

ST PAUL LUTHERAN, CALEDONIA SUNDAY ADULT CLASS

REVELATION- CHAPTER ONE NOTES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Rev. 1:1-3 the title of the Book. Since John was over 60 (very old already in those days), this vision and Revelation which John received on Patmos may be regarded as the final fulfillment of the Apostolic signs and miracles spoken of in Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17: Your old men shall dream dreams. The first word in the original is "Apocalypse" which indicates that this is a revelation of information to man, by God, which man could know in no other way. Apocalypse translates into English as Revelation, hence the name of the book.

1:3 offers a special blessing to those who read and learn this book. The book of Revelation is the only book of the Bible so singled out with such a unique blessing, although Scripture makes clear that reading and study of all Scripture brings blessing.

1:4-7 Revelation was originally written as a letter to the seven churches named in chapters 2 and 3. While John's name self-consciously does not appear in any of his other books here it appears twice in four verses (also 1:9, 21:2, 22:8), leaving no question to the fact that the book is Apostolic. Asia the Roman district of Asia, actually the western part of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). There were 13 churches in Asia, these seven are singled out by the Lord. The other churches in the district were in Troas, Miletus, Colossae, Hierapolis, Magnesia and Tralles.

Verse 6: Believers are called priests (I Peter 2:5-10). And what Psalm 2 says only of Christ, Christ says about all who are His in Rev. 2:26-27. Believers shall have power over the nations. The earth belongs to Christians, all others are trespassers on private property. As one great Lutheran put it, "In short, Christians are the wealthiest and mightiest group in the world. Heaven's sluices of grace and blessing have opened for them through their faith in Christ. The believers have everything, the unbelievers nothing." But the devil's work (and this is the message of Revelation) is to make it appear that Christians have nothing; are outcasts and misfits; and live in a world of make believe.

Verse 7 Summary of the whole book of Revelation. "Behold" occurs 27 times in the book and serves to draw our attention to an especially important point. The coming of Christ will be personal and visible, seen by all at once. Clouds are symbolic of Christ's majesty and power.

The Tribes of the earth will mourn not in repentance -- without warning it will be too late to repent. See also Matt. 24:27,30; Luke 17:24; I Thess. 5:2; Matt: 24:44; Matt. 7:13-14.

Even so. Amen. This is the way it will be. No second chance for unbelievers, no last moment opportunity. Excuses to God and denials of Gods Truth shall be instantly transformed into the realization of eternal damnation with no appeal.

1:8 Here Christ Himself, glorified in heaven, speaks to St. John and clearly identifies Himself as the Almighty God Himself. This verse along with those which follow is one of the best proofs of Christ's divinity and perfect equality with God in the whole Bible. They will fail to convince only those who have totally rejected Scripture as God's Word.

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet just as A and Z are the first and last letters of the English alphabet. While these letters have been interpreted in many different ways God Himself

interprets them for us already in the Old Testament in Isaiah 44:6: I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside Me there is no God.

The words I AM used by God actually is the meaning of God's Name which is usually rendered into English as "Yahweh" or as some may say "Jehovah." Actually I AM only provides the consonants for God's name, we don't know what the original vowels were since they were never written. God, having given His Name as I AM (when translated into English) identifies himself as the uncreated One who is His own cause and Reason for Being. When Jesus, during His ministry claims to be I AM (as in John 8:58 Jesus said unto them, before Abraham was, I AM) He is using God's name and claiming to be God Himself. Since the Jewish leaders did not believe in Him they considered this blasphemy. Since there is no question that John wrote the book, the divine claim at this point in the opening of the book makes it clear that Christ is behind the book of Revelation.

Revelation 1:9-20 may be divided as follows:

- * v. 9 & 10 The place, day and manner of receiving the commission to write.
- * v.11 what John heard first
- * v.12-16 What John saw when he turned to see who was speaking to Him.
- * v.17a John's reaction
- * v.17b-20 the commission repeated, expanded and concluded.

1:9 John identifies the time of this revelation and the writing of the book as being during his exile on Patmos.

1:10 In the Spirit, John, an Apostle in exile, surely longed to be with fellow Christians for worship on the Lord's Day, Sunday. This, by the way, is Scriptural proof of the distinction even by the Apostles between Jewish worship on the Sabbath, Saturday, and Christian worship on the Lord's Day, Sunday. Sunday was chosen by the Apostles themselves in the freedom of the Gospel because it is the day of Christ's Resurrection. But John was in exile so his worship was meditation and prayer without human company. Being an Apostle he also had some very special gifts of the Spirit. Matt. 22:43 refers to David being in the Spirit when he wrote by inspiration. John was conscious, not in a trance or hypnotized, but in a special state of worshipful attendance on the mysteries of God granted in the New Testament times only to the Apostles (II Cor. 12:12).

