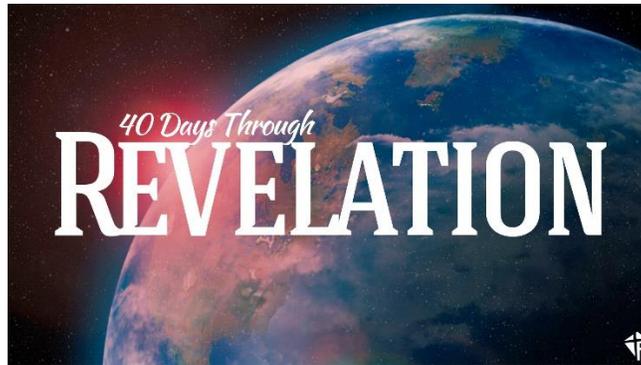


FELLOWSHIP NOTES ~ Sunday, November 15th, 2020



Part 1: “Why Study the Book of Revelation?”

Revelation 1 - 3

2020 has been a wacky year amen? And it isn’t over yet! We’ve seen a lot of things that none of us have ever seen in our lifetimes.

Our witness to history unfolding before us is therefore causing a lot of people to ask a lot of interesting questions – especially questions that relate to future prophetic events found in the Bible, specifically the book of Revelation.

(Slide) “Ask a Pastor”

Today’s Question:

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*Are microchips, vaccines, real ID’s etc.,
the mark of the beast?*

Can your salvation be forfeited by taking the mark unknowingly?

Answer: Revelation 14:9-11; Info. Sheet in the tower at the Welcome Center

Jan Markell has studied prophecy for many years. She has a radio and internet ministry called Understanding the Times. She's on 940 am every Saturday morning.

In her ministry's recent newsletter they highlight some of the top prophecy-related stories of 2020.

(By the way, you can get a copy of the newsletter in the tower at the Welcome Center in the lobby.)

These include:

- 1.) The Decline of America – I spoke to you several weeks ago about the absence of the United States in biblical prophecy.**

Since America is as of today a staunch defender of Israel and during the second half of the Tribulation Israel will have no nation coming alongside to defend her, it begs the question: What happens to America?

I highlighted one probable answer to that question: The moral collapse and implosion of our nation as a world power.

In 2020 we seen capitalism come under attack, as well as socialism and globalism and even Marxism trumpeted as viable solutions to our nation's challenges. Any one of these ideologies will leave our nation in ruins.

Here' a second prophecy-like development this year...

2.) Throughout the book of Revelation, as we're going to see, we see prescribed for the future in our world lawlessness like never before. Jesus also talked about this in Matthew 24.

And this year here in America and around the world we've seen an increase in public lawlessness like few of us have ever seen. We've witnessed violence and looting and mayhem in record levels.

These things are a foreshadow of the coming lawlessness during the tribulation.

3.) This year we've also seen peace deals being brokered with Israel. This is also a foreshadow of the coming peace treaty that the Antichrist is going to make with Israel at the start of the tribulation.

4.) End-times events in Revelation and as described by Jesus, include great natural disasters, diseases, destruction and death. We've seen a lot of that this year and it continues happening right now.

Again, these global catastrophes foreshadow the coming events detailed in Revelation about the tribulation. The stage is being set.

5.) The Bible predicts that in the final generations of the human on earth culture will decline morally, evil will rise and be called good and good will be decried as evil. We've seen this moral decline in 2020 in new ways.

Sin is celebrated in our land and around the world. Internet movie sites are honoring sins like pedophilia with movies like Cuties. In California they've passed pro-pedophilia legislation, removing felony status for sex with minors.

A thousand more illustrations of the moral decline of our culture and world could be given, but what we're seeing is the kind of immorality outlined in Romans chapter 1 and 2 Timothy 3.

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"But know this: Hard times will come in the last days. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, demeaning, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people."

2 Timothy 3:1-5

Again, our moral decline is a foreshadow of the great moral decline that is coming and is closer than we might think.

Finally,

6.) 2 Thessalonians 2 says that in the end times people will believe a strong delusion because of their refusal to accept and love the truth.

In 2020 we've seen countless examples of people refusing to accept and love truth and therefore be easily led astray into believing what is false.

Who would ever imagine that there would be a call to abolish or defund our law-enforcement community like we've seen this year? Or the claim that the entire country is racist?

When truth is abandoned people will believe anything and that is what we're witnessing more of and again, it's just a foreshadow of end-times events.

In 2020 prophetic-like events like these and more have risen and raised a lot of questions. And it's not just the events themselves, but the speed of how they've risen.

How fast did our lives change when in the middle of March everyone was told to stay home? Malls closed, restaurants, schools, every type of service imaginable become inaccessible at the drop of a hat!

