
Church in Campbell Weekly News

December 02, 2012 Issue 12 - 49

LIFE-STUDY OF REVELATION

MESSAGE ONE: A FOREWORD

By the Lord's mercy, in this life-study we come to the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. Due to the subtle enemy of God, the book of Revelation has been closed, and few Christians understand it. Hardly anyone has seen something of life, of God's economy, and of the testimony of Jesus in this book. Thus, we have been burdened by the Lord to have a life-study of this book.

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Now we come to the contents of Revelation. Do not think that the contents of this book are frogs, scorpions, locusts, horns, serpents, and horses. We should not even say that the contents are merely the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls. No, this book is not mainly concerned with these things. Revelation is firstly a book of Christ, secondly a book of the church, and thirdly a book of God's economy.

A. The Revelation of Christ—Unique and Ultimate

The whole Bible reveals Christ. As the conclusion, completion, and consummation of the Bible, the book of Revelation especially is "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1). Although this book also reveals many other things, the focus of its revelation is Christ. Several aspects of Christ, such as the vision of Him as the High Priest in the midst of the churches, caring for them in love yet with a judging attitude (1:13-16), the vision of Him as the Lion-Lamb in the midst of God's throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the twenty-four elders of the universe, opening the seven seals of God's universal administration (5:1—6:1), and the vision of Him as Another Mighty Angel coming down from heaven to take possession of the earth (10:1-8; 18:1) have never been unveiled as they are in the book of Revelation. In this book, the revelation of Christ is unique and ultimate. In the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles we do not see that Christ has seven eyes, but this is revealed in the book of Revelation (5:6). Christ, our Savior, has seven eyes. How terrifying! This revelation of Christ is unique. In Luke 4:22 we are told that "words of grace" proceeded out of Christ's mouth, but in Revelation 1:16 a sharp two-edged sword proceeds out of His mouth. Moreover, in his Gospel, John says, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (1:29), but in Revelation one of the elders says, "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (5:5). Hence, the revelation of Christ in this book is unique. In no other book is Christ unveiled as He is in Revelation. The first item of the contents of Revelation is this unique Christ.

B. The Testimony of Jesus—Particular and Consummate

On one hand, this book gives us "the revelation of Christ," and on the other hand, it shows us "the testimony of Jesus," which is particular and consummate (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4). The testimony of Jesus is the church. Revelation presents the revealed Christ and the testifying church. In this book we have a particular and consummate record of the church. In no other book are the churches revealed as they are in the book of Revelation. The lampstands in chapter one, the great multitude of the redeemed in chapter seven, the bright woman with her man-child in chapter twelve, the harvest with its firstfruits in chapter fourteen, the overcomers on the sea of glass in chapter fifteen, the Bride ready for marriage and the fighting army of Christ in chapter nineteen, and the New Jerusalem in chapters twenty-one and twenty-two are all the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit—the substance, the disposition, and the characteristic—of the prophecy (19:10). Christ is the Witness (1:5), the testimony, the expression of God, and the church is the testimony, the expression of Christ. As such, the church is the reproduction of the testimony, the expression of God in Christ. The particular revelation of the church in this book is very crucial, and we all must see it.

C. The Economy of God—Universal and Eternal

The contents of Revelation also include the economy of God. God's economy is His universal and eternal administration. In the book of Revelation we see God's universal and eternal administration which is for the carrying out of His economy. Space-wise His administration is universal and time-wise it is eternal.

1. The Seven Seals

In God's administration the first group of items is the seven seals. A seal indicates that something is closed, concealed, and not open to the public. The first four seals cover the history of the world from Christ's ascension to the end of this age (6:1-8). This history is briefly yet all-inclusively covered in these four seals. With the opening of these seals we see four horses, every one of which has a rider. The rider of the first horse is the gospel preaching, the rider of the second is war, the rider of the third is famine, and the rider of the fourth is death. Hence, in these first four seals we have the gospel, war, famine, and death. If you know the history of the world, you will realize that this has exactly been the situation during the past twenty centuries. Since Christ's ascension, the gospel has been preached.

