

Christ in Prophecy

Revelation 15: An Overview of Revelation

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: How do you feel about the book of Revelation? Do you fear it? Are you confused by it? Have you ever even bothered to read it? Stay tuned for a sweeping overview.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. The purpose of this program is to try to get you interested in studying the book of Revelation in detail by presenting a sweeping overview of the whole book. And since that means we have a lot of ground to cover, let's get right to it.

Dr. Reagan's Presentation

Dr. Reagan: The book of Revelation was written in 95 AD, 65 years after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was written by the Apostle John who was imprisoned on the Island of Patmos by the Roman government. The Island of Patmos looks like this today, beautiful, idyllic island. But let me tell you in his day and time there was nothing there. It was a barren rock, and it was a place for prisoners. Patmos is a Greek Island that is located off the western coast of Turkey, modern day Turkey. In close proximity to the seven churches that are mentioned in chapters 2 and 3. The church at large at that time was suffering terrible persecution, and John had been arrested for his faith. You can image how astonished John must have been when Jesus suddenly appeared to him, 65 years after His death, burial and resurrection Jesus returned to this earth to that Island of Patmos and appeared to John. And of course he was particularly astonished because Jesus appeared to him in His glorified body with all of His heavenly glory restored. And it was so amazing that John fell upon his face as though dead. But Jesus immediately consoled him. He reached down, He put His hand on his shoulder and Jesus said these immortal words, He said, "Do not be afraid I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead and behold I'm alive for evermore and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Think of what He is saying here, Jesus is saying, "John I am the beginning of history. I am the end of history. I am the middle of history. I am the meaning of history. I was dead and I've overcome death and therefore I have authority over death. For those who put their faith in me you shall overcome death." What a glorious statement that first chapter ends with.

That brings us to chapters 2 and 3. Jesus begins immediately to dictate seven letters to seven churches located in the area today that is known as western Turkey. The specific churches were Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Now there were many more churches than these seven, but I believe these seven were selected because they were representative of seven types of churches that existed then, and which exist now. Let's take a look at them.

First was the church at Ephesus and all of these are actual photographs of these sites. The church at Ephesus it was a legalistic church. It dotted the i's it crossed the t's it wanted to be

certain about doctrine. But in the process of focusing upon doctrine it had lost its first love, it had taken its eyes off Jesus. Then came the church at Smyrna it was a church that Jesus had nothing critical to say of. It was the church that was suffering terrible persecution. Then the church at Pergamum it was the opposite of the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus was concerned about doctrine, the church at Pergamum was a liberal church it could care less about doctrine and it was willing to welcome anyone into its fellowship. The church at Thyatira was a pagan and cultic church that was Christian in name only. The church at Sardis was a church that had a reputation for being alive but in reality it was dead. But there was then the wonderful church at Philadelphia, the church was an alive church, it had a great zeal for the Lord. And therefore it was a church that was meriting an open door for evangelism. And finally perhaps the saddest of all the church at Laodicea was a worldly, apathetic church, enamored with its own importance, and bored by the call to evangelism.

Now, in addition to representing seven types of churches that existed then, and which exist now I also believe the seven churches are prophetic of seven periods of church history during which one of the seven types would predominate. All were present during these periods of Church history but one predominated. Let me show you what I'm talking about. The church at Ephesus seems to be representative of the Apostolic Age from 30-100 when the Church was focused upon doctrinal issues like: How do you organize a church? How does a church run? How is it ruled? What are the basic doctrines and so forth? And began to get its eyes off of the Founder of the Church the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then came the Church at Smyrna the martyr church. This was the period from 100-312 when the Church was terribly persecuted and Christians were fed to the lions. And Christians were crucified all over the Roman Empire. By the year 312 the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and made it the religion of the Empire. That sounded good but it was one of the worst things that ever happened to the Church because the moment he declared it to be the religion of the empire, all of the pagan priests of the Roman Empire simply took off their pagan symbols, put on Christian symbols and kept doing what they had been doing beforehand. So, the Church began to be corrupted from the inside out.

