A Look from the Lamb's Point of View

Overview of Revelation Chapters 1-3

This is not a typical midweek message. It is an update of what is going on in Bible Study for the 24-25 study year, every Tuesday at 11 am at New Deliverance.

The Book of Revelation is complex because of all of its symbolism. It is a book of hope and assurance that God will take care of you. It is a book that announces to all who would listen that it does not matter what is going on in the world, God is in control. God has the final word.

As you read Revelation, I want you to shift your thinking from God punishing humanity to God correcting humanity. God is about restoring, and reconciling the world.

God's Actions Are Corrective, Not Punitive

Why do I say this? I say it because perfect love does not punish. Perfect love corrects. The actions of the Lamb of God are about drawing humanity back to Him not causing them to suffer.

What happens to humanity are the consequences of their choices. The judgments, the trumpets, and the seals are the natural result of humanity rejecting God's ways. These events are a wake-up call, an invitation to return and come back.

If we consider Romans 1:24-28, God gives humanity over to its desires. This is God respecting their choices, even when their choices lead to destruction.

These seals, judgments, and trumpets are symbols of what is going to happen. This is not something that is taking place. We have for so long read these symbols as realistic events that take place and it has obscured our ability to understand the Book of Revelation.

These events are symbols of God saying there will be consequences for those who oppress my people as well as for those who fail to be reconciled.

The reason why punishment does not fit is because punishment implies retribution. It suggests that God acts out of anger or has some moral ledger to even the scales. Perfect love does not look for the scales to be balanced. Perfect is the balance in and of itself. There is nothing better or more complete than perfect love. The Lamb of God is focused on

restoration and reconciliation. These seals, trumpets, and judgments are symbolic of what it will be and feel like to be separated from God.

Below is an overview of the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation. It will hopefully give you a basis from which to view it. I hope you can begin to see Revelation as a book of hope and assurance of God's presence in our lives.

Revelation 1: The Vision of the Glorified Christ

Each church receives a personal message from Jesus, offering praise, correction, and promises of reward.

- **Author and Audience:** The apostle John writes Revelation while exiled on the island of Patmos. He addresses the seven churches in Asia Minor.
- **The Setting:** On the Lord's Day, John is "in the Spirit" and receives a vision of Jesus Christ.
- **The Vision:** John sees Jesus glorified—His hair white as snow, eyes like flames of fire, and His voice like rushing waters. He holds seven stars in His right hand and walks among seven golden lampstands.
- **The Message:** Jesus commands John to write what he sees, addressing the present and future. The lampstands symbolize the seven churches, and the stars represent their messengers (likely pastors or angels).

Revelation 2-3: Letters to the Seven Churches

1. **Ephesus: The Loveless Church (Rev. 2:1–7)**

- **Commendation:** Hard work, perseverance, and rejection of false apostles.
- **Rebuke:** They have abandoned their first love.
- **Exhortation:** Repent and do the works they did at first, or their lampstand will be removed.
- **Promise:** To the overcomer, Jesus will grant access to the tree of life.

2. **Smyrna: The Persecuted Church (Rev. 2:8–11)**

- **Commendation:** Faithfulness in the face of poverty and slander.
- **No Rebuke:** Jesus offers encouragement instead of correction.
- **Exhortation:** Be faithful unto death, and they will receive the crown of life.

- **Promise:** Overcomers will not be hurt by the second death.

3. **Pergamum: The Compromising Church (Rev. 2:12–17)**

- **Commendation:** Faithfulness to Jesus' name despite living where Satan's throne is.
- **Rebuke:** Tolerating false teaching (like Balaam's and Nicolaitans' teachings) that leads to idolatry and immorality.
- **Exhortation:** Repent, or Jesus will come to fight against them with the sword of His mouth.
- **Promise:** Overcomers will receive hidden manna and a white stone with a new name.

4. **Thyatira: The Corrupt Church (Rev. 2:18–29)**

- **Commendation:** Love, faith, service, and patient endurance.
- **Rebuke:** Tolerating Jezebel, a false prophetess leading others into immorality and idolatry.
- **Exhortation:** Hold fast to what they have until Jesus comes.
- **Promise:** Overcomers will have authority over nations and the morning star.

5. **Sardis: The Dead Church (Rev. 3:1–6)**

- **Rebuke:** They have a reputation for being alive but are spiritually dead.
- **Exhortation:** Wake up, strengthen what remains, and repent.
- **Promise:** Overcomers will be clothed in white garments and have their names in the book of life.

6. **Philadelphia: The Faithful Church (Rev. 3:7–13)**

- **Commendation:** They have little strength but have kept Jesus' word and not denied His name.
- **No Rebuke:** They receive encouragement and promises.
- **Exhortation:** Hold fast to what they have so no one takes their crown.
- **Promise:** Overcomers will be pillars in God's temple and will bear His name.

7. **Laodicea: The Lukewarm Church (Rev. 3:14–22)**

- **Rebuke:** They are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—and self-satisfied in their wealth, yet spiritually poor, blind, and naked.
- **Exhortation:** Repent and be zealous. Jesus is knocking at the door, ready to fellowship with those who open.
- **Promise:** Overcomers will sit with Jesus on His throne.

Summary of Key Themes

1. **Christ's Sovereignty:** Jesus is actively involved in His churches, correcting and guiding them.
2. **Call to Repentance:** Each letter urges believers to return to faithfulness and overcome challenges.
3. **Promises to Overcomers:** Jesus offers eternal rewards for those who remain faithful.
4. **Spiritual Discernment:** Each church is called to recognize its spiritual condition and respond to Jesus' call.

I pray you will use this overview as you study the Word of God.

Happy Thanksgiving from my family to yours!

Blessings,
Pastor Gool