How fast did the grocery store shelves become empty – especially the toilet paper aisle? How fast did transportation, entertainment, many types of business, and government services shut down? It was incredible!

Hollywood became nonessential – Praise the Lord! But so did church in the eyes of the world and even in the eyes of some Christians and it's still that way for many across our nation.

Now we have a better understanding why the Bible often relates the speed of end-times events. When events begin happening, they will come with amazing speed upon the world. And that's easier to believe now.

The word "quickly" is found 8 times in the book of Revelation emphasizing the sudden nature of end-time events. Over in 1 Thessalonians 5 it's emphasized there as well...

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"For you yourselves know that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!', then sudden destruction will come upon them like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape."

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

So truly there's good reason to study the book of Revelation. But there's more reason to make it a priority to study this book.

First, let me say that this is not going to be an exhaustive message series on the book of Revelation – it's an overview. For you to get the most out of this message series and the study of Revelation then it's important for you to take the time to read and study during the week – using the book we've made available to you.

And please, I encourage you to do this: whatever you're used to spending time reading or whatever time you're used to spending on facebook or on social media, or doing other things in your spare time, during this 40 days,

adjust that time and devote yourself to reading and studying the book of Revelation.

I can't cover it all in just 6 messages and the best way to absorb the truth of God's Word is for you to immerse yourself in it in reading and studying it, so that is my challenge to you.

We all have 24 hours in a day, let's use them wisely or we will certainly miss out on the blessings God is ready and willing to grant each of us and our church family when we devote ourselves to his Word, especially the book of Revelation.

And that's another reason to conduct this study – because of the promise of blessing that God has given to those will undertake such a study.

Look at Revelation 1:3 and 22:7. READ

Notice 3 words here in 1:3: read, hear and keep

The promise has qualifications. If you want to appropriate the promise of God of being blessed, it requires reading Revelation, hearing Revelation and keeping (following, obeying) Revelation.

And notice the change in the wording in 1:3. "The ONE who reads (singular), THOSE who hear...and keep." (plural)

This picture here is of a first-century church service where they would publicly read the Scriptures as part of the service. Since most local churches only had one copy of the Scriptures –

Because of the difficulty of manually handwriting copies - this was an important element in the service because everyone needed to know what God was saying to them.

So the pastor would read the Scripture in the worship service since he was the only one who had a copy of the Word and it was the expectation that those in the service would listen and in response, obey it!

Reading, hearing and obeying the Scriptures was not only their practice it was their way of life, and it should be our way of life as well.

Things are different now. Thanks to modern technology and the advancement in Bible translations – we all possess a copy of the Bible – most of us multiple copies.

So now it becomes our personal responsibility to not only listen to the Word when it preached here on Sundays, but on our own read the Word ourselves and obey it Word as a way of life.

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“But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was.

“But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works – this person will be blessed in what he does.”

James 1:22-25

Have you ever noticed that It’s so easy to read and hear – but not really listen. Have you ever been reading a book – dare I say even the Bible – and you can read a whole page and at the same time be thinking about something else. (What you have to do that day; the ballgame, etc.)

Then you come to your senses and you look back over that page and you realize that while you read it, you didn’t hear it. You absorbed nothing of what was said on that page that you just finished reading. I’ve done that!!!

This is the danger we must avoid with God’s Word and especially the book of Revelation. Only in hearing with our ears AND our minds will we be able to obey it and receive God’s blessing.

Only in hearing with our ears AND our hearts in tune with the Spirit of God will we be able to comprehend the mysteries of God found in the book of Revelation and how they impact our lives today in applying it to our daily living.

And this is all important because of what the last line of the verse says: “because the time is near.” The word “time” here isn’t referring to time on a clock; it’s not referring to the chronology of time.

The word means seasons or eras or epochs of time. We are living in the church age today... but the next great era of time in God's redemptive plan for the world is NEAR.

The second coming of Christ is near and since that's true it's important that we – the followers of Christ – take seriously the calling that is ours as the people of God to live on obedience to Christ and His Word.

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“And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:24-25

“The end of all things is near; therefore, be alert and sober-minded for prayer. Above all, maintain constant love for one another since love covers a multitude of sins.”

1 Peter 4:7-8

According to God – not what I think or you think or anyone else thinks – the end of all things is near. Time is short. That's why we NEED to study the book of Revelation. It's not an option. We NEED to know what it says.

We need to read it and hear it and obey it, not only for the sake of being blessed, but because God says He wants us live in a state of readiness for His Son to return.

Chapter 3:1 is our memory verse for this week, let's say it out loud together...

(Slide)

"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near."