Throughout the centuries, along with gospel preaching there has been war. Since the Roman Empire sent its armies to destroy the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, war has been intensified century after century. In the beginning of this century there was World War I and following that there was a greatly intensified war—World War II. War always

causes famine, and famine brings in death. These four horses are the content of the first four seals. The fifth seal covers the cry of the martyred saints (6:9-11). This will occur close to the end of this age and near the beginning of the great tribulation. Due to the preaching of the gospel throughout the centuries, many saints have been martyred. Close to the end of this age these martyred saints will cry to God for revenge.

The sixth seal, taking place very near to the time of the great tribulation, covers the shaking of earth and heaven (6:12-17). At the opening of the sixth seal, there will be a great earthquake (6:12) which will be a warning to earth's dwellers. Some evil ones say, "Who is God? We are God!" Although they may say that they are God, when the real God comes to shake their dwelling place, then they will know who God is. I have met some people who have argued with me, saying, "Mr. Lee, you preach about God. Don't you know that we are God?" I answered, "Let us see who is God. Although God has some amount of toleration, His toleration is limited. One day you will exhaust His toleration, and His little finger will shake the earth. Then you will know who is God." Before the great tribulation begins, God will send forth a warning to all the earth's dwellers reminding them that there is a God. At the time of the sixth seal, God will not only shake the earth but also the heavens. Revelation 6:12 and 13 say, "And there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind." At that time, the earth will no longer be a suitable place for evil men to live boastfully.

The most difficult seal to understand is the seventh. The seventh seal, which will last for eternity, consists of the seven trumpets. Do not confuse the seals with the trumpets. The seals are secret, but the trumpets are public. When you seal something, you make it secret and private, but when you sound a trumpet, you make something public.

2. The Seven Trumpets—the Contents of the Seventh Seal

The seven trumpets are the contents of the seventh seal. The first four trumpets are the judgments on the earth, the sea, the rivers, and the sun, moon, and stars (8:7-12). As a result of the judgments in the first four trumpets, the earth will no longer be a suitable place for people to live in. The fifth trumpet, the first woe as judgment on men, will be the beginning of the great tribulation (8:13—9:11). As we shall see, the great tribulation will be terrible. The sixth trumpet, which is the second woe as a further judgment on men, is a part of the great tribulation (9:12-21). The seventh trumpet is quite complicated. It consists of the eternal kingdom of Christ, the third woe comprising the seven bowls, the judgment of the dead, the rewarding of the saints and of the God-fearing people, and the destruction of the earth's destroyers (11:14-18). The third woe, which is the second item of the seventh trumpet, will be the closing of the great tribulation. After this, there will be the rewarding of the

prophets, the saints, and those who fear God's name. Throughout the generations, these three categories of people have been produced. The prophets mostly come from the Old Testament, the saints mostly come from the New Testament, and those who fear the name of God will be produced during the great tribulation. The seventh trumpet includes the reward the Lord will give to these three classes of people. The seventh trumpet also comprises the judgment of the dead and the destruction of the earth's destroyers. The destroyers of the earth are Satan, the Antichrist, the false prophet, and all their followers. Hence, the seventh trumpet includes everything from the end of the tribulation to eternity.

3. The Seven Bowls

The seven bowls, a part of the negative contents of the seventh trumpet as the last plagues of God's wrath on men, will be the ending of the great tribulation (15:1, 6-8; 16:1-21). The seven bowls, like the seven seals and the seven trumpets, are composed of a group of the first four and then the fifth, sixth, and seventh. This grouping is meaningful. Certainly the writer of the book of Revelation must be God. Who else would have had the wisdom required to write it? If this book was written according to John's imagination, then John must be God. The book of Revelation is surely composed in a marvelous way.

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Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for the gospel friends of past Thanksgiving gathering.
- Pray for the English-speaking testimony and gospel preaching on West Valley College campus.
- Pray for the burden of raising up next generation for building up of the body of Christ.
- Pray for YP that they will be companions with one another to pursue the Lord together.
- For GOW training: Vital groups be raised up, attending prayer meeting, prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth.

Announcement

- Bible Reading Schedule:

	M	T	W	Th	F	S
Revelation	1:1~3	1:4~6	1:7~11	1:12~13	1:14~16	1:17~20

- 12/4 prayer meeting at bro. Tai's house.
- Registration for 7th term GOW training due on 12/16.
- 12/15 Monthly GOW training at Cupertino meeting hall.
- Financial needs for Boston Training center and Church in Hayward.