he wrote the letter to your family, your church, or your friends?
- In Revelation 2:4, John encourages the church in Ephesus to return to the love they had at first. Can you think of any times you needed to return to a prior state of fervency? What does the need to return to a previous state tell us about the spiritual life? Do you need to return to a state of more intense worship?

Text of Revelation 2:8-29

8 “To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. 9 I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

12 “To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. 13 I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. 14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. 15 Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

18 “To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. Rev. 2:19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. 24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): 25 Only hold on to what you have until I come.

26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 27 ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery’— just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Summary

Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation contain short letters to 7 churches in a certain region of Asia Minor. Each of these churches had their own set of problems, so the letters are Christ’s words of encouragement and rebuke to them so that they get back on track. This is especially important in light of the fact each of the churches was facing harsh persecution for their faith. Remember, the leader and apostle, John, who is also the author of Revelation, has been put in prison precisely because of his faith in Jesus!

Here’s a quick summary of the 3 churches mentioned in our text. The believers in Smyrna (Rev 2:8–11) are encouraged to persevere in the face of extreme persecution. Here Jesus doesn’t promise to end their suffering, but he encourages faithfulness and promises deliverance. Those in Pergamum (Rev 2:12–17) are rebuked for falling into the idolatry and immorality of their surrounding culture. Finally, believers in Thyatira (Rev 2:18–29) are given a similar message as those in Pergamum, to hold fast and not give in to the prevailing cultural winds. All three situations can be found in our world, so there are many ways these passages apply to Christians today.

Questions for Discussion

- What are some of the negative influences culture can have on our belief in God? And how does this impact us living faithfully for him?
- What do these passages teach us about suffering and persecution? Based on what Jesus says here, how should we respond to suffering?
- What does it mean to be faithful to God in everything? Describe what “idolatry” looks like today for a Christian.

Text of Revelation 3:1–13:

I “To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

“These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

“4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. 5 The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. 6 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

7 “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

“These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. 8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. 10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

11 “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. 13 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Summary

John continues his seven epistles in today’s passage. First, he writes a cautionary letter to the church in Sardis. Outwardly, the church in Sardis had a good reputation. People assumed they were alive spiritually. However, God knew their hearts and tells them that he knows they are spiritually dead despite their reputation for vitality. Even amid a dead church were authentic believers, however. God saw their faithfulness even in a dark situation.

Second, John writes a letter to the church in Philadelphia. God tells the church in Philadelphia that he has put an opportunity before them. Though they are spiritually tired, he encourages them to be faithful to the end and continue in ministry. Faithfulness, after all, is the mark of successful ministry. God promises them a reward for continuing.

Questions for Discussion

- Scripture repeatedly holds up those who are faithful as worthy of imitation. Jeremiah and Noah were both unsuccessful in ministry but were counted successful because of faithfulness. Likewise, God encourages the church in Philadelphia to faithfulness. What does it mean to be faithful in your spiritual life? Are you faithful? How can you pursue faithfulness?

- Are you spiritually alive or do you merely have a reputation for being spiritually alive?

Text of Revelation 3:14–22

14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 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. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Summary

This passage is the last of the 7 letters to the area churches. Here we find a message from Jesus to the church at Laodicea. As with the previous messages to the churches, they are in need of a firm correction from Christ so that they can be a positive influence on society without caving in to their culture. Laodicea was uniquely situated in between two other cities who sourced water to Laodicea. Hierapolis provided the warm waters from their hot mineral springs for healing and medicinal use. Colossae was situated at the foot of a mountain and provided pure, fresh water from the melting snow of the mountain. So, when Jesus says in Rev 3:15 that the church was neither hot nor cold but lukewarm, he is using their water situation as an illustration. The church is not being “cold” (being refreshing and life-giving) or “hot” (being a source of healing) to their surrounding society. They are lukewarm, which is the source of Jesus’ firm rebuke to them.

Based on the verses that follow, it seems that the believers in Laodicea have fallen into the cultural trap of making life all about status, wealth, and materialism. Jesus rebukes them for this, then instructs them to ask of him for what they need. As in the Gospels, Jesus’ rebukes to his followers flow from his love for them: “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline” (Rev 3:19). The hope is that this church will once again be a life-giving and life-preserving source of hope to the world around them.

