**Revelation 1:1-9**

I. Why study Revelation?

A. “Blessed are those who hear and take to heart” (v. 3)

B. While it is confusing and there are many different interpretations, there are many point of agreement, and we will focus on those as much as possible

C. While at first glance it might seem irrelevant to daily life, it is incredibly relevant to daily life. John did not write Revelation simply to satisfy our curiosity about the future; he wrote it to change the way we live today.

II. What is the context of Revelation?

A. suffering (v. 9)

1. Greek word “thlipsis” = pressure

2. These 7 churches in Asia minor were experiencing the pressure of following Jesus in the Roman Empire. Roman subjects were increasingly being pressured to acknowledge that Caesar is Lord.

 a. Some churches were experiencing outright persecution

 -John was on the island of Patmos in exile

 -Others were being slandered, imprisoned, and killed (ch. 2-3)

-Today: Christians around the world are experience persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ

b. Others were simply feeling the pressure to compromise and conform
 -Today: We all feel the pressure of the culture to conform to its

vision of reality (what beauty is, what truth is, what sex is, what

success is, etc.)

B. kingdom (v. 9)

1. Revelation is a vision of God’s coming kingdom which began at Jesus’ death and resurrection and will come in its fullness at his second coming

 2. Revelation is a vision of the King

 a. the central image is an image of a throne in heaven

b. Revelation reminds us that God is on the throne directing the course of history and directing the details of our lives to his good end

C. patient endurance (v. 9)

1. In light of the persecution and God’s coming kingdom, the call of Revelation is to stay faithful to Jesus no matter what

2. To those Christians experiencing persecution, this would be a note of comfort and encouragement

 3. To those Christians tempted to compromise, this would be a note of warning

III. What kind of a thing is Revelation

 A. Revelation is a letter (v. 4)

1. A circular letter to 7 churches (see v. 11) intended to be read out loud during their church service

2. This means Revelation was written primarily for them not for us. When John wrote, he wasn’t writing for Christians thousands of years later, he is writing as a pastor to those churches to encourage and challenge them in their context.

3. So our first place to go to understand Revelation’s images won’t be our modern newspapers, but first to the Old Testament and then to the first century context.

 B. Revelation is a prophecy (v. 3)

1. The prophets primary role is to be a truth teller who makes God’s truth (which may be hidden or unclear to people) clear

2. “Revelation” (v. 1) is the Greek word “apocalypse” which means “to uncover or unveil.” Revelation unveils the truth about 1) the unseen realities of the future and 2) the unseen realities of the present.

C. Revelation is an apocalyptic prophecy whose truth comes to us in powerful visual images (lambs, dragons, beasts, brides, whores, earthquakes, streets of gold, etc.) Why all these images?

1. Jesus is not just trying to engage our intellect, but also our imagination, and images have the power to do that like nothing else

2. Richard Bauckham: “Revelation’s readers in the great cities of the province of Asia were constantly confronted with powerful images of the Roman vision of the world. Civic and religious architecture, statues, rituals and festivals all provided powerful visual impressions of Roman imperial power and of the splendor of pagan religion. In this context, Revelation provides a set of Christian counter-images which impress on its readers a different vision of the world: how it looks from heaven. The visual power of the book effects a kind of purging of the Christian imagination, giving it an alternative vision of how the world is and will be.”

3. Every day (especially in this visual age) we are confronted with images that communicate a vision of the world, and these images shape our imaginations and grab hold of our hearts. What we need is a set of Christian images that capture our hearts so that our vision of God dominates our daily life

4. Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Revelation is all about being transformed through these images

IV. Conclusion

A. “My goal is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable”

B. There are places in our lives where we are suffering and need to be comforted and encouraged, and no other book has power to do that like Revelation

C. There are places in our lives where we have compromised and need to be woken up, and no other book has power to wake us up like Revelation

**Discussion Questions**

1. What has your experience/exposure been with the book of Revelation? Share about any Bible study or sermon series on Revelation you’ve been through previously. What do you remember most from that experience?

2. Consider the following statements made during Sunday’s message: “John did not write Revelation to satisfy our curiosity about the future; he wrote it to change the way we live today.” And, “Revelation is a letter written to a specific group of people in the 1st century. That means the first place we’ll go in order to understand the images of Revelation will not be our 21st century newspapers, but rather the Old Testament and the first century.” How do those statements square with your previous understanding of Revelation?

3. The context in which Revelation is written is persecution (or pressure), and we talked about the way the culture can pressure us to fit into its mold and buy into its values and assumptions about what is true, important, beautiful, successful, etc. Where are you currently feeling the “squeeze” of culture pressuring you to conform to its assumptions? Where do you see yourself buying into those assumptions more than you’d like to?

4. On Sunday we discussed the power of visual images to affect our imagination and emotions. Consider the visual images you encounter every day. How are those images shaping your mind and emotions, for better or for worse?

5. What is one thing you’re hoping to get out of this series on Revelation?