Then came the Pergamum period, the Apostate Church from 312 to 590, 590 being the time of the Proclamation of the Infallibility of the Pope. It was during this time that the Church became an apostate Church as Babylonian practices and all kinds of heathen and pagan practices came into the Church.

The next period Thyatira was the pagan period from 590 to 1517 the Church became very pagan. In fact so pagan that by 1517 it was selling salvation to the highest bidder. And that is when Martin Luther said, "Enough is enough, is enough." He nailed his Thesis on the door and said, "Let's get back to the Bible."

And we moved into that period from 1517 to 1700 when the Church seemed to be alive. When Protestant denominations like the Church of England, Presbyterian Church and all these various different denominations began to develop and they were getting back to the Bible. And it looked like it was an alive Church, but in reality it was a dead Church because every one of them immediately got in bed with some emperor, some ruler, some state in order to be protected from persecution. And when the Church gets in bed with the state it is always the Church that is corrupted. And so the Reformation stopped short of going as far as it should have in terms of returning to the Word of God. For example there was no return to the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy during the Reformation period. So, there was a reputation of alive, but it was dead.

Then we come to the Philadelphia Church the alive church from 1700 to 1900 we began-- Christian Churches in Europe began to translate the Bible into many different languages. They began to send missionaries out all over the world. And for the next 200 years the Church grew like it had never grown before.

But as the 20th Century began we moved into that final period the Laodicean period, the Church apathetic. What happened was that the School of German Criticism, Higher Criticism developed. It came across the channel into England, destroyed the Church of England. Then jumped over the Atlantic Ocean into the United States. And today the result of that German School of Higher Criticism is that probably 80% of all the seminaries in America today, if not more than that teach that this Book is not the inspired Word of God, but that this Book is man's search for God, and therefore full of myth, legend, and superstition. And we are going right down the same path in this country that occurred in England. We are about 100 years behind them but we are right in the path of the Church becoming more, and more apostate because we have an apathetic Church enamored with its own importance and bored to death by the call to evangelism.

Well the best summary of these letters I've ever read in my life was a summary I found written by John Stott the great British Evangelical. He wrote a book called, "An Introduction to the New Testament." And when he got to the book of Revelation he summed up these letters in three statements, the best summary I've ever seen. He said, "Here's what Jesus was saying to the Church: To a sinful church: I know: Repent! To a doubtful Church: I have conquered: Believe! And to a faithful church: I am coming soon: Endure!" Three summary words: repent, believe, endure. That pretty well sums up the seven letters to the seven churches.

The suffering Church in 95 AD desperately needed a second touch from the risen Lord Jesus Christ. And these letters made it a point that He knew about their plight, and He was concerned about their plight, that He cared for them. They also drove home the fact that He was going to be faithful to that promise He made, that the gates of Hades will not prevail against my Church. The Church will survive. The Church will be victorious.

That brings us to chapter 4 and 5. At this point in the book of Revelation John saw a door open in Heaven and he was raptured up to the very Throne Room of God. One of the most glorious visions in all the book of Revelation. Just as he was taken out of this world before being given the vision of the Great Tribulation. I think that we can view his snatching away as symbolic of the Rapture of the Church before the Tribulation begins. John begins to describe the Throne Room of God as one of constant worship. He points out that the throne itself is circled by a rainbow to symbolize God's faithfulness. And the throne is one of blazing light to symbolize God's holiness. There are 24 elders who appear to symbolize the raptured Church. There are seven lamps of fire that represent the seven fold nature of the Holy Spirit. There are four living creatures that represent all of God's creation. And there was a host of angels involved in never ending worship. All of heaven sings, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty who was, and who is, and who is to come." Notice holy, holy, holy, an affirmation of the Trinity. Holy, holy, holy the Lord God. And the emphasis here is on His holiness, on the fact that He is all powerful. And on the fact that He is the eternal God who has always existed and always will. And John is simply dazzled by this scenery.