Questions for Discussion

- What are some problems with making life all about status, wealth, power, and/or fame?
- How does sharing the gospel and living for Jesus bring hope and life to our world?
- Is there anything that you need correction on right now so that you can live faithfully for Jesus? If so, confess it and pray for continued obedience.

Text of Revelation 4:I-II:

1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. 4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6 Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

"Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come."

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being."

Summary

In this passage, John gets the first of several glimpses of heaven. Too often we miss the point of passages like this. Usually, people focus on the details of this passage. For example, people will try to find layers of meaning in the rainbow that shines like emeralds in verse three. Or, they might spend all their time trying to figure out who the elders are in verse four. These details are interesting and worth reflection, but we miss the point of the passage if we only focus on these details. The passage is now about rainbows, mysterious elders, or thunder. Much to the contrary, this passage is about the supremacy of Christ. The point of this passage is that Christ is the holiest being, things that strike fear and awe into our souls worship at his feet, and that all things are dependent entirely on him.

The point of this passage becomes clearer as we remember the genre of Revelation. Like other works in apocalyptic literature, a main point in Revelation is to comfort those going through intense trials. John's audience was experiencing persecution at the hands of the Roman Emperor Domitian. When John's audience read this passage, what they saw was that Jesus is supreme over the Roman empire. When we read this passage, we see that Jesus is supreme over the evil in our world.

Questions for Discussion

- John 4 is meant to elicit emotional responses from readers. What emotional responses do you feel in reading this passage? How does this affect you? Do you feel comforted or challenged? Why?

- Consider verse 11. Do you believe this is true? Do you live like this is true?

Text of Revelation 5:1–14

1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals,
because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.
10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth.”

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”

14 The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshipped.

Summary

Revelation 4 and 5 together describe one heavenly vision. This vision is centered on God and Christ. Here in chapter 5 the vision focuses on Jesus but also has something to say about us as human beings. The story in chapter 5 picks up where chapter 4 leaves off. The setting is heaven and there is someone (God) sitting on a throne in the center of everything. He is worshipped by those around the throne and they proclaim his glory and majesty. In chapter 5 we are introduced to the vision’s description of Jesus Christ. He is portrayed as both a lion and lamb, and he is the only one worthy to open the scroll that God holds in his hand.

Notice the “why.” Why is Jesus the only one worthy to open this scroll and why is he also being praised for this? Revelation 5:9–10 tells us that it is because of his sacrifice: “because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” Embedded in this worship moment is also a statement about the primary vocation of all human beings. Revelation 5:10 states that we are

“to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.” We are a kingdom because we are people who are to be devoted to service to our one true King. We are priests in the most basic sense of the word, which means that we are to represent God to the people around us. In summary, God and Christ are the central focus of this vision and they are worthy of all the praise, but we as God’s special creation are meant to serve and worship and have a place in his kingdom.

Questions for Discussion

- How can our worship become self-centered and what’s the big problem with this?
- Think about your chosen profession. What would it look like for you to be a faithful member of God’s kingdom in this profession? What would it look like for you to be a faithful “priest” in that profession, that is, representing God rightly to your co-workers?

Text of Revelation 7:9–14:

9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying:

“Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”

13 Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

14 I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Summary

What an amazing passage! In these verses, we get a glimpse of the redeemed standing in the presence of God. Notice first what John says about this group: this group is comprised of people from all different backgrounds. God loves diversity, and his Church draws people from all different backgrounds. This, in my opinion, shows the incomprehensible wisdom of God. Differences in race, culture, and customs have always separated people. Wars are fought because of differences between people groups. In his infinite wisdom, God creates one groups from all different races and nationalities and unites them through the blood of Christ. Despite their differences, this multitude worships God in unison. Only God could make unity out of this wonderful diversity!

The Church is united in its experiences. These people, we are told, have all gone through great tribulation. Tribulation can refer to any experience that upsets us such as persecution, ostracism, or even the difficulties that Christians experience in a sinful world. As Christians, our hope is not in this world but in eschatological fulfillment beyond the grave.

Questions for Discussion

- Define tribulation. What are the characteristics of tribulation? Do you experience times of tribulation? How does this passage comfort you?
- In this passage we see unity amid diversity in the Church. What other types of unity amid diversity does the Church express? How does this unity honor and glorify God?

