

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Week 1 – What Led Up to This? (How Do We Understand the Bible/God’s Plan?)

January 16, 2018

Audio recordings and handouts can be accessed via www.jewishrootsofchristianity.org – lessons link – PDF’s – handouts for Revelation (in progress) – click on to see Pt. 1, 2, & 3. MP3’s – audio recordings.

II Tim. 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Diligent – zealous persistence. Approved – dokimos – pleasing, fit. Not need to be ashamed – I John 2:28 - little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. Rightly dividing – handling rightly/correctly – w/ precision, w/ accuracy.

The book of Revelation has been likened to an exclamation point at the end of the “one long sentence” that is the Bible!! The Bible is “one long sentence” which is culminated/fulfilled in the book of Revelation! Everything that God has decreed...everything that is in God’s plan is culminated/fulfilled in this book which we are studying. How then should we study Revelation?

REVIEW: From Revelation 4 on we’re in the future. The settings in Revelation go back and forth between heaven and earth. In Rev. 4 & 5 the setting is HEAVEN; we’re in the throne room of God. We see the Lamb as though slain taking the scroll from God the Father...the scroll, that I’m suggesting, is the title deed to the earth. REMEMBER, after God created the heavens and the earth and gave man dominion over the earth (to rule over the earth), man sinned and the earth was cursed.

According to the plot of the Bible which is summed up in four words...

CREATION FALL REDEMPTION RESTORATION

God’s plan is to redeem man and to redeem the earth. Thus, I’m suggesting that this scroll that Jesus, the Son of God, takes from God the Father, is the title deed to the earth. The earth will be redeemed. Jesus breaks the seven seals on the scroll to accomplish the redemption of the earth!

In Rev. 6 we read of the Tribulation on earth. And, in this term we’re going to study Rev. 16 through Rev. 22. We are studying that which will indeed unfold in the future!

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The Bible is INSPIRED by God. It is God-breathed. The Bible is the only work in the category of religious works that is rooted in past history (ETERNITY PAST) that also prophesies/predicts future history. The Bible not only records past events accurately, but it also speaks of future events with just as much veracity/accuracy. And because God has already delivered on promises that relate to the world’s history thus far ...because Israel continues to exist...because we know that God is faithful to His promises and He will continue to deliver – we are confident and assured that what God has proclaimed about the future will indeed happen!!!

In moving forward into this new and last term, I'm asking you and I'm asking myself... "With what are we going to come away after we read the last verse in the Bible, Rev. 22:21 - *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* - ?? Are we grasping God's plan? THE question to ask after studying Revelation: how are we better understanding the BIBLE? What really leads up to Revelation? How do you understand that "ONE LONG SENTENCE" that is the Bible?

Let's visit Christmas! Remember, the Bible is one long sentence. It's pertinent for us to talk about Christmas any time of the year. What does Jesus' incarnation teach us? The theological meaning of incarnation is God in the flesh. Isa. 7:14 - *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.* Emmanuel - God in the flesh; God with us. The Incarnation - God's desire to identify with mankind - to be made in the likeness of man - to be, shall I say, disfigured...to pay the price for our sin. This is the UGLY side of Christmas! What is the necessity of Christmas? SIN! Sin has brought about conflict on the world stage. BUT GOD promised REDEMPTION and RESTORATION. AND, the story doesn't end with redemption. God has promised to renew/restore the whole world. Christ will return to judge sin and evil, and He will usher in righteousness and peace. God will purge this world of evil once and for all. And God will dwell with man for all eternity (Ex. 25:8)

As we continue to consider the ugly side of Christmas, of Jesus' incarnation, let's look at Mary and Joseph. I'm going to suggest that Mary and Joseph, from their perspective, most likely didn't travel to Bethlehem from Nazareth to fulfill Bible prophecy. They traveled to Bethlehem because GOD orchestrated the events! They HAD to travel to Bethlehem. God used pagan Caesar Augustus from the pagan Empire/Kingdom of Rome. Have we ever asked, as we're reading the "Christmas account," why Rome is mentioned? We know about Rome from the book of Daniel - written about 500 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem Ephrathah. In Daniel chapter 2 we read of Gentile kingdoms that would rise and they did: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. And, in Daniel 2 we read of an extension of the Roman Empire - and then the KINGDOM OF GOD! Hold on to the Kingdom of God. The KINGDOM OF GOD is CRUCIAL to understanding the plan of God/to understanding the entire Bible!

