

Sunday January 12th 2020
The Word of God
A Survey of the Bible – Lesson 18A
'I Know Your Works....'

1). Re 1:1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

As we come to the last Book of the Bible it might be helpful to begin by addressing what has become a common error, an error whereby this Book is often referred to as the 'Book of Revelations', plural. A name which suggests that this is a Book that contains a series of 'revelations'. And to view this Book after this fashion would be completely wrong and will inevitably lead to a wrong understanding of it if this thinking is not corrected.

a). If we go to the very beginning of v1 it is made abundantly clear for us that the Book is about the revealing or unveiling of Jesus Christ – one singular revealing, of one singular individual.

b). And given Who it is that is being revealed, as we see in – Jn 1:14 *And **the Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

We will see that the revealing, the unveiling of Jesus Christ is also a revealing, an unveiling of the written Word, which is alive.

c). And not only this, but if we add to it what we find in – Jn 1:1 *In [the] beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.***

We will realize that this is also a revealing, an unveiling of God the Father Who is inextricably connected to the written Word, through the person of Son – this is then a complete opening up, for the purpose of being brought to conclusion, of all that is contained in the OT and NT Scriptures, as there is nothing in the New that cannot be found after some fashion in the Old.

d). This is something the Scriptures clearly attest to, but the problem of trying to see numerous ‘revelations’ rather than one unveiling comes from taking this English word and then applying a contemporary definition of it. The word ‘revelation’, as found in the dictionary is defined as follows -

a surprising and previously unknown fact, especially one that is made known in a dramatic way.

But such a definition cannot possibly apply to this Book because all the events set forth in it through the revealing of the Christ can be found in the OT/NT Scriptures, there is nothing previously unknown to be found here.

e). And this of course is just what the Scriptures have taught us over the years – *Isa 46:9 Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’*

Am 3:7 Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

And then we must realize that the word ‘revelation’ itself is an English word and is a translation of the Greek word ‘apokalypsis’, which from the Greek through Old English, Old French and ecclesiastical Latin has produced our modern English word, ‘apocalypse’.

f). And if we take this English word, ‘apocalypse’, and its definition and try to apply it to this Book we will find ourselves in a heap of trouble

the complete final destruction of the world, as described in the biblical book of Revelation.

The word 'apokalypsis', as we have seen, literally means a revealing, an unveiling, nothing else and that which is revealed, which is unveiled, is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. The first verse of the Book then would begin, 'The apokalypsis of Jesus Christ....' And any attempt to apply the modern English word apocalypse here would render this as nonsense.

g). Now it is true to say that through the revealing of the Christ cataclysmic judgments are seen as the 7 sealed scroll is opened but this is not a Book about 'the end of the world'.

h). It would also be true to say that in it we see the complete destruction of Gentile world power and following the end of the Millennial Kingdom the destruction of the present heavens and earth which is replaced by a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, but the Book is not about these things per se, rather these events are the necessary outworking of the fulfillment of God's purpose for His created being, Man, a purpose that has always been regal. In the first instance it has to do with God's 3 firstborn sons, the Christ, Israel and the Church ruling the Gentile nations on the earth during the Kingdom Age. And beyond that, all of redeemed Man having a part in the governance of the universe throughout the eternal ages.

i). God's stated purpose for creating Man – Ge 1:26 *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; **let them have dominion**.....*

It has never and will never change. And really this is what the Book of the Revelation is about, the unveiling of Christ as the great King/Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. It is a Book that describes God's final intervention in the affairs of Man at a time when He will allow matters as they exist at the present to go no further to bring about His eternal purpose.

j). So, why are these potential errors of importance to us? Because of what we read in v3 - *3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

There is blessing for those who read the words contained in the Book of the Revelation, blessing for those who hear those same words and blessing for those who 'keep', literally give heed to 'those things which are written'.

k). Now we cannot give heed to the things which are written if we have a completely wrong idea as to what the Book is about and how its subject is presented to us. If we are looking for numerous 'revelations' or details about 'the apocalypse', according to their English definitions, then we will completely miss what is contained in the Book and be separated from the blessing for correctly giving heed to it.

l). With this in mind we might remember how the first part of the warning in the Book of Hebrews begins – Heb 2:1 *Therefore we must **give the more earnest heed** to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

