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REVELATION

Sword and Scale

Revelation 6:3-6

- I. Come Up for Air
 - a. Book of Revelation is often abandoned after chapter 5
 - i. Seals, Bowl Judgements, Trumpets – application is quite as apparent
 - ii. Come up for air and reorient ourselves
 1. Revelation of Jesus Christ - The word “Revelation” means unveiling—it reveals truth instead of concealing it.
 2. Remember the promise - ***Rev 1:3 "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near."***
 3. Who reads, who hears, and who keeps those things written in it
 4. There is application and instruction throughout the book
 - iii. We’ve been provided a foundation and an outline at the beginning of the book
 1. ***Rev 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty"***
 2. God is sovereign over all of history and will bring it to its fulfillment in Christ.
 3. Outline is provided in ***Rev 1:19 "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."***
 - a. Grounded in history, relevant today, and will be perfectly fulfilled in the future
 - b. Revelation shows that all of human history involves an unseen spiritual war
 - i. There’s no neutral country in this war. There’s no Switzerland
 - ii. The fence belongs to satan
 1. Your allegiance is to Christ and His Kingdom or it is to satan and his
 - iii. God is still in control.
 1. He is even sovereign over the works of satan for his own glory – and He has and will continue to use the works of satan to accomplish His perfect plan
 - c. That is what brings us to chapter 5 and a scroll with writing on both sides
 - i. Scroll is the title deed to the earth – not simply the deed to a landmass – but God’s complete plan of redemption for the earth and all those He will redeem from the clutches of death
 - ii. As John looks at the scroll he notices there are seven seals on it and he weeps
 1. Because a seal is a mark of ownership – as one commentator points out “In the first century, documents were sealed not to prevent their contents from being known, but to say that only the one authorized by the author could open them.”
 2. And there was no one worthy to open the scroll

- d. ***Rev 5: 5 Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Look, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”***
 - i. Of course! The Lion from the tribe of Judah – A lion – a symbol of strength and power and authority
 - ii. John turns, probably expecting to see a mighty warrior – and instead sees one who is like a slaughtered lamb
 - iii. Jesus Christ – who was crucified for our sins – who overcame sin and death by freely giving up His own life
 - 1. Only He is worthy to open the scroll – it belongs to Him and only Him – all things belong to Him
 - 2. That is why we read in ***Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.***

II. The Seals

- a. That takes us into some difficult passages
 - i. As the Lamb opens these seals it is important to view them in light of chapters 4 and 5
 - ii. The Lamb is on the throne – what comes next in Revelation – even in these next few verses – worldly conquest, war, and famine –it is God executing His perfect plan which leads us to the second coming of Christ
- b. That presents us with another challenge – how could a good God not simply allow these things but be the cause of them?
 - i. I think the biblical answer is found in ***Gal 6:7–8 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.***
 - ii. ***Proverbs 1:29–31 They hated knowledge and rejected the fear of the Lord—so they eat the fruit of their own way.***
 - iii. ***Job 4:8 Those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.***
 - iv. ***Jer 2:19 Your wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you.***
 - 1. Back in Genesis 6 – God said “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever,”
 - v. These seals mark the moment where God says I will give mankind what they have wanted – life apart from me
- c. That begins with the first seal
 - i. The false messiah – riding in on a white horse – but with a crown that he has been given
 - ii. And he comes conquering and to conquer
 - 1. At that language of conquest is used to describe the work of the beast throughout Revelation
 - 2. A show of worldly strength – promising peace through an iron fist – salvation through human strength – victory through the might of men
 - 3. But he is a counterfeit, an imposter – he promises peace but as we will see next – war and famine are soon to follow

III. The Already Not Yet

- a. Good place to pause and talk about “what has been, what is, and what is to come”
 - i. Interpretation of Revelation usually falls exclusively into one of these categories

- ii. Preterist (meaning past, these events have already happened, specifically in the 1st Century), Idealist or Symbolic (timeless spiritual drama and should only be used for life lessons), or the futurist view (describes end-times events, prophecy that one day will literally be fulfilled)
 - iii. Which is it? The Word is clear – YES
- b. Birth pains
- i. ***Matt 24: 4 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.***
 - ii. ***Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.***
 - iii. ***1 Thes 5:3 For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.***
 - 1. In the first century, how did the Roman Empire maintain control? Through conquest
 - 2. Their promise – peace and prosperity – but what really followed was slaughter and famine
 - 3. That isn’t simply the story of Rome – the is the story of all of human history and it will continue to intensify until the final battle of Armageddon and the second coming of Jesus Christ
- c. Is that not what preceded Christ’s first coming
- i. People without hope, and a type of Christ, a messiah (lower case m) arrives to save and deliver
 - 1. Moses, Joseph, the Judges, David, the prophets - all imperfect examples – but pointing to a promise fulfilled in the coming of true Messiah
 - 2. Jesus took the disciples through the Old Testament explaining how all these things pointed to Him

Rev 6:3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” 4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill (slay, butcher) one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

IV. The Second and Third Seal

- a. ***it was granted*** – it was given – that is why Jesus teaches in Mark 13:7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled
 - i. The peace of this world is fragile. Where Christ is rejected, conflict follows.
 - ii. First seal was nation against nation, the second seal is brother against brother – civil war
 - 1. He has a sword but never has to use it – men murder each other
 - iii. Where Christ is rejected, the love of others is abandoned

1. We know the end days will be marked by a love for self above all else – 2 Timothy 3 – But know this, that in the last days men will be lovers of themselves
 2. James asks “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain.”
 3. Where does war and bloodshed come from – our hearts – war doesn’t start as a global issue – it’s a personal issue
 4. When we reject the Prince of Peace and the author of true self-sacrificial love all that is left is pride, envy, and covetousness
 5. Where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there
- iv. Again, this is the culmination of what already lives in the heart of men
1. What comes after a global fight for resources?

5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”

- b. A full day’s wages only buys enough food for a single person
 - i. The beast promises abundance, but those who follow him find themselves destitute, starving – hungry with nothing to satisfy
 1. Who suffers the most? The poor – as one commentator points out - it may mean that the necessities of life for the poor will be in short supply while the luxuries of the rich will not cease
 2. At this point what are the wealthy thinking? They think they can continue to hide behind their riches – but God’s judgement is only beginning

V. Application

- a. All modern day false messiahs are simply the beast in disguise
 - i. Anything we trust for salvation, for deliverance, anything we place our hope in for purpose and satisfaction apart from Christ will lead us into a life conflict and destitution
 1. Always striving, always fighting – trying to acquire something that satisfies only to be left feeling empty
- b. We become like that which we worship – there is a reason the anti-christ is referred to as the beast
 - i. Those who reject Christ and follow the ways of the beast become beastly – begin to look more like an animal than a man or a woman created in the image of God
 - ii. That is the enemy’s goal – strip away our identity – steal what God designed us to be
- c. There is still time to look upon the lamb that was slain – to look to the cross of Jesus Christ for redemption
 - i. Before He returns as the mighty Lion of Judah