In the book of Revelation we repeatedly read of kings who are connected with kingdoms!: Rev. 6:15 - the kings of the earth called upon the mountains and the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him Who sits on the throne. Rev. 16:12-14 - the kings of the east and the kings of the whole world are gathered together for the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Rev. 17:1-2 - we read about the judgment of the great harlot who is religious Babylon with whom the kings of the earth will commit fornication. (see also Dan. 7:24; Psa. 2:2-3....)

Although God had entered into a special covenant relationship with the people of Israel, God's plan has always been to impact the world through Israel! Who came through Israel? JESUS - the Messiah FOR ALL! God's plan is redemption and restoration which will impact the world!!

Pagan Caesar Augustus was moved by the Spirit of God at exactly the right time. And he unknowingly fulfilled Micah 5:2 – which was written centuries before. Micah 5:2 tells of the One Whose days were from eternity Who would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah. Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem. And there was no room for them in the inn. And they laid Jesus in a manger...a feeding trough for animals! The ugly side of Christmas. Jesus came in lowliness, in humility. But, from God's perspective, it's beautiful – it's all about His grace! In Gal. 4:4 we read that in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son.... In the midst of Satan's attempts to destroy the Jewish line through Whom the Messiah would come, God sent forth His Son! Do we grasp that the real Christmas story is the result of conflict? But in the midst of the battle of the ages...in the midst of spiritual warfare that rages...God's grace and mercy shine forth! From man's perspective there's a tension in God's plan. From God's perspective there's HARMONY.

Do you realize that when we studied Rev. 12, Christmas was focused upon? In Rev. 12 we see a woman being pursued by a fiery red dragon. As the woman is preparing to give birth to a Child, the dragon hovers over her. The dragon attempts to devour/kill the woman's Child. The woman is a picture of Israel; the Child is Jesus; the dragon is Satan. This is Christmas from a HEAVENLY PERSPECTIVE – from God's perspective.

Rev. 12 gives us the big picture of what was really happening when God sent forth His Son into the world. It represents the conflict/the ugly side of Christmas. BUT, in Rev. 12:5 we read of TRIUMPH and VICTORY as we look into the future - *She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.*

Moving from Caesar Augustus and the Kingdom of Rome, think of what Jesus announced during His ministry... Matt. 4:17 tells us *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'* (The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are synonymous) What was the kingdom of heaven/the kingdom of God to the Jewish people? God had been unfolding His plan in the Bible, from Genesis forward, and God's plan concerns HIS KINGDOM! Throughout the Bible we read of nations/kingdoms...and that there would be THE KINGDOM which would crush all other kingdoms! Throughout the Bible the theme of the kingdom of God is in neon! God is King! I Tim. 1:17 - *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.* And that Kingdom of God will come to earth in the future. Jesus will establish it after His physical Second Coming! Everything we read in Revelation which is the summation of Scripture revolves/orbits around and focuses on/highlights the plan of God and the worship of God and His goal in restoration which is His KINGDOM – when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God!

The Bible is “one long sentence”.... During Jesus' public ministry at His first coming, JESUS said, “In this manner, pray” *Our Father in heaven, hallowed (holy) be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* (Matt. 6:9-10) These are Jesus' words! Why would Jesus begin His prayer, after proclaiming God as HOLY, with God's kingdom? AND, what does “Your Kingdom come...on earth” mean? What

components do you need to have a kingdom? A sovereign king...a throne...for starters. Have we seen this in Revelation? We were in the throne room of God the father in Rev. 4 and Rev. 5!!! This is Who God has been for ALL ETERNITY! Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16). In the Bible we read of an ETERNAL Kingdom.

Jesus taught the Jewish people how to pray which included their asking for God's kingdom to come on earth!! The Jewish people had been taught about God's kingdom coming to earth. Where do we find that?