Text of Revelation 8:1–5

1 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

Summary

As weird as it may seem, these few verses in chapter 8 actually have to do with prayer. It stands in between symbolic presentations of seals and trumpets, so what's happening here with the angels is symbolic as well. Revelation 8:3 tells us that an angel offers up the prayers of the saints, while the following verses show that God has received and answered the prayers of his people. What's unique here is that the trumpets that follow symbolize God's judgments. Remember, all these seals and trumpets flow from the opening of the scroll back in chapter 5.

So what? What does any of this have to do with us? First, in the middle of all the apocalyptic, crazy things that are happening at this point in Revelation, we see God's commitment to his people. They pray, and he hears and answers. I don't know about you but that is encouraging. Second, even though God is always there for his people, it doesn't mean there won't be punishment for disobedience. Our actions should always be consistent with God and his word. In conclusion, these two application points are important reminders for God's people and especially so during a time of suffering.

Questions for Discussion

- Do you ever pray to God and it seems as if he isn't listening or isn't there? What does this mean? Does it impact you in a negative or a positive way?
- What does this text in Revelation teach us about prayer?
- How can you incorporate more prayer times throughout your day?

Text of Revelation 10:1–11:

1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. 2 He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3 and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. 4 And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.”

5 Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 6 And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, “There will be no more delay! 7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: “Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.”

9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, “Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but ‘in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’” 10 I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. 11 Then I was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.”

Summary

This passage reminds us of God’s supremacy. Previous chapters focused on things happening on the earth. We read of plagues, widespread destruction, and horrific calamities. In times like this, the church rightly wonders about God’s intentions. We, like Job, seek the face of God when life is difficult. Revelation 10 points us away from the world toward spiritual concerns. Difficult times on the earth are sometimes the result of unseen spiritual forces. And this passage reminds us that creation is not only physical. Not all that exists can be experienced through our senses. Instead, Scripture describes the world as rife with spiritual power that can wreak havoc on creation.

We need to read this passage in light of the entire book of Revelation. As we’ve discussed, the point of Revelation is to comfort believers because Christ is supreme. The point of Revelation 10, then, is that God is sovereign over all that happens on earth. So, when sicknesses come and life is difficult, Christians can take comfort in the fact that God is still on his throne. Nothing happens to us that is outside of God’s sovereignty. Since we know the character of God and that God is sovereign, we can live courageous lives in dark days.

Questions for Discussion

- How does a spiritual view of creation contrast with the naturalistic view of the world our culture accepts? Which do you believe is correct and why?
- Discuss and define divine sovereignty. Does divine sovereignty comfort or challenge you? Why?
- Why is the character of God important to discussions of divine sovereignty? Consider Romans 8:28 when thinking about God’s sovereignty. How can you live a courageous life for Christ? List some practical steps that are specific to your situation.

Text of Revelation 11:15–19:

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

“The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,
and he will reign for ever and ever.”

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.
18 The nations were angry,
and your wrath has come.
The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your people who revere your name,
both great and small—
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

19 Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.

Summary

In this passage, John points his readers past their current situation to the end of the world. John’s readers were afraid that persecution would soon visit them again. Through the book of Revelation, John has reminded his readers that Jesus is sovereign. In this passage, he hints toward the eschatological reward that awaits God’s followers. One day, Christ will return, and heaven and earth will become one. The reason that John’s readers should be faithful even during persecution is that Christ will one day return and make their trials worthwhile.

We can draw a similar message from this passage. Our lives are far from perfect. Whether school, work, or relationships cause us pain, we should be faithful in our spiritual lives. If persecution ever arises in our lives, we should be faithful to Christ. The essence of faith, according to Scripture, is trading momentary comforts for eternal benefits. Because we are confident in Christ and his resurrection, we follow him despite what happens to us. Faith enters when we admit that we do not understand why bad things happen or how Christ will resolve them. We follow him through trials because we have faith in him—we trust his unimpeachable character and unrivaled power. Like John’s audience, we wait patiently for the day when Christ will return in power, honor, and glory.

Questions for Discussion

- Verse 15 says that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of God. What is the kingdom of the world? What is the kingdom of God? What does it mean for the kingdom of the world to become the kingdom of God? How does this verse affect your understanding of God’s purposes for creation?

- Like so many other passages in Revelation, this passage reminds us of God's sovereignty. The nations rage against God, yet God calls them to judgment. In other words, the most powerful parts of human existence are hauled before God's judgment seat. How does this image affect you?