

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

REVELATION LESSON 3 (Chapters 1-11)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10). Welcome to our study of the Book of Revelation. In our last two lessons we looked at seven keys that can help us understand this great book. Now we are going to go chapter by chapter and hit the main thoughts in order to weave everything together to see God’s overall message to Christians in the first century and His message of encouragement for us in the twenty-first century today.

In chapter 1 Christians are immediately impressed with the image of Christ, the One Who is in control. Remember that this was during times of great persecution. Rome was persecuting Christians. Some were being dragged off. People like Nero or Domitian were in control. Thus, Christians are minded by the image of Jesus in chapter 1 that Jesus is still King of kings and Lord of lords. During times of persecution, we must look to Christ for help. Revelation 1:13-16 says that John saw

“in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.”

Here we see this image of Jesus that presents His holiness, power, radiance, and the Word of God that came out of His mouth. The impression we receive from this image is that Jesus is alive, well, and in control—which means that during persecution we must look to Christ. There is a practical lesson here for Christians then as well as for us today. When we face difficulties, when we struggle, and when things do not always go the way they ought to in life, we need to go to Jesus first for help. Too many times we look to self-help books, doctors, psychiatrists, and so on. There is nothing necessarily wrong with that, but the first place we ought to be looking for help is Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 12:1-2 we read,

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

If we want real help in times of trouble, we must look to the Lord. He is able to aid those who are in need of help (Heb. 2:17-18). Revelation begins on a positive note. Jesus is alive and well, and can help us. Thus, we must look to Him in time of trouble.

Revelation 2 and 3 probably are the chapters that have been studied the most by people who have examined the Book of Revelation. We are not going to spend a whole lot of time talking about the letters to the seven congregations. Let us simply notice that Jesus says this to these congregations. He **knows** what is going on in His church, and we need to let **Him** be Head of the church. Jesus rebukes five of the congregations. Only two are not rebuked. Five out of the seven are rebuked for things they are not doing or for things that they

should not be doing. Either they were doing something wrong, or they were lacking in some area. During times of persecution, we must not forget that Jesus is still the Head of the church, and that we are responsible as a member of that church for how we live our lives. Revelation 3:21 reveals the encouragement that Jesus offers saints who live faithfully. "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." We must look to ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5) and examine ourselves to see if we are living in the faith, especially in times of persecution. But at all times we must make sure that we are right with God and that we are living as we ought to live, realizing that if we live faithfully, then we can come over and live with God.

Chapter 4 presents for us a great throne-room scene, and offers one main idea: God is on the throne and is in control. Every time it looked like Domitian or Nero was ruling the known world while putting Christians to death amidst great persecution, Christians needed to remember that God is on His throne. He is in control, and we need to trust Him and let Him have his way with us in this life. This throne-room scene surely would have been an encouragement to Christians in the first century so that they would know that the God of Heaven was still in control. Daniel 5:21 illustrates an important point along these lines. God was talking to Nebuchadnezzar, who was going through some hard things but had learned an important lesson. We are told that Nebuchadnezzar went through those difficult times "till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men." That is the message of Revelation 4. Domitian is not in control. Nero is not in control. The Roman government is not in control. God still rules in the kingdoms of men and sets over them whom He wishes. We need to be encouraged by knowing that God is in Heaven and that He is in control. His will ultimately will be accomplished, so we must be faithful to Him and to no one else.

Revelation 5 introduces us to the Lamb "Who was slain before the foundation of the world." John has a scroll that no one can seem to open. But the Lamb then comes and opens the scroll in order to unleash the wrath of God. Christians, as a result, cry out, "Worthy is the Lamb!" Who is this Lamb? In John 1:29 John the Baptist sees Jesus approaching and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Christians were being persecuted. They wanted to know, "If God is in control, who will help us overcome the great world power that is Rome?" The Lamb takes the scroll and unleashes the vengeance of God. Who is the Lamb? It is Jesus Christ, Who is able to offer help during times of persecution. Revelation 5:12 records, "...saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!'" The Lamb is pictured as the One Who is worthy to receive our honor. We are not to pay honor to Domitian or Nero. The Lamb is going to unleash God's vengeance, and He is the One Who is worthy of our honor or glory. Our lives must be about giving Jesus, the Son of God, the glory and honor He deserves. In fact, that is what our lives are all about. Isaiah 43:7 says, "Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." Paul said, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Revelation 5 tells us that the Lamb is worthy. He is able to unleash God's vengeance, and we must give Him the glory and honor that He deserves. It is through Jesus that the devil, the beast, and Rome itself will be defeated because of Jesus' actions. Jesus, through death, overcame "him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).

