

THE NEXUS

Future Faith (Part 1)

Text: Revelation 1:1-8

This message was provided by Christ Church of Oak Brook and Love Changes Life, the broadcast ministry at Christ Church of Oak Brook.

I

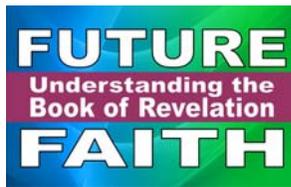
Open the Book of Revelation and you will enter a bizarre and fantastic universe, it seems. You will read of beasts and dragons, of angels and demons, of lions and lambs. You will hear of seals being broken, of trumpets being blown, of the contents of bowls being poured out on earth. Before you get to the last page you'll come across number patterns that make your head spin and violent visions that make one's blood run cold. You may wonder whether you're meeting a writer on some kind of hallucinogen -- or maybe the same power that descended upon Mount Sinai with thunder and smoke, and lasered its will into tablets of stone.

Even those who believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God are divided on how to understand this book. There are those who feel that the book is simply describing in poetic terms particular events and figures native to the end of the first-century, the time when the book was written. There are others who believe that the book describes a long chain of specific events and characters that appear somewhere in time between the first century and the end of history, with all of us living someplace in between. There are also those who conceive of the book as primarily detailing what will happen in the last stage of history, sometime out in a future that we can't fully see. I, for one, hold a different view of the Book of Revelation. I think the Book of Revelation is actually a timeless window into what I would call "the Nexus."

A nexus, of course, is simply a connection-point. About 100 yards from my house there sits a nexus like this. It is a pale green metal box about 3 feet high and 3 feet wide. I have walked my dog past that box nearly every day for more than 2 years now, but a few weeks ago, I happened to go by just as a workman removed its metal cover. With one powerful lift, he unveiled an absolutely mind-numbing array of wires and lights, I never knew were there. The workman explained that I was now looking at the point through which thousands of phone, fax, and internet conversations met and were routed every single minute of every day. He said he was trying to repair a place where the connection had become broken and the line had gone dead.

II

On a scale infinitely more vast and important than that green box, the Book of Revelation is a bit like this. The very word "**Revelation**" literally means "unveiling." In the Revelation, God momentarily draws back the metal box of normal human perception. He gives us a glimpse past the news stories, past the superficial sensory inputs, past the surface circumstances that appear to define reality. He lets us peer into that hitherto hidden realm where all the events and players of history -- past, present, and future -- connect in common conversations and conflicts. Through this Revelation, God seeks to "**show his servants**" a spiritual infrastructure centuries-old, signals and struggles that will only intensify as the lines of human history wind toward their terminus, and which must find their resolution in the One to whom every being must connect or ultimately die.



THE NEXUS

Future Faith (Part 1)

Text: Revelation 1:1-8

This message was provided by Christ Church of Oak Brook and Love Changes Life, the broadcast ministry at Christ Church of Oak Brook.

If there is one over-riding message to the Book of Revelation it is this: Jesus is the supreme Nexus. As chapter 1 verse 8 declares, Christ is the **“Alpha and the Omega”** -- the first and the last letter of the cosmic conversation between God and his creatures we call Life. He is the One **“who is, and was, and is to come,”** the One with Whom the circuit of history and being began, and continues, and finds either a new beginning or a decisive end. As John puts it in his gospel, Christ is the **“Logos,”** the divine Word through which all things were created.¹ It is by His grace the Apostle Paul says we all **“live, and move, and have our being.”**² Human or other kinds of being may roam through their days living “cellular lives,” believing that they are independent entities, but this is not so. No one’s battery lasts forever. Jesus himself says, “Cut off from the Vine, the branches will die.”³

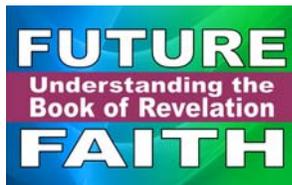
This is the fundamental truth, Christ himself is the fundamental Truth, that connects the members of the Church across time and space. It is not so much the fine-points of our sacramental doctrines, or the music that we use to worship, or the shape of our buildings and programs that unites us. We are truly and finally connected to one another only to the extent that we are connected first and foremost to Jesus.

Take away all the lesser distinctions that mark a particular congregation, if you will. Put a fourth century Coptic Christian from Ethiopia in a room with a Russian Orthodox believer from the 1700’s and a Conservative Chinese Baptist from the 1990’s. Leave these persons alone with only the name of Jesus and a prayer of praise to Him to unite them, and in an hour they will discover a closer connection with one another than a group of college roommates in four years. The closer each one is to Him, the closer they will be to others who are close to Him, because Christ is the Nexus.

III

That is the vision of World Communion, my friends, and it is the vision that permeates the entire Book of Revelation. But it is not *all* there is here. In coming days, we’re going to explore many of the other amazing lines that tie us together in Christ. But let me leave you with the glimpse these first eight verses give us of just a few of the themes that are going to wind back in coming chapters and meet us again and again with ever-deepening wonder and meaning.

Verse 4 reminds us that if we are connected to Christ, then we are people to whom God will send his **“grace”** in the face of life’s gravity and griefs and his **“peace”** in the face of life’s pressure and losses. Some of us need to hear that today. Verse 5 tells us why we can count on him to extend such help to us. It is because **“he loves us.”** I’m not talking about the sort of simple sentimental attachment that might bind us to someone’s heart today and be severed tomorrow. The love of Christ for the people of his church isn’t like a strand of telephone wire that can be cut with an errant spade. No, the love of Christ is like ocean-going communications cable – thick and indestructible, able to cross vast distances and withstand heavy seas.



THE NEXUS

Future Faith (Part 1)

Text: Revelation 1:1-8

This message was provided by Christ Church of Oak Brook and Love Changes Life, the broadcast ministry at Christ Church of Oak Brook.

We know that because of what the rest of verse 5 tells us – that Christ **“has freed us from our sins by his blood.”** The Apostle Paul once said that **“the proof of God’s amazing love for us is this: That while we were still lost in our sin, Christ died for us.”**⁴ Even before we understood how deep our need was, Jesus loved us enough to go to a Cross and pay the penalty of sin so that you and I would not have to. Is there anything we cannot face with a love behind us like that?

But there’s more. Jesus has not simply loved us enough to give his life for us. He has loved us enough to give us an even greater purpose for the life we now have. Verse 6 says that he **“has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father.”** Most people spend their whole lives trying to do something significant with them. But those who are connected to Christ, gain that significance instantly. They become part of a kingdom and ministers of a Lord whose **“glory and power is for ever and ever! Amen.”**

As we come to the Table of that Lord today, the veil lifts again for a moment. Even ordinary bread and wine can become the Nexus for us – a connection to the **Almighty** One who binds us together with gifts of grace and peace... who embraces us with a love that forgives our sins... who invites us to join in the greatest work in the universe. Yes, **“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written.”** And blessed be the name of the Lord.

Amen.

¹ John 1:1-3

² Acts 17:28

³ John 15:5

⁴ Romans 5:8



Christ Church of Oak Brook
Thirty-First & York Road
Oak Brook, Illinois 60523
(630) 654-1882
www.cc-ob.org

at Christ Church of Oak Brook



Broadcast Ministry