

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Village Church of Rancho Santa Fe

Winter 2010 – *La Costa Glen, Women’s Fellowship, Thursday Morning Men’s Study*

Lesson Eight – February 23, 24, 25

Revelation 21:1 – 22:21

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INTRODUCTORY NOTES – Structure/Outline of Revelation

1. Chapters 1 – 3
 - a. The introductory vision of and message from Jesus to the churches
2. Chapters 4 – 18
 - a. The main series of visions given to John that illustrate the terrible woes that will befall the world as a prelude to the final defeat of all evil, assured in Jesus’ victory already won through his death and resurrection
3. Chapters 19 - 22
 - a. Visions of the final redemption and restoration of God’s Kingdom, especially as seen in the establishment of the Holy City of God – New Jerusalem

DETAILED NOTES

1. 21:1 – 22:5 -- Overview
 - a. Part 2 (Chapters 17-18) was Fall of City of Babylon, now Part 3 (21-22) is establishment of City of God (Jerusalem)
 - b. Background: much thought in Hellenistic/Roman world about the “ideal city,” the ideal civilization, or Eternal City (Rome)
 - c. Again...John borrows and recasts available thoughts and images from a variety of sources to speak pastoral theology to struggling churches
2. 21:1 – 22:5 -- Detail
 - a. God, the End of All things (not events or places, but God)
 - i. Eschatology – finally is about God and only God
 - ii. God (himself) speaks 21:5-6
 - iii. Alpha & Omega – God not only *brings* the End, God *is* the end
 - iv. No Temple – God *himself* is Temple, God dwells, God *tabernacles* with his creation/people
 - v. Perfect Cube (of City) – perfection of God
 - vi. Jasper Wall – represents glory of God himself (Zech 2:4ff)
 - vii. God’s Face – (not backside of Ex 34) but full revelation of God

- viii. My Son (21:7) – not generic “children” but son (theological sense) of full adult personhood (full relationship with God)
 - ix. What awaits us at the End? GOD!
- b. Via Negativa
- i. While we cannot state with certainty always what/who God *is*, we can say much by saying what/who God *is not*
 - ii. No Sea (21:1)
 - 1. Sea separates John from his churches
 - 2. Sea = chaotic power of uncreation
 - iii. No tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain (21:4)
 - 1. *All* that robs life from being true life is erased
 - iv. No cowardly, faithless, polluted, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, liars (21:8)
 - 1. Catalog of vice
 - 2. Right & Justice prevail
 - 3. List of things relating specifically to “backsliding” Christians and worshipers of Cult of Rome
 - 4. Not so much the people, but the practices, will be erased
 - v. No temple (21:22)
 - 1. Temple – place where God dwells (tabernacles) with his people
 - 2. Now...no need for special place because God is *everywhere*
 - 3. Now...all of life is holy and all people are priests
 - vi. No sun, moon, night, closed gates (21:23, 25, 22:5)
 - 1. God banishes night
 - 2. God makes light irrelevant
 - vii. No curse (22:3)
 - 1. Original sin (Gen 3:1ff) is gone
 - 2. Bondage of evil is gone
- c. The City of God
- i. Background: Urbanization of Christianity
 - ii. City = human community, not buildings, but people
 - iii. Dominant Theme – God is *with* his people
 - iv. Dimensions – 12s!
 - v. Jerusalem – now in ruins, then in glory
 - vi. Renewed
 - 1. Vision of “heaven” but in terms of “earth”
 - 2. Fulfillment of God’s plan for decent earthly civilization
 - 3. “God does not make all new things, but makes all things new” (Boring)
 - 4. Kings of earth bring glory of earth into the City (21:24, 26)
 - 5. Affirmation of goodness of this creation
 - 6. Dependent on grace/gift of God (21:6b)
 - vii. Big & Inclusive

1. Not special place for the few
 2. Huge place for the many (1500 miles cubed!)
 3. Populated by the nations (21:24)
 4. Healing of the nations (22:2)
 5. Gates with one-way traffic...in! (
 6. Gates – listed in opposite order of Astrological Calculations!
- viii. Bridal City, Beautiful City
1. City as woman or bride
 2. Celebration, festivity, intimate union
 3. Transformed beauty
 - a. Transparent gold
 - b. Crystalizing jasper
- ix. Holy City
1. Not “moral correctness” but “otherness”
 2. Holiness – not just pious acts according to a formula, but a total reorientation of life around God and his purposes
 3. *All* reality becomes holy – no outsiders, and yet...lake of fire still exists – problem/paradox of who is “in” and who is “out” with God
- x. Active City
1. Not place of “rest” but place of ceaseless “activity”
 2. Worship/Serve (22:3) and Reign (22:5)
- xi. The Imperative
1. If this is where everything is going someday, then...
 2. All things now that are not going that way are ultimately futile, empty, wasted, and...
 3. It is up to us to get in the stream of where things are going!
3. 22:6 - 21
- a. The Vision Ends
 - b. A “return” to earth and earthly reality
 - c. “Copyright” – do not take away or add to these words!
 - d. Worship God (22:9)
 - i. Don’t worship the means of revelation!
 - e. I am coming soon (22:7)
 - i. Not about far future, but about “now”
 - ii. Not about what, but about who (God/Christ = one and the same)
 - f. This is “true” revelation -- from God/Christ
 - i. Sacred words
 - ii. Trustworthy words
 - g. Call for Faithfulness
 - i. “Keep” the words – in sense of living according to them
 - ii. Reward – personal responsibility, even in midst of hope of salvation of all
 - h. The Pastoral End

- i. "Grace of Lord Jesus be with all the saints"
 - 1. Text Disagreements
 - a. Some omit "all"
 - b. Some omit "saints"
 - 2. Boring – "...symbolic of the provocative tension of the Revelation as a whole, guarding us from both the despair of limited hope and the complacency of cheap grace."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the "perfect" human community look like to you?
2. What pain and suffering of this life are you most looking forward to being eliminated?
3. What can you do right now in your life to begin living according to the way that all of life and creation will one day go?
4. What will you do today with the knowledge that one day, at the end of all things (and/or the end of your life on this earth) you will meet God-in-Christ?

i Primary Sources: Earl Palmer, *Communicator's Commentary*, and M. Eugene Boring, *Interpretation Commentary*