In Revelation 6 we find six seals that are going to be broken—seals that are directly related to the scroll. The seals represent God's vengeance. God's wrath will be unleashed against Rome and her ungodly government. God is in control, and He will deal with those who are punishing His saints. In Revelation 6:10 the saints asked God how much longer He would

allow this to go on. He told them to be faithful a little while long because it was all going to work out. Notice what is said in Revelation 6:17—“For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” This is picturing Rome and the coming destruction that was going to take place. People cried out, “God’s wrath is coming; how can we stand it?” Even Rome realized that God was in control. These seals—representing acts of vengeance on God’s part—showed Rome that **she** was not in control. **God** was! And they desperately needed to submit to His will and obey the teaching of Christ.

In Revelation 7 we find a scene where God’s people are being sealed. God is unleashing His wrath upon the ungodly Roman government. But Christians are going to be sealed and safe. They will be taken care of because God knows those who are faithful to Him. An important principle that we can learn from this has to do with the fact that during times of ungodliness, or at times when the world is immoral (as it is in our day today) we can be sure that God knows who are faithfully serving Him. We **will** be taken care of. Revelation 7: 13-14 states,

“Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’”

These are the ones who served God and who worshiped Him. Christians were suffering, and many would wonder, “Why did God allow these things to happen?” One of the elders asks, “Who are these redeemed people?” John says, “You know. They are the ones who came out of the tribulation and who had their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb.” If we are going to endure and be victorious, we must be faithful to God! We must make sure that we are one of God’s children and that we are living as we ought to live. We must be sure that our robes have been “washed in the blood of the Lamb.” How does that take place? If our robes are going to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, that means we must obey God’s teaching regarding the plan of salvation. We contact the blood of Christ when we are baptized in order to wash our sins away in the blood of the Lamb (Acts 22:16). That is where we contact Jesus’ blood. These Christians in Revelation had endured, and **they** were the ones who would be victorious—**not Rome!**

In Revelation 8 we see four trumpets that are sounding out God’s vengeance upon Rome, and that will defeat her and bring her down. One trumpet makes a sound described in Revelation 8:3.

“Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.”

Here we see a throne-room scene again. In the midst of trumpets that are unleashing God’s wrath, the saints’ prayers go up before the throne of God as sweet-smelling incense. One powerful lesson we can learn from this is that during times of trouble and tribulation, God is no farther away than the avenue of prayer. God is willing and able to help, but we must have the faith to pray and ask Him for that help. We learn here the importance of prayer in the Christian’s life at all times, but especially during times of trouble. In James 5:16 we read, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Paul said, “Pray without ceasing.” We must never stop praying, and we must realize the value and importance of prayer. Jesus said in Luke 18:1, “Men always ought to pray, and never lose heart.” Christians’ prayers rise up to God as a sweet-smelling savor. During times of trouble, we must approach God. Hebrews 4:16 says that we can approach boldly, and that as we do we will find help in our time of need.

Revelation 9 shows us that God will deal with Rome in several ways. Rome's government will decay from the inside. And there also is going to be an external invasion. God promised that Rome would be punished. The government would begin decaying from the inside. History tells us that that happened. Also, Rome was invaded, and outside forces came and overtook Rome, eventually bringing punishment upon her. Although Rome looked like she would be victorious, God promised that she would decay from the inside that be invaded in order to be punished. How does all of that apply? Look at Revelation 9:20-21, where we are taught that we must stay true to God and always be sure that our lives are right. To Rome God said,

"The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts."