But suddenly, suddenly he notices a scroll in the right hand of God and he becomes obsessed with it because he recognizes it as the Title Deed to the earth. John knows that this earth was created for man. But he also knows that man lost his dominion over this earth when he sinned and Satan stole that dominion. John is then told there is only one person in all the universe who is qualified to open that scroll and reclaim man's dominion over this earth and that person is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And when John turns to look at the Lion he sees instead a bloody

Lamb with seven horns, and seven eyes, representing perfect wisdom and perfect power. And John realizes that the Lamb and the Lion are symbols of Jesus who came first as a suffering Lamb and will return as a conquering Lion. At this point Jesus suddenly steps up, takes the scroll from God's hand. And when this happens all of heaven breaks forth in celebration singing these words, "Worthy are You," speaking of Jesus. "Worthy are You to take the scroll and to break its seals for You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation and You have made them to be a kingdom and priest to our God. And they," you and I, "will reign upon the earth." Oh, what a day that's going to be when we reign with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: At that point in my presentation I launched into a survey of the Tribulation of seven years when God is going to pour out His wrath on those who have rejected His grace and mercy. He is also going to destroy the kingdom of the Antichrist during that time. Let's pick up now the story in chapter 19 with the return of Jesus.

Which brings us to the glorious climax of the Book of Revelation and chapters 19 and 20 when Jesus returns. The Antichrist himself, and his false prophet are in Israel in the Valley of Armageddon with a vast army. I think waiting to battle the rebel armies of Asia. It is at this moment that Jesus breaks from the heavens, returning to earth with the Church and His angels. Yes, I said with the Church. Let me tell you something folks I believe with all my heart on the day that Jesus Christ returns we will be with Him. We will be there as glorified Saints, 100's of millions of us hovering in the heavens on the ground. He was there once before. He was there once before. He got on a donkey. He rode down the Kidron Valley. It was filled with people, filled with people. They had heard about this miracle worker who had resurrected Lazarus from the dead. And they waved palm branches and they cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna to the Son of God." And a week later the same crowd, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" But He is going to relive that moment. He is coming back to the Mount of Olives. He's coming with you and me. When His foot touches that mountain we are going to see it break in half. We are going to see Him ride down that Kidron Valley once again this time on a white war charger, the symbol of a victorious general. He is going to ride up to that Eastern Gate in Psalm 24 it says that when He rides up the gate, the gate is going to cry out, "Come on in King of Glory." And it is going to blow open and He is going to go up on that Temple Mount and He is going to be coroneted King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And we are going to be there to shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna to the Son of God." What a day that's going to be. I can hardly wait. Oh, my what a day it's going to be.

Jesus is coming. He is coming as King of Kings. He is coming as Lord of Lords. And all the armies of Armageddon are going to be destroyed in a moment. There really is no Battle of Armageddon. He doesn't send an army out against the Antichrist and his armies. It says He speaks a supernatural word, and when He speaks it. It says, "The eyeballs melt in their sockets. The tongues melt in their mouth. Their skin falls from their bodies." There is no wonder that that valley is going to be filled with blood to the horses bridle for a period of 200 miles because the people are going to be instantly destroyed. Jesus doesn't fight anybody. He simply speaks the word. Remember this is the one who spoke the word and the whole universe came into existence. And He will speak the word and the Antichrist will be destroyed.

At that point the Lord is going to proceed to put the Antichrist and the False Prophet into the Lake of Fire, which is Hell. And Jesus will proceed to take Satan and bind him in a pit for 1,000 years. And at that point Jesus will judge all those who are left alive at the end of the Tribulation;

all of those who live to the end of that period will be judged. They will be judged to whether or not they have accepted Him as Lord and Savior, and are therefore eligible to enter into the Millennium in the flesh. Most will not, but there will be those who will enter the Millennium in the flesh. And from that small group the population of the world will begin to grow once again, because we are told in the book of Isaiah that during the Millennium people's life spans are going to returned to what they were at the beginning of time. It says people will live as long as a tree. I think most people who go into the Millennium in the flesh will live the entire period of the Millennium. The Lord will then establish His worldwide reign. He will reign from Mount Zion in Jerusalem. And the redeemed, you and I in our glorified bodies are going to be scattered all over this world to reign with Him over those in the flesh. The world will be flooded with peace, righteousness, and justice.

