

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOD DOING: REVELATION, VISION 6

Vision 6. The 1000 years

A summary so far. This book is written in certain genre - apocalyptic - that uses symbols to convey truth. In this series we are interpreting it symbolically unless it is obviously literal. It is a series of overlapping visions rather than a chronological countdown. It was to bring hope and to a church that was wondering what was happening in the world. We are living in times of great uncertainty. We have pandemics, disasters, climate change, war, economic challenges and as a church in NZ we are becoming in many circles a despised and declining minority. Revelation speaks into such a context. As it has done over the centuries.

First Vision. A scene from heaven where we Jesus opening the scroll that no one else could. This scroll reveals the purposes of humanity. The vision has 4 horsemen, 7 seals. (Not the animal type but like a seal on a jar) and describes the characteristics we should expect in this age - deception, war, inequality, death. We are shown the church suffering, and we see God's judgment. The church, represented by the number 144000 is "marked" set side by God 144,000. She is protected, not from physical harm but from schemes of the evil one

2nd Vision 7 trumpets. God's judgement upon the earth. This judgment is the consequences of human rebellion. The first 4 we see impacting the environment. Land, sea, water, air. As humans have turned their back on God, seen themselves as masters of the universe, rather than guardians of God's creation, we are now reaping the consequences in destruction of species, global warming, loss of sea and water. The 5th trumpet is the release of demonic influence. The 6th is mass killings. Interspersed here was a symbolic picture of the church, represented by Moses and Elijah. She proclaims boldly the gospel while also often appearing to be wiped out. This is an accurate history of the church. The 7th trumpet is the final judgment.

3rd vision We are shown a woman and two beasts. The woman is the church. One beast is state power that can oppress as is the case for many today. The other beast is false religions that deceive. But believers 144000 are marked by God. Who have we given our allegiance to? We overcome these beasts by standing firm in who we are, by sharing our testimony and by self sacrifice

4th Vision 7 bowls which are symbols of judgement, cleansing. They affect people bodies, seas, water, sun, leadership of states, In the 6th bowl we see Satan the dragon and the state combining for some kind of intense persecution of God's people 7th bowl is the final judgment which is a massive earthquake and hail storm God will not allow this world to keep rebelling, and injustice to continue

5th Vision we are introduced to Babylon the great Prostitute. She is a seducer. She stands against the values of God. In the West, we don't face the beast of the oppressive state, but the seduction by the values of Babylon - sexual immorality, materialism and power that hurts the poor. The vision shows Babylon being eventually overthrown by God.

All these visions show us what is happening in the world from the perspective of heaven. We read the media and see wars and mass killings. We are starting to see the impact of the abuse of our environment. We occasionally are horrified by a mass killing which in NZ are few are far between. We are starting to feel the pressure as believers from a secular country, state We are impacted by sickness, and natural disasters We are aware somewhat remotely of extreme poverty and persecution in part of the world. We see the rise of false religions in NZ. We are immersed in a culture that prioritizes materialism and sexual freedom.

We are all aware of these things. Sometimes we just sort of accept them as life or maybe we get angry and feel betrayed and ask why? But what God is saying through these visions is: here is how I see this. I am in control. I will not allow the church to be destroyed. I will bring justice and reveal myself. Don't despair or be seduced. What you are seeing around you is what you should expect. I am showing people they are not gods, and need to repent and turn to me. But you are the church: lampstands giving light into this darkness.

6th vision. This is the one that has caused so much angst over the years. You can make a case for one of 3 views. Pre Millennial 1000 years of God's reign will happen before Christ returns. God takes his people out of the world before a short time of terrible persecution. Then there is 1000 years of God's reign before Jesus return. Post Millennial. Jesus returns, then 1000 years rule on earth, then final judgment. Amillennial view. (the view point this series has been coming from) The 1000 years is a symbolic number like all the other numbers in Revelation. It stands for a complete amount of time. This 1000 years represents the time from Jesus ascension to Jesus return. The years of God's reign is his kingdom here on earth. It is not complete or perfect, but God has established a beach head as it were on this earth.

Revelation 19:11-16 Now this quite clear who this rider is. We had an earlier horse in the first vision who we concluded was not Jesus, but deception. But this is made quite clear to us. The robe dipped in blood, the Title of the Word of God and the king of all kings and the Lord of all lords

Revelation 19:17-21 Reintroduced to the beast, and the false prophet (the second beast) There is a final showdown between the forces of darkness and the people of God. Very clear that that before Jesus comes back there is a time when every forces of state and false religion turn against Christians and the church, wanting to wipe us out. This picture is repeated in 20:7-10.