These things were happening, and should have been recognized as signs to bring the people of Rome back to God. Yet they did not repent of their works. God loves **all** people, and He wants **everyone** to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). The Bible makes it clear that God is longsuffering toward us, and is not willing that anyone should perish, but wants everyone to come to repentance. Did God want the souls in Rome who were opposing Christianity to be lost and go to Hell? Absolutely not! The Romans should have seen their destruction as the power of God. They should have seen the internal decay and external invasions as God's power, and as signs that they needed to get their lives right. They needed to make sure that they were worshiping the God of Heaven, not idols of silver and gold that could not see, talk, or hear. Yet, unfortunately, they did **not** repent of their works. It is so important for us today to realize that we must, at all times, examine ourselves to make sure that we are right with God. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish." How serious it is for us to take the time that we have here and now very seriously so that we will use it to honor God and make sure our lives are right before Him. The people of Rome were lost because they refused to change their ways. God does not want people to be lost. But because He is a just judge, He will punish those who do ungodly things.

Revelation 10 shows us a scene in which John is given a book by an angel, who tells him to eat the book, which represents some of the things that will be happening to the Roman government, and some of the things that will be happening to Christians. Revelation 10:9 says, "So I went to the angel and said to him, 'Give me the little book.' And he said to me, 'Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.'" In some ways the book was good news, yet was bad news in other ways. It was sweet in John's mouth, but would be bitter in his stomach. The sweetness represented the God news, which was that God was going to take vengeance upon Rome as ungodly people were punished. But the bitterness was that Christians would have to continue to endure and be faithful to God because there would be more persecution yet to come. In this life, we have never been promised by God that life would be full of roses without any thorns along the way. In fact, we have been promised that there **will** be trouble, and that we **will** experience trials. "All who live godly in Christ Jesus **will** suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Paul said that we must "through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). In this life, as we face struggles, that is the bitterness (the hard part). But we must realize that there is sweetness, in the sense that if we endure and remain faithful to God, we can overcome, be faithful to God, and live with Jesus. Jesus said in Revelation 2:10 that if we will be faithful unto death, then God will give us a crown of life. How we must make sure

today that in the midst of our troubles, we refuse to “throw in the towel.” We must not let our troubles drag us down, but instead must realize that God is faithful, and that with temptation will make a way of escape so that we can endure such temptations in this life.

In Revelation 11 we see God’s two witnesses who are prophets of God. They are sent out to proclaim His message, but they are killed. The people did not want to hear what the prophets had to say, so they put them to death. Their bodies laid in the street, and it looked like Christ and Christianity had been stamped out. But notice what happens. In the midst of this scene, these two witnesses are resurrected and begin to preach again. God sent a message, but the people of Rome did not want to hear it. Rome therefore persecuted Christians—to the point where it appeared as if Christianity would be stamped out. It may have looked like Christ and Christianity were “lying in the street, dead,” but God and His cause would rise up and be victorious. On the heels of that message we find Revelation 11:15. This may well be the key verse in the Book of Revelation.

“Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”

After the witnesses were resurrected, Christianity was infused with new life. Rome had been defeated, God was victorious, and Christians were the winners in the end. No matter how bad things may get or how immoral our world may become, we must realize that God is still in control and that it is the kingdom of Christ that will be victorious over all other kingdoms. Rome did not win. America is now going to win. No country in the world will be victorious over God. Christ and His kingdom will outlast and outlive all other kingdoms and will be victorious.

What is the message of these first eleven chapters? It is this: Christ is in control. We need to look to ourselves to see if we are living as we ought to be living. If there are changes that need to be made—either individual or congregational—then we need to make those changes so that God will be happy with us. We need to realize that Jesus is the only way for us to escape the ungodliness, immorality, and corruption around us—and ultimately the punishment that God is going to exact on an ungodly world. We must realize that God will punish those who do not live according to His will. There is a day coming when God will judge every person on Earth. Those who have done evil are going to be punished. Those who have been righteous will be exalted. After reading the Book of Revelation, and after seeing what happened to the Roman government, the message is this: Why would anyone ever want to be against God and His Cause? Instead, we need to realize the importance of obeying God and of being a member of His kingdom.

