

Christ in Prophecy

Revelation 1: Chapters 1-3

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Is the book of revelation impossible to understand? Most people think so. I don't, stay tuned and I'll tell you why.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings to all of you in the name of Jesus our blessed hope. I'm Dave Reagan Senior Evangelist for Lamb and Lion Ministries. Here in the studio with me are two special guests, my colleague Dennis Pollock and a special guest from Amite, Louisiana, Don McGee, the Founder, Director, and Evangelist of Crown and Sickle Ministries. Don thanks for coming all the way from Louisiana.

Don McGee: [Responds in French]

Dennis Pollock: We fondly refer to Don as the Ragin' Cajun because when he starts talking about bible prophecy he really gets cranked up.

Dr. Reagan: Well you got that right Dennis, and we're gonna give him an opportunity to do that in just a moment, but first, we want to introduce you to a new series of programs we have prepared concerning the book of revelation.

Don McGee: Over the next six weeks, we're going to take you through the book of Revelation chapter by chapter. Each week we're going to begin by