Revelation 1:3

Now before we read Revelation 1-3 together let me make something abundantly clear about Revelation: the central figure in the book of Revelation is not Satan, or the Antichrist or the False Prophet or anyone else.

The central theme of the book is not judgment or heaven or eternity. The focus of the book is not what happens on the earth, what happens during the tribulation, or even the events of the millennium and beyond.

The central figure of Revelation is Jesus. The central theme of Revelation is Jesus. The focus of the book of Revelation is on and is all about Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus – you can write that down!!!

As we study through the book in the next 33 days, keep your eyes on Jesus. The book begins in chapter 1, verse 1 with Jesus. He's the one who does the vast majority of the talking in the opening chapters.

He's the one who is worshiped over and over and over again in Revelation. He's the one who judges every human being who's ever lived or will live.

He's the one who defeats all foes to His kingdom – Satan, the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and all world leaders and nations.

He's the one who rewards the faithful. He's the one who is returning in power and glory and will be the talk of the world.

He's the one who will establish a world-wide kingdom that will last longer than any other kingdom ever has in the history of the world during the millennium.

He's the one who closes the book with the words, "Look, I am coming soon, and my reward is with me to repay each person according to his work." Keep your eyes on Jesus!!!

Watch in a moment when we read chapter 1. There are 24 distinct names and descriptions of Jesus in chapter 1 alone. Watch again as we read chapters 2 & 3. Eight more descriptions are used for a total of 30 descriptions in the first 3 chapters alone.

His name is Jesus (which means Savior)

He is called Christ

The Firstborn and true witness

The Firstborn from the dead

The ruler of the Kings of the earth

Him who loved us and washed us and made us kings and priests

He is coming with clouds

He has a loud voice, like a trumpet

His voice is as the sound of many waters

He is the Alpha

The Omega

The First

The Last

He stands and walks in the midst of the seven lampstands

He is the Son of Man

He is the garment to the feet and has a golden sash around his chest

He head and hair are like white wool and white as snow

He eyes are like a flame of fire

He feet are like fine brass as if refined in a furnace

He has the seven stars in his right hand

His mouth is like a sharp two-edged sword

His countenance is like the sun shining in its strength

He is the one who lives, was dead, and is alive forevermore

He holds the keys to the kingdom and the keys to hades and death

He was dead and came to life

He has the key of David

He is the faithful witness

He is the beginning of the creation of God

He is the Son of God

He is coming quickly

He is the true witness

He is the amen

He is the holy one

And that's just in the first three chapters of Revelation. Overall there are 90 descriptions of Jesus in the book of Revelation.

So, I want to ask you to stand now. And in like-manner to our brothers and sisters in the Lord from the first century who read and listened to the Word of God as part of their worship service, let's do the same.

READ Revelation chapters 1-3. (Be seated)

In chapter 1 we're given the outline for the whole book of Revelation. Look at that verse again – and this outline is on your notes...

Basic Outline of Revelation:

<u>SCRIPTURE:</u>	<u>CHAPTER:</u>	<u>TIMING:</u>
1:19a: "...write what you have seen..."	Chapter 1	The Past (John receiving the Revelation)
1:19b: "...[write] what is..."	Chapters 2-3	The Present Church Age
1:19c: "...[write] what will take place after this..."	Chapters 4-22	Future, end-time events

Now I want you to take particular note of three distinctive similarities in each of the seven letters from Jesus to the churches in chapters 2 & 3.

In each letter Jesus says to the church...

(Slide) 1. "I know"

Jesus knew the spiritual state of each pastor and each congregation that he sent these letters to in John's day. He likewise knows the spiritual state of every local church today.

He knows the spiritual state of every person within in the sound of my voice.

Like these 7 churches in Asia 2,000 years ago did, we may not have a specific letter addressed to Fellowship Community Church from Jesus today informing us of the spiritual state of our church.

But the surest way to begin to get an idea of what Jesus might say to us as a church is by looking in the mirror. Start with yourself. Look deep down inside your own soul – what do you see?

What matters to you? What or who do you love? What do you give your time to? How do you spend your money? How do you talk? Where do you go? What activities make up your life?

What are your passions? Aspirations? Goals in life? What are your priorities? What do you do with the Bible? How do you relate to other brothers and sisters in this church family?

What do you do with the gospel – do you hide it or share it? I'm asking us all this morning, what's the temperature of your soul this morning?

He knew everything about the churches in John's day and He knows everything about our church and each of us today.

Chapter 2 verse 23 says, "...all the churches will know that I am the one who examines minds and hearts and I will give to each of you according to your works."

The second statement in each letter that's worth noting is:

(Slide) 2. “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.”

What does Jesus mean by this statement? He’s telling us that EVERYONE has a responsibility to listen to and take to heart what Jesus says. What He said to these 7 churches in the first century is also applicable to us today.