Maybe today you are not a part of the body of Christ because you have never obeyed the Gospel. One thing is clear: You must be on the Lord’s side in this life. You must be sure that you are right with Him so that you can take advantage of the help He offers and so that you will be sure that on the Day of Judgment you will be prepared to stand before God. What must a person do to become a child of God? The Bible makes it clear. Jesus is the way to salvation. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6). How does a person become a child of God? The Scriptures are very clear on this matter. A person must hear the Word of God. Romans 10:17 says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” We must recognize that the Bible is God’s authority all matters related to salvation. It does not matter what men say. It does not matter what popular books say. We must understand that only the Bible has the plan of salvation. Once a person has heard the Word of God, he then must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In Acts 8 we find Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch traveling down the road. They came to water, and the eunuch said, “Here is water. What hinders me from

being baptized?” Do you remember what Philip said? In Acts 8:37 he said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” Having believed in Jesus, a person must be willing to repent. The people in the Book of Revelation did not repent of their wicked deeds (Rev. 9:21), and as a result they were lost. Jesus said, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Having repented, a person then must be willing to confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In Romans 10:10 we are told, “With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” It was the Lord Who said, “If you are unwilling to confess Me before men, I will not confess you before My Father who is in Heaven.” We must confess Jesus as God’s Son. Then, in order to get on God’s side and have his sins washed in the blood of the Lamb, a person must be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. Think about what Jesus said concerning this. In John 3:3 Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” We must be born of water to enter the kingdom of God and make it to Heaven. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the Gospel was preached for the first time, the people cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (vs. 37). The answer was, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Baptism is essential to (necessary for) the forgiveness of sins. It is difficult to misunderstand what Peter said in 1 Peter 3:21 when he wrote, “Baptism does now also save us.” In Galatians 3:27 Paul said that we are baptized into the body of Christ. Have you obeyed the Gospel? Are you on the Lord’s side—the only side that will be victorious? If not, why not become a Christian today. And if you are already a child of God, these chapters illustrate that we must be certain that we endure and never give up. We must remain faithful so that in the end we will be victorious. The Lord said, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” May we take this encouragement into our daily lives and live faithfully for Jesus every day.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST is brought to you by loving, caring members of the church of Christ. The McLish Avenue church of Christ in Ardmore, Oklahoma, oversees this evangelistic effort. For a free CD or DVD of today’s broadcast, please write to:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST
607 McLish Ave.
Ardmore, OK 73401

You may call **580-223-3289**. Please visit us on the web at www.thegospelofchrist.com. We encourage you to attend the church of Christ, where “the Bible is loved and the Gospel is preached.”

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION LESSON 3 (CHAPTERS 1-11)

1. According to the material presented in this lesson, what is the main message of Revelation 1:13-16?
2. What important point is found in Hebrews 2:18?
3. In Revelation 2 and 3 Jesus addressed seven different churches. Of those seven, how many did He rebuke?
4. What is the main point being made in Revelation 3:21?
5. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, what did Paul urge Christians to do?
6. What important point is found in Daniel 5:21?
7. When John the Baptist said in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," of whom was he speaking?
8. Who, according to Revelation 5:12, is worthy to receive honor?
9. What important message is contained in 1 Corinthians 10:31?
10. According to Hebrews 2:14, who did Jesus overcome?
11. Revelation 6:10 records a question being asked by first-century Christians. What was that question?
12. Revelation 6:11 records the answer to the question that was asked in Revelation 6:10. What was that answer?
13. When John wrote in Revelation 6:17 that "the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?," what was he predicting by the phrase, "the great day of His wrath has come?"
14. Revelation 7:13-14 speaks of some who were adorned in white robes. Who were these people?
15. Revelation 8 depicts a throne-room scene. What is the message of that chapter?
16. What does Revelation 9:20 say that the people of Rome had failed to do?
17. Revelation 10:9 presents both good news and bad news. What is the good news, and what is the bad news?
18. What does Revelation 2:10 have to do with the bad news revealed in Revelation 10:9?
19. When Revelation 11 speaks of the resurrection of the two dead witnesses who were lying in the street, what message is being stressed?