A loud voice like the sound of a trumpet the clear powerful, expressive voice of our Lord Himself in His fully glorified state.

1:11 (1) Ephesus: where John would soon serve as Pastor for the next 30 years.

(2) Smyrna: a model congregation, one of only two to escape censure.

(3) Pergamos: where Satan dwells and faithful Antipas was martyred.

(4) Thyatira: where Lydia who hosted Paul on his journeys lived.

(5) Sardis: spiritually dead congregation falling into sin.

(6) Philadelphia: like Smyrna, a model congregation

(7) Laodicea: materially wealthy, spiritually poor lukewarm.

1:12 Seven Golden Candlesticks which represent the seven churches (1:20). Gold, a precious item, symbolized how much Christ loves each congregation, including St Paul Lutheran, Caledonia MI.

1:13-16 Physical description of the glorified Christ. In the middle of the lampstands -- Christ's presence with His churches. As the theme of the book we see Christ's continuing love and care for His churches. This close connection between Christ and His love and care for His Church means that those who reject the Church, which Christ so closely ties to Himself, are actually rejecting Christ. See also Daniel 10:5-6 Did Daniel see Christ Himself?

His hair...white as snow -- Holiness (Is. 1:18 Though yours sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow). Christ again clearly identified as God Himself see Daniel 7:9. Clad in priestly garments, our Lord is our great High Priest.

His eyes like a flame of fire penetrating, omniscient, powerful with the intent to overcome or to destroy.

His feet were like burnished bronze -- not like the feet of clay which idols have -- His enemies all shall be trampled underfoot.

His Voice like the sound of many waters -- with His mighty voice He terrifies and dashes to pieces all who set themselves against Him. The Voice that stopped the great storm instantly was but only a whisper. His voice shall not be ignored but temporarily. This imagery also denotes the surety of His Word.

And in his right hand He held the seven stars (see v. 20) the angels of the seven churches being written to.

Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword -- His mighty Word -- one edge, the Law, cuts down men in judgment; the other edge, the Gospel, destroys the power of the devil. The first speaking of the Gospel by God (Genesis 3:15) was in fact, a curse addressed to the devil.

1:17 As overwhelming as His appearance is to John, He comes to believers with comfort and gentleness.

1:18 Keys of Death and Hell -- He is the great final judge who shall judge those who claim to follow Him, as to what they really love, and to judge those who chose to reject him. This power of the Keys has been granted by Him to His congregations for use in certain instances.

1:19-20 The Lords command for John to write what he has seen and does see includes the things which will take place after this. This statement tells us what we are reading in the book of Revelation. Everything we read in Revelation takes place in heaven. Since none of us are familiar with heaven -- the things John writes of -- we have few points of reference to help us understand them. The things which will take place after this, speaks of events in time, and therefore in the creation. But again, the future events (for John) that he writes of are written from the vantage point of heaven. We read of the events from the perspective of their heavenly meaning, rather than our earthbound perspective. As a result, many of the events described can only be tentatively identified from certain clues given when an event is described.

The seven stars are the angels -- The Greek word for angel simply means messenger. Usually in Scripture the angel or messenger is a heavenly being. But here the messenger is associated with the ministry of the Word (compare vv. 16 and 20), leaving us to conclude that in this instance the messenger is the pastor of each of these congregation which will be receiving the seven letters. Verse 2 also gives us a positive identification of the lamp stands as the churches themselves, charged with bringing the light of God's Word to this dark world.

Discussion Questions for REVELATION- CHAPTER ONE

1. Because the Book of Revelation is the most unusual book of the Bible, it is important that the origin of the book (Christ Himself) and the Apostolic authorship is well established. Which verses in Revelation, Chapter 1 directly attest to the Divine origin and/or Apostolic authorship of the book?

2. How much freedom do we have to assign whatever meaning we feel is right to a Biblical passage?

3. Which principle(s) of Biblical interpretation apply most specifically to Question #2?

4. In Revelation 1:3 a special blessing is pronounced upon those who read and hear the words of prophecy in this book. What is meant by "read and hear"?

5. Does any other book of the Bible have such a special promise attached to it as in Rev. 1:3?

6. Rev. 1:6 talks about all Christians as priests. What exactly does it mean that you are a priest?

7. Is priest here the same as pastor or minister?

8. In verse 9 John says that he was in exile on the Island of Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. What does this mean?

9. Explain that sharp two-edge sword spoken of in v.16.

Does it cut you at times?

Who else does it cut?

What is the purpose of its cutting?

10. Christ has given part of the power of these keys spoken of in v.18 to his congregations. How and why is this power to be put to use?