When God created man, God gave man dominion over the earth – administration (command/mastery) over the earth under God's authority. God is sovereign/KING of the universe. The universe is God's kingdom. Man was created by God to rule over His/God's creation on earth. God's plan was to rule the earth through man. Man was to serve and nurture the earth (Gen. 1:26). Man sinned and the enemy usurped man's dominion. This is why Satan is called the god of this world (II Cor. 4:3-4). Jesus called Satan the ruler of this world (John 12:31). Satan is also called the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). This is why Col. 1:13 talks about the Kingdom of God and the power of darkness (kingdom of Satan). Matt. 12:26 – JESUS said, *If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?*

BUT GOD'S plan is NEVER thwarted. When man sinned, God immediately promised the Redeemer (Gen. 3:15) through Whom God would redeem and restore all that was lost: man's relationship with God was lost, and the earth was cursed. When Jesus receives the Kingdom from God (Dan 7:13-14a, 27) before He establishes it on earth, He will give it to the saints, to believers in Jesus (Luke 19:12ff)!

After the fall, the ramifications of sin grew and God covered the world with the universal flood. In Gen. 10 we read of 70 nations coming from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. From Shem came Abraham. In Gen. 12 God called Abram (exalted father). God made a covenant with Abram and changed his name to Abraham (Gen. 17 - father of many nations). God promised to make of Abram a great name and a great nation. God promised to use this great nation to bless all the nations of the world (Gen. 18:18). God would use this nation to be His witness nation to the world (Isa. 43:10) to tell the polytheistic nations surrounding them of the one true God! Through the unconditional covenant that God made with Abraham in Gen. 12 & Gen. 15, God promised Abraham and his descendants (the Jewish people): land (w/ boundaries [Gen. 15:18-21]); seed (multiple descendants and THE Seed – the Messiah); blessing for the world (salvation [Gal. 3:13-14]). The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional covenant. God has obligated Himself to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. God will indeed deliver His promises to Abraham and his descendants who are the people of the unconditional covenant. The delivering of the promises from God is NOT dependent upon the obedience of the children of Israel.

God promised Abraham and his physical descendants a land, seed, and a blessing. This speaks of a kingdom! God developed the kingdom program with the nation of Israel

through the covenants. The eternal, unconditional, irrevocable covenants determined the ultimate form of the kingdom of God on earth!

All the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant to national/ethnic Israel have not yet been fulfilled. They will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom. The promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are expanded in the unconditional Land Covenant (Deut. 30:1-10), the unconditional Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7:12-16), and the unconditional New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34):

- Israel does not yet have all the land (see Eze. 48 re: the allotment of land in the Millennial Kingdom). (Land Covenant)
- The Messiah is not yet seated on King David's throne (II Sam. 7:16; Psa. 2:6-9; Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:32; Acts 15:15-17 – fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom)
- The entire nation of Israel is not yet saved nor has the nation as yet been a successful witness to the world (New Covenant).
 - God will use the 144,000 Jewish male virgins to witness during the Tribulation as well as the two Jewish witnesses.
 - The Jewish people remaining alive at the end of the Tribulation will come to faith in Jesus (Zech. 12:10).

Do we grasp part of the reason for the Tribulation and the reason for the Millennial Kingdom?

NOTE: while God promised the New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah (Jer. 31:31), the New Covenant has been eternally based on the blood of Jesus. Luke 22:20 – *This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.* Rev. 13:8 - *...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

And, Gentiles who become believers in Jesus are grafted into the blessing/salvation aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant (Rom. 11:11ff)

NOTE: God promised the New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – the ethnic nation. The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:33-34 speaks of the ethnic nation of Israel being forgiven – through Jesus – and serving the Lord – through Jesus!

In Israel's history as it is recorded in the OT, Israel was not obedient. They worshipped other gods. And so God, while promising them the land as an everlasting possession (Gen. 17), orchestrated the northern kingdom of Israel's exile into Assyria (722 BC) and the southern kingdom of Judah's exile into Babylon (586 BC). And yet, there was always the promise of returning to the land as it was promised as an everlasting possession (Gen. 17; Jer. 7:7; Jer. 25:5) and the promise of the kingdom (Dan. 2; Dan. 7; Psa. 2; Hosea 5:15; Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 1;....)