I love this artist idea of what the Millennial Kingdom is like. We are told that when Jesus comes back the greatest earthquake in history is going to occur. It says every mountain will be lowered, every valley will be lifted up. The plain of the earth is going to be level. It says every island will be moved. It says the city of Jerusalem will be lifted up and the implication is it is going to be the highest point on planet earth. The City of Jerusalem is lifted up. The glory of Jesus Christ is emanating from that as He reigns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all the earth. The peoples of the earth are going there to worship the King. On the left you've got a man beating swords into plowshares. In the middle you've got the wolf lying down with lamb. On the right you've got a little boy playing with a cobra because no longer are they poisonous. Nature is redeemed. The wolf as I say lies down with the lamb. The lion eats straw with the ox. Children play with cobras. There is perfect peace within all of God's kingdom between man and between the animal kingdom.

At the end of that 1,000 years Satan is going to be released and he is going to successfully tempt many of those in the flesh to join him in revolting against the reign of Jesus Christ. I've often had people say, "How can that be? How can you live for a 1,000 years in perfect peace, righteousness, and justice under Jesus Christ and then revolt at the end?" Well folks, have you ever stopped to think what it would be like to live in the flesh under the rule of the rod of iron? All those in the flesh are still going to be in the flesh, they are still going to have all those fleshly desires. They are going to have a little promiscuous sex over here, and some booze over here, and some gambling over here and all of this sort of thing. But they are going to know that justice will be swift and it will be sure. He is going to rule with a rod of iron. You step out of line, you are arrested. You are taken before a judge in a glorified body. He gives a decision and there is no appeal because the decision is perfect, justice is swift, justice is certain. And so what happens is that those who have that rebellious spirit are saying all through that period of time, "We love you Jesus," while gritting their teeth. But at the end Satan is going to pull that rebellion out, and say, "Let's got get that joker in Jerusalem." And the sad thing is that after 1,000 years of perfect peace, righteousness and justice the majority of those probably in the flesh, probably the majority are going to rebel against the Lord Jesus Christ and march on Jerusalem to destroy the City of Jerusalem. It is going to prove, what God is going to do here is He is going to prove once and for all that humanism is false. Humanism teaches that man is basically good. The Bible says no. Humanism teaches that man can be perfected with education and with the proper social environment. All you've got to do is give a man a guaranteed job and a nice home, and a nice car and you will revolutionize him. No, you don't. The only way you can change human nature is you've got to have the Holy Spirit residing inside of you. And God is going to show that one last time. Let me tell you we are going in cycle here. History begins with two people in a perfect society and they rebel against God. It ends with all of humanity in a perfect society and they rise up and rebel against God. Man hasn't changed one bit. Satan and his rebels are going to be defeated. Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire to be tormented forever, together with his

demonic hordes, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. And at this point the redeemed, you and I we are going to be removed from this earth. We are going to be put in that New Jerusalem that Jesus is preparing for His Saints right now. And then I think we are from that point are going to watch some events. I think we are going to see this one, all the redeemed who have died outside of a faith relationship with God are going to be resurrected and they are going to be judged at what the Bible calls the Great White Throne Judgment. I think we'll watch that judgment. And each one of them will step before the Lord and they will be judged of their works to determine their eternal destiny. And since no one can be justified by works all of them will be condemned to Hell. It is a judgment of the damned, as people try to justify themselves by their works to cover their sins.