And we will remember that contextually, 'the things we have heard' refers back to the 7 OT quotations from Chapter 1 that demonstrate both the deity and regality of the Christ in relation to the 7th Day. And that which we are to give the more earnest heed to in Hebrews is exactly what is then revealed, that we must also give heed to, in the Book of the Revelation – the Christ and the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom.

m). And if we think about it, this is the subject matter of all of Scripture, beginning with Genesis. Giving heed to that which is written in the Book of the Revelation cannot be separated from giving heed to the rest of Scripture because all Scripture deals with the same thing.

n). If our understanding of the preceding Books of Scripture is correct, then our understanding of the Book which brings all to completion will be correct also. Start wrong and the Revelation will become a mess. And conversely, have a wrong view of the Revelation and it will skew everything that comes before.

o). These are life and death issues and make clear why blessing will follow for those who read, hear and give heed to that which is written, beginning with Genesis and concluding with the Revelation in the correct way.

2). To go back to the opening verses this morning - Re 1:1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which*

must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,

What we see then is that the revealing, the unveiling of Jesus Christ through whom God's purpose will be brought to completion, contained in the pages of this Book, was given to Jesus 'to show His servants', who for our purposes today, would be us. And we are to be shown things 'which must shortly take place'. Now, the word translated 'shortly' here is not referring to something imminent, although given where we are in the dispensation this would be a truth, but to something that will happen 'quickly'.

a). The complete revealing of the Son by the Father as contained in the OT Scriptures will happen in a little over 7 years and is seen through the unfolding events before, during and after the Lord's return to the earth. Once the unveiling of Jesus Christ begins with the resurrection/rapture of the Church, it will quickly be brought to its conclusion. This is what we need to understand.

b). And we are also given the manner in which the revealing of Jesus Christ is accomplished, it has been 'signified'. This word translated 'signified' is the verb form of the Greek word for 'sign'. And we will remember that John, the writer of the Revelation, in his Gospel account, opened up and developed his subject matter through the use of 8 signs – Jn 20:30 *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

And in the Revelation the Holy Spirit moved him to open and develop the subject matter in a similar fashion.

c). We have seen throughout our studies how God has an affinity for the use of types, signs, numbers, metaphors – the use of figurative language, to make His plans and purposes known to us and it is important for us to recognize that this is the way in which the Book of the Revelation has been constructed.

d). Not only then is it imperative that we understand correctly what this Book is about, but also how this subject has been presented to

us. And God leaves us in no doubt about either, if we will just pay close attention, give heed, to the first verse.

3). *Re 10:7 but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

As the Christ is unveiled in the Book of the Revelation so the ‘mystery of God’ is brought to its complete and irrevocable conclusion. And by comparing Scripture with Scripture, the mystery of God is made known to us - *Col 2:1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of **the mystery of God**, [both of the Father and of] **Christ**, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

The mystery of God is the Christ, the Word made flesh, and this mystery is ‘finished’, fully revealed, in the days of the sounding of the 7th angel in conjunction with the opening of the 7th seal, as the judgment of the 7th trumpet brings to conclusion God’s dealings with those upon the earth, both Jews and Gentiles. It will be the time when the King of kings and the Lord of lords prophesied and typified throughout the OT and seen in the NT is fully unveiled in all His glory – *Ps 2: 1 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.” 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 “Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.” 7 “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.*

Col 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on

earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Re 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

At this point the inheritance is redeemed, Israel is brought to repentance, Gentile world power is destroyed. Man's Day is in its final moments and the Kingdom Age beckons. That which God said at the beginning, 'Let them have dominion' is to be reality.

a). It is the Christ, fully unveiled bringing to completion the mystery of God as seen in Revelation Chapter 10 who is described to us after the same fashion in Chapter 1 – *Re 1:4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed [loosed] us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

The Book that we call the Revelation is in the form of a letter. And this letter which contains the revealing, the unveiling of Jesus Christ is written to 'the seven churches which are in Asia'. This letter then had an historical context written to 7 literal churches, but because we know of God's affinity for numbers, the 7 churches also gives us the complete church, in this instance all Christians throughout this dispensation.