Every church and every follower of Christ must take note of what Jesus said to the 7 churches – the things He encouraged them for doing, and the things He scolded them for not doing. These apply to us today as well.

In light of these letters we should be asking, What kind of a church are we? Do we possess the positive qualities that Jesus highlighted to the churches?

Do we possess the negative qualities that Jesus condemned and urged them to repent of? What would Jesus say and what is He saying to Fellowship Community Church? This is what I want you to ask God as we continue studying the book of Revelation in the coming weeks.

And the final statement included in each letter to the churches is...

(Slide) 3. “To the one who conquers”. (or “Overcomes”)

“To conquer”: to overcome; to have victory; to defeat

Turn to 1 John 5.

The questions this statement demands of us are what is an overcomer and who is an overcomer? Am I an overcomer? Are you an overcomer? What's it take to be considered in God's eyes an overcomer?

READ 1 John 5:1-5

According to this passage all true believers in Jesus Christ are overcomers. Our faith in Christ makes us overcomers. Ultimately it's not our power that enables us to be overcomers, it's the power of Jesus Christ Himself.

(Slide)

"Be courageous! I have conquered the world."

John 16:33

In John 16:33 Jesus calls Himself an overcomer. Through His death on the cross Jesus overcame Satan and the satanic world system. That victory forms the basis of all believers being overcomers.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:37 (SLIDE)...

"...in all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

The phrase in that verse "more than conquerors" refers to being absolutely, completely victorious. To understand it in a simple way, to absolutely, completely be victorious is when your favorite football wins 72 – 0. That's an absolute, complete victory.

Here's how that applies to us as follower of Christ: In Jesus all believers are invincible and unconquerable so that nothing can ever separate us from God's love – nothing.

(Slide)

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:38-39

Now watch this:

Let me give you 3 things that all born-again followers of Christ have absolute, complete victory over...

(Slide) 1. All believers are overcomers of Satan – 1 John 2:13-14

Satan has no power over that unless you give it to him by laying aside your spiritual armor and living in the flesh instead of the Spirit and thus letting him ride roughshod over you – and he'll do that if you let him. But that's only by you granting him that freedom.

Satan has been already been defeated by Jesus through His death on the cross and because of your faith in Christ and His death on the cross, you likewise are an overcomer of Satan by merit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Slide) 2. All believers are overcomers of death – 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

“When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin in the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

(Slide) 3. All believers are overcomers of the world – 1 John 4:4-5

Through our relationship with Christ all believers are no longer part of the world system, just like Jesus isn’t part of it. We are overcomers of it because we’ve been pulled out of it spiritually.

“He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.”

Colossians 1:13

Now let’s take this back to Revelation. In each of the seven letters to the churches in chapters 2-3, Jesus promised special blessings in the future to ALL who are conquerors - All who are overcomers.

These special blessings are for ALL believers – for all who place their faith in Christ for salvation. If that’s you then here’s what’s coming in the future for you when you get to heaven.

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The Future Blessings for All Overcomers:

Ephesus (Rev. 2:7): Participation in the tree of life – life forever in heaven

Smyrna (Rev. 2:11): The second death (eternal judgment and separation from God) will have no power over you

Pergamum (Rev. 2:17): God's provision for all your needs; admittance to the eternal victory celebration in heaven

Thyatira (Rev. 2:26-28): Reign with Christ in His kingdom with and under His authority; the very presence of Christ himself always with you

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Sardis (Rev. 3:5): Given freedom from sin and the purity and holiness of God; one's name never removed from the book of life; public declaration from Jesus to God and the angels in heaven that you belong to Him

Philadelphia (Rev. 3:12): Absolute eternal security in God's presence shown in you receiving the mark of God's ownership, citizenship in heaven and a new name specific to you

Laodicea (Rev. 3:21): Share Christ's throne and His reign victoriously forever

If you know Christ as your Savior this morning you are NOT a pawn of Satan OR a defeated prisoner of the enemy. You are an overcomer through Jesus Christ.

You stand in spiritual victory, not defeat. You have spiritual authority over the enemy. You possess Christ's conquering power inside you. Satan is a defeated foe, not an enemy to be feared. He has no power over you.

As an overcomer sin has no power over you because it too was defeated at the cross. Death has no power over you because Christ took your death penalty for you. The sting of death and eternal separation from God has been erased forever.

As a conqueror you will be given the eternal blessings granted only to those who believe in Jesus and share in His death and resurrection.

As a child of God, Christ has declared you to be an overcomer, a conqueror, and you stand in victory through your faith in the greatest overcomer of all, the Lord Jesus Christ...

Who Himself is worthy of all our adoration and worship because He alone is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords – to Him be glory and honor and power and praise!!!