AND SO we find in the book of Daniel God's plan of restoration for Israel and for Jerusalem. Daniel understood from reading Jeremiah's prophecies that the Babylonian exile would last for 70 years (Dan. 9:2; Jer. 25:11; Jer. 29:10). Daniel recognized that the restoration of Israel depended on national repentance (Jer. 29:10-14). Daniel, therefore, personally interceded for Israel fervently in prayer (penitence and petition). He prayed specifically for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple (Dan. 9:3-19). Daniel

apparently expected the immediate and complete fulfillment of Israel's restoration with the conclusion of the 70-year captivity/exile. However, the answer delivered to him by the angel Gabriel revealed that Israel's restoration would be progressive and ultimately fulfilled only at the time of the end (see also Dan. 12).

Let's again look at Jesus' incarnation. When the angel Gabriel came to Mary, what were his words from GOD to her? Luke 1:30-33- *Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.* ³¹ *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.* ³² *He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.* ³³ *And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."* What do you think of the message to Mary from God?

And then, Zachariah's praise of God when he told the people who gathered for his son, John's, circumcision and naming – that this child, who would be the herald of the Messiah, would indeed be named John: Luke 1:68-75 - *Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people,* ⁶⁹ *And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David,* ⁷⁰ *As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began,* ⁷¹ *That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,* ⁷² *To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant,* ⁷³ *The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:* ⁷⁴ *To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,* ⁷⁵ *In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.* What do you think of Zachariah's words? What were they expecting?

While the unconditional covenants that God made with Israel promised a kingdom here on earth, it was the prophets who described the glories of that kingdom. The prophets of the OT had proclaimed a message of hope that caused Israel to eagerly anticipate the fulfillment of God's covenants and promises to them. David's Son, the Messiah (Son of David), would come to bring peace, righteousness, and prosperity to the nation. He would come as a Savior to redeem and as a Sovereign to reign. Israel would know the promised peace that the Prince of Peace would bring. Her accumulated sins would be put away and she would experience forgiveness and live in righteousness (Isa. 54:14). Such was the hope of Israel. Centuries passed before the prophesied forerunner, John the Baptizer, heralded the Messiah by proclaiming: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). In other words...Here is the KING Who will bring the KINGDOM on earth! When Jesus began His ministry, He made the same proclamation (Matt. 4:17).

The call to repentance was an offer. The blessings of the kingdom depended on the nation's response. This does not mean, however, it was not a genuine offer. The reference to the kingdom needed no explanation; it was the covenanted kingdom under David's Son, the Messiah which the prophets had so clearly spoken and for whom the nation was waiting. The nation was plunged into a great debate concerning Jesus. Is He Who He claims to be? If so, He truly is the promised and covenanted Messiah. If not, He is a blasphemous impostor who is worthy of death. Jesus made His claims concerning

His person very clear. Jesus' teaching and miracles validated His claims. He challenged people to accept His claims and to put faith in Him, so that they would receive a righteousness from Him that would enable them to enter His Kingdom. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 - *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

From the inception of Jesus' ministry, two responses to His presentation were evident. John says, "He came to His own and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (Jn. 1:11-12). If the Jewish religious leaders acknowledged that Jesus performed miracles by God's power, they would be without excuse for their unbelief; but if He performed miracles by Satan's power, they could justify their rejection. Thus they sought to dissuade those who believed by saying, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (Matt. 12:24).

TO BE CONTINUED!

The Bible's "one long sentence" reveals the plan of God. We need to understand the context. The context is not just what's written directly ahead of what we're studying or directly after what we're studying. The context is the ENTIRE BIBLE. Understanding the entire Bible helps us answer the WHY questions. The answers are IN the Bible!

And so, we press on!

QUESTIONS:

What were your V8 moments?

Does this lesson clear up what you have studied in past Bible studies and in your current study of Revelation? If so, how so?

What is most helpful in knowing about the Kingdom and about the covenants?

What questions do you have?

STRONGLY SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread week 1's handout with the Scripture references.

Jot down observations and questions. Dig further.

Share with at least one person what you've learned from this lesson.

Read week 2's handout when you receive it.