Revelation 20:1-3 Here we see Satan being bound for 1000 years. Language is very similar to that of Chapter 12. Satan is thrown down to earth. Satan's ability is curtailed for a time. Remember we are seeing this 1000 years as this time we live in. We might think. I don't really see Satan's power curtailed. He seems to be doing very well.

The angel has a key. The key is held by Christ because of his resurrection. He hold the key to life and death. With Jesus



death and resurrection, Satan has only limited power here on earth. Paul says Christ disarmed the spiritual powers through the cross. Col 2:15.

How is Satan bound. He no longer has power over the realm of the dead in the way he did before. He still operates in this world, but now God uses his destructive powers for his purposes. This is a hard to understand but God makes all things work for his good. Satan can no longer deceive the nations, and so the gospel message of salvation is able to take root in peoples hearts. Kingdom is established.

Revelation 20:4-6 Now we see what is called the first resurrection. That is those who have died are with Christ and in some way are given authority to judge. By the first resurrection it means that their souls are resurrected, second resurrection is the physical bodies.

That is when we die, we are with Christ in spirit, but not in body. Phil 1.21-23. To die is to depart and be with the Lord Role as kings and priests is simply an intensification of our role now. We are described as priest, ruling with Christ. The second death holds no power. That is the final judgment. As believers we have nothing to fear from this. The second resurrection is the physical resurrection of our bodies.

Revelation 20:7-10 This describing the same events as before. Gog and Magog: there is lots of speculation that this is Russia. Gog just means king of the northern lands. Magog means the land of Gog. These are referred to in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 37-39 which a parallel prophecies that in Revelation become universal to the church. Gog and Magog are symbols of evil. This is the same picture as before; of forces of darkness surrounding the people of God, city of God – some would see this as literal Jerusalem, but more generally the city of God describes the church. Just as it appears that all is lost, God intervenes and throws Satan into the lake of fire along with the beast and false prophet. Clearly the lake of fire is symbolic because Satan is a spiritual being.

Revelation 20:11-15 Here we see the final judgement. Everyone who has ever lived is judged according to their deeds. Those who are not believers experience this second death, which is eternal separation from God.

What do we get from all of this?

WE know what happens when we die. We are with Christ in spirit, in some way we are co reigning with Christ in the heavenlies. This is the first death and resurrection

We see that God will overcome every evil and falsehood

We see that Satan's power is bound and limited and being used to achieve God's purposes.

We see that before Christ returns there is going to be a short time when Satan is released by God and makes one final effort to totally destroy Christians and the church. When things appear their absolute bleakest, God will decisively intervene.

We see that every person will be accountable for their actions. Revealed. Not to fear this, because as believers our actions are seen through the cross. Paul says that the things that are not of God will be burnt up as it were, like straw, but the good things God will reward us for. Appears there are levels of reward in heaven.

The second death and second resurrection happen after this time of judgement. The second resurrection is when we receive new physical bodies. The second death is the final act of judgement where everyone who has not put their faith in Jesus Christ, will be permanently separated from God.

All of this can seem very abstract and distant from our everyday lives. It can seem like fantasy land. But you only have to see what is happening in the world to see Revelation being played out right before our eyes. Famine, war, death, environment, moral decline As we get older what happens when we die no longer seems like an abstract question but a very real one You only have to suffer some adversity in life, cancer, tragic death, persecution for your faith, to begin to question what is the meaning of it all. Here we see the answers given. This is the big story. The meta story, from God's perspective. It tells us what we should expect in the world

Going to see both God's kingdom established. Both in individual lives and in the world See this as people come to faith, church established, as sexual abuse is exposed, as we start to care for the environment, as we work to fight against disease Never used to be there. This is the kingdom that we are to work towards

But at the same time we should expect to see the demonic at work. Expect to see war and disasters and evil. Picture here is not one of naïve optimism. Society getting better and better and God's kingdom ruling. But it also is not a picture of doom and gloom, that the world will get worse and worse until Christ removes us from it all

It is a picture of both God's kingdom expanding and the forces of darkness at work. But these forces power has been limited. Just before Christ returns Satan will be released for one last assault on earth. Then God will decisively intervene.

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

Does this teaching help explain what happens when you die?

What do you think it means that when it says we rule and reign with Christ?

What evidence do you see of the world improving from 100 years ago? What evidence do you see of the world getting worse from 100 years ago?

If the kingdom is God's rule, how do you see the kingdom expanding in the world?

Do you think the climate issues the world faces are a result of humanities rebellion against God?

How is Satan's power limited?

How do you react to every deed being judged by God? How does this fit with the doctrine of salvation by faith and not by works?

What comfort do you take from this vision?



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS