

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

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Scripture: The Book of Revelation

***"Why Revelation?"***

**FRIDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY**

I think most everyone here knows we have been doing a Bible Study on the Book of Revelation during the fall of the last two years and during Lent. This coming Lent which begins with Ash Wednesday this week I will finish our study as we look at chapters 15 – 22 during the next six Fridays. We will look at subjects like the final seven bowls of God's Wrath, Armageddon, Mystery Babylon, Christ's Return, the Millennium and the New Heaven and Earth. And once we are finished, we won't be looking at Revelation for a good while. So in the meantime, not only do I encourage everyone here to take time out of your hectic and busy schedules during the season of Lent to study this vitally important book and come on Friday Nights, but I want to answer the question "Why Revelation?" Why do we have such a book? Why did the early Church, despite some opposition, agree that this is inspired by God and should be considered as Holy Scripture. Why did God ordain such a book? Why is it so very essential to the whole witness of God's Word?

That's what I would like to talk about today: 20 minutes to break down the important themes of Revelation and why it is important for all of us right now, right here, and for our daily lives.

**FIVE REASONS WHY REVELATION IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERY BELIEVER**

1) **There is a blessing to be had when one reads, studies, and obeys it!** Note what **Rev. 1:3** says: *"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near."* We find the same words in the last chapter of Revelation! **Rev. 22:7** says, *"And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."* Again note the emphasis on obedience. This means that one needs to study and understand Revelation. Otherwise you won't be able to put into practice that which you are supposed to do! Of course, this principle applies to all of God's Word. But there is a special blessing when it comes to Revelation. God says so! And that is why we should never neglect it but study it and put it into practice!

2) **It is the culmination and completion of God's Work in history.** There is a reason why Revelation is composed as a series of seven. Seven is the number of completion in the Bible. Revelation completes God's plan of salvation for the whole world. There is also a reason why it is also the last book of the Bible. It completes that which was begun in Genesis – the first book of God's Word. What began in Genesis? Life, the Fall of Man, and then death. Everything since that time has been the process by which God is restoring His Creation and remaking it so that it perfectly reflects His character – His righteousness, His goodness, His love, and His truth all of which reflect the ultimate reality of God – that He is holy. So what began in Genesis is finished in Revelation – but finished in God's way. And the result? A new heaven and a new earth. Please turn read with me **Revelation 21:1-5**.

It is also testament to the promise that God gives us in **Philippians 1:6**: *“I am confident of this very thing that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

**3) It is the Revelation of Who Jesus Christ is, What He has done and What He will do for humanity.**

Notice how Revelation begins: *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 3Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”*

That in fact is the title. It is not the Revelation of John, it is not Revelations, it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ – in addition to the words, “In the beginning God created,” these are the five most important words in the Bible. The book of Revelation, like the rest of the Bible, is all about Jesus Christ - Who He is and what was and is His mission as the Son of God.

**The Who of Jesus is found throughout Revelation.** We read in **Rev. 1:4-18**: *“John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— 6and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to 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.”*

*Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 13and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. 14His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.*

*17When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”*

Here we have Jesus as distinct from the Father in Person, but One with the Father as God. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. This means life itself, and the building blocks of life and all knowledge come from Christ.

This is how Revelation begins. But something else becomes apparent. Christ’s first coming and second coming are highlighted throughout the book. Look now at **Rev. 5:1-10**: *I saw in the right hand of*

*Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” 3And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. 4Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; 5and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.”*

*6And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”*

Jesus is identified as the Lamb of God twenty-three times in Revelation. Recall the words of John the Baptist upon seeing Jesus in **John 1:29** “**Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.**” Such imagery highlights the mission of Christ to die as a sacrifice for man’s sin and to take away the punishment we deserve as guilty sinners.

But He is also viewed as a Lion, the symbol of the tribe of Judah. For as a descendant of King David, in fulfillment of the covenant God made with King David, Jesus is coming back to judge the world and to establish God’s justice and kingdom for all eternity – **Rev. 19:10-16:** “**For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.14And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**

Notice too what is said above in **verse 10**, “**For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**” In other words the prophetic Word of God is from Christ Jesus Himself.