b). This letter then has been given to those who have in their possession the OT Scriptures in which the Christ is to be found –
Lk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

It has been given to those who are in possession of the mysteries of the Kingdom – *Mt 13:10 And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”¹¹ He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.*

And those in possession of the gospel of the glory of Christ –
2 Co 4:3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

c). In Re 1:4 it is said of God the Father that He is the One ‘who is and was and who is to come’ and in v8 exactly the same thing is said of the Son again making clear that Father and Son are One and the same – ‘the Word was with God and the Word was God’ - And these phrases, ‘who is and was and is to come’, denote existence outside of time.

d). The Father, the Son and therefore the Word have always been –
Mk 13:31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

There was never a time when they weren’t and there will never be a time when they won’t be.

e). Then intimately connected with the eternal Godhead we see ‘the seven spirits who are before His throne’ and the description of Jesus as ‘the faithful witness’ and there is an inseparable connection between the 7 spirits and the faithful witness. Seven as we know is a number showing the completeness of what is in view. And what is in view in this opening Chapter is the unveiling, the revealing of Jesus Christ. God the Father, who is Spirit, through His Son, brings this unveiling to completion.

f). And that which is seen through the unveiling is spiritual, it is to be spiritually discerned, hence the 7 spirits and Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness of this spiritual truth, being the embodiment of it as the Word made flesh – Jn 8:18 *I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.*” 19 *Then they said to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.”*

The Son is then further described as ‘the firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth.’ The phrase, ‘the firstborn from the dead’ takes us back to the Lord’s death, burial and resurrection – this is a sequence of events that has been clearly set out through the type of Israel, who having died the night of Passover, was buried in the Red Sea and raised in resurrection for the purpose of rulership in the land of their inheritance, and rulership following resurrection is exactly what we see, as Jesus is described as ‘the ruler over the kings of the earth.’

g). And in this overall picture, because of the type given through Israel, we would also have to see those to whom this letter is written, Christians, who themselves through that pictured in baptism have also been raised for the purpose of rulership in the land of their inheritance. And this is what the end of v5 and v6 is about - *To Him who loved us and washed [loosed] us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests [Lit. a kingdom, priests] to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

1 Pe 2:9 *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, [a kingly priesthood, priests in a kingdom] a holy nation.....*

And in that Day when the many sons are brought to glory, we will find that seen in – Ro 8:29 *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

Christ will be the firstborn among many brethren and the Kingdom to be made up of priests, has been made possible by 2 inextricably connected things – God’s love and the death and shed blood of His Son born out of

that love, that has loosed us from the slavery of sin – Ro 6:5 *For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.*

4). And it is with respect to those ‘whom He foreknew’, those who ‘He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son’, those loosed from sin, that the revealing, the unveiling of Jesus Christ is to begin – 1 Pe 4:17 *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

2 Co 5:10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

1 Th 4:16 *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

The picture we have in our minds of the Lord Jesus will come from seeing Him in the Scriptures through our spiritual eyes, but let’s make no mistake that the day is soon coming when we will individually stand before Him in the body we now possess and we will see Him with our physical eyes – Job 19:26 *And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, 27 Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another.*

And in that day the Jesus we shall see will not be the Great Shepherd of the sheep, He will not be the compassionate High Priest, nor the suffering Servant, but the eternal Judge into whose hands all judgment has been given – Jn 5:22 *For the Father judges no one, but has committed all*

judgment to the Son, 23 that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

And with this in mind we might note the Apostle John's reaction to seeing the One on whose bosom he had rested his head – Re 1:12 *Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and 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. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 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. 17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.*

And we might remember the experience of Peter on the night of the Lord's betrayal – Lk 22:59 *Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." 62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.*

There is no doubt that when we see Him it will be an experience such as we have never had before and more than likely than not we will fall at His feet as dead.

a). But then, what will happen next? Will the Lord lay His hand upon us and say, 'Do not be afraid'? Or will we, like Peter, remember the word of the Lord and go out and weep bitterly?

b). The choice remains ours. He knows our works and until the trumpet sounds or we breathe our last breath there is still time to produce those acts of righteousness, the works of gold, silver and

precious stones, because it will be our works and our works alone that will be judged.

We will continue with this next time – if the Lord is willing.