This brings us to chapters 21 and 22 the eternal state. At that point when the Great White Throne Judgment is finished God is going to consume this earth with fire and all the pollution of Satan's last revolt is going to be burned away. And out of that fiery inferno is going to come a new earth, a perfected earth. Oh, my it is going to be so wonderful. We are told that we will then be lowered down to this earth, to this new earth. We will be lowered down inside that New Jerusalem, and God Himself will come down to earth to live among us. We always think about going to Heaven and living with God forever, the Bible doesn't teach that. It teaches God comes to earth and He lives among us forever, and we live in glorified bodies on a new earth in the presence of Almighty God. We are going to have intimate fellowship with our Creator forever, and ever. It says we will see the face of God. That's intimacy. I can hardly wait.

Well, what is the message of the Book of Revelation? The message is summed up at the very beginning of the book in chapter 1 verse 7, "Behold He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so amen." And this message is reaffirmed at the end of the book. In chapter 22 verse 20 were the last words of Jesus spoken on this earth are, "Behold, I am coming quickly and my reward is with me to render to every man according to what he has done." Those words were spoken by Jesus 2,000 years ago on the Isle of Patmos. But keep in mind that to the Lord a 1,000 years is like a day. As God sees time those words were spoken two days ago.

And as we await the Lord's return the book of Revelation tells us there are four things that we are to do. So use this is a spiritual mirror and see if you are doing these four things as you wait for the coming of the Lord. First obey. "Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book." Not just the one who reads it but the one who heeds it. Are you obeying? We are to live our lives in obedience to the Lord. Jesus is to be Lord of everything in our lives. I often tell people the Holy Spirit today is calling us to commit our lives to holiness. That sounds so theological. In practical terms here's what it means go home and sit down take a piece of paper draw a line down the middle and list all the activities of your life on the left side. What I eat. What I drink. What I watch on television. The movies I go to see. The music I listen to. The vacation places I go to. Just everything. And on the other side write whether or not Jesus is Lord of that? Is He Lord of your music? Is He Lord of your TV? Is He Lord of your movies? Because you are going to find some things that He's not Lord of. It is a daily struggle. But that is what holiness is all about, making Jesus Lord of everything in your life, and that is what this is talking about.

Number two we are to worship. As you heed the words of this book worship God we are told. And let me tell you something folks, that means more than just the celebratory type of congregational worship that we have been having here as we have sung along with this wonderful quartet and listen to them sing. As we go to church and we are involved in great worship services. Yes, it means that but it means more than that because the ultimate worship

according to the Bible is what you do after you leave there and how you serve the Lord with the spiritual gifts that He's given you. That is the greatest worship of all.

And then we are told to yearn. Let the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." We are to live with an eternal perspective looking for the return of Jesus and committing ourselves to holiness and to evangelism. In fact did you know that we are told in 2 Timothy chapter 4 that those who live yearning for the coming of Jesus, anyone who lives for the yearning for the coming of Jesus will receive a special crown at the Judgment Seat of Jesus called the Crown of Righteousness, a crown that you can take and put right back at His feet. I hope you are eligible for that particular crown.

And finally we are told to protect. Do not add or take away from the words of this Book. We are in an age where people are clipping the Book right and left. They are clipping out every Scripture they don't like. We are in an age of the grossest apostasy in the history of the Church. We need to stand for the Word of God as we have never stood for it before. Speaking out boldly when those twisted and those pervert it. And we need to stand for what it says, its literal interpretation.

To conclude let me say that the overall message of Revelation is one of encouragement. The message is that God is on the throne. He's in control. He has the wisdom, and the power to orchestrate all the evil of mankind to the triumph of Jesus Christ. Let me summarize it in this way: God is in control. Satan is doomed. Jesus is destined to triumph. And you and I the redeemed have the promise that we will rule with Jesus over a world that is flooded with peace, righteousness, and justice. In other words folks, the message of the Book of Revelation is we win in the end. And all I can say in response is Hallelujah, and Maranatha, come quickly Lord Jesus. Praise the Lord.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: That's our program for this week. I hope you will be back with us again next week, the Lord willing. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near!"