#### **4) It exposes and judges the evil of this world as embodied in the flesh, the world, and the devil.**

But there is a reason why Jesus is coming back. And this leads us to the third reason why Revelation is so important – it exposes the evil systems of our world and the work of the flesh, the world, and devil. Evil is real and evil has a person. His name is Satan. Turn now to **Rev. 12:7-9:** “**And there**

*was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”*

It is then in **Rev. 13** that John sees two beasts – one arising from the sea, the other from the land. The sea beast is the final political world ruler who will lead the world astray. And the land beast is the final world religious leader or false prophet who will compel the world to follow the sea beast or popularly known as the Antichrist. These two will exert such power on the world that their political, military, and religious control will mean economic control as well since we are told in **v. 17** that *“no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.”*

We see in **Rev. 16:4-11** God pours out His final wrath. Why? We find the answer throughout the chapter. *“Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. 5And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; 6for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.” 7And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”*

*8The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.*

*10Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.*

On March 27, 1977, two Boeing 747 passenger jets, KLM Flight 4805 and Pan Am Flight 1736, collided on the runway at Los Rodeos Airport (now Tenerife North Airport), on the Spanish island of Tenerife, Canary Islands, killing 583 people, and making it the deadliest accident in aviation history. Only 61 people survived on the Pan Am aircraft. One of those survivors was an American by the name of Norman Williams. You can hear his testimony online. God miraculously delivered him from the Pan AM 747. Everyone around him ended up being burned beyond recognition. But the thing that bothered him the most was hearing some curse God as they died. Even the pilot of the Dutch KLM 747 when he saw that he was going to hit the Pan Am jet cursed and then took the Lord’s name in vain. Those were his last words on the black box recorder. Norman did some research on this phenomenon. According to psychologists, if a person responds that way in everyday life to stress, they will do the same in times of extreme crises. Rather than call out to God, if the Lord is not important in one’s life, they are going to do what they normally do and that is blaspheme the name of God. We see the same thing happen when God pours out His wrath before Christ’s Return.

We also see how these judgments affect Mystery Babylon of **Rev. 17 and 18** for the same reasons. Judgment falls on the world because people trusted in the Antichrist and False Prophet and engaged in false

worship, which ultimately is following Satan. In addition, they persecuted believers and murdered them, and they refused to repent. This is the problem in our world today and throughout history – Bad Government, False Religion, rebellion against the Creator and His Word, rebellion against Jesus Christ and a refusal to repent from selfish desires (i.e. sin).

**5) It is a call for the Church to worship the One True God as revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ and in God’s Holy Word and a call of all believers to live a life of repentance.** Repentance is not a one-shot deal. Just as we needed to repent of our sin and turn to Christ in order to be born again, we need to do that on a daily basis if we are going to be victorious over the attacks of the devil and temptations of the world.

Worship means that to which you ascribe the most worth. We worship that which we love. We worship that which is most important to us. We are called to worship the Living God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to demonstrate that worship in how we live our lives. Hence, John sees visions of worship throughout the Book of Revelation. In **Rev. 4:8** the four living creatures before the throne of God worship the Lord by crying out *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.”* And then in verse 11, John sees the 24 elders who say, *“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”* And then the four living creature and 24 elders together, and then the angels and then all of creation in **Rev. 5**. We see such worship again in **Revelation chapters 7, 12, 15 and 19!**

And repentance? To five of the seven churches in **Rev. 2-3**, Jesus calls on them to repent. Only Smyrna and Philadelphia do not have to repent, but they are simply exhorted to continue doing what they are doing.

So you see, Revelation is not simply about end-time events and the end of the world. It is much more than that. It is a culmination of all that God is doing in this present age; it is the Revelation of not only God’s plan but of God’s Son Jesus Christ – both as the Lamb of God who was slain at His first coming and the Lion of God who is coming back to judge the living and the dead at His second coming. It is a warning to the world that it will be judged if it does not repent and the assurance by God that His people will be vindicated. Finally, Revelation points us to what we are called to be and do as followers of Christ. We are called to worship the Father through the Son and by the Holy Spirit, daily turning from our old life of sin and loving Him in all that we say and do. That is our spiritual act of worship. And through it all we will be blessed!

I close with how the Bible closes – the Return of Christ and His grace which will keep us until His return! **Rev. 22:20-21: He (Jesus) who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.**

I cannot think of any better way than to end a sermon or anything in this life for that matter! We are here because of God’s grace. We have hope because of God’s grace in Christ. And we can live for Jesus because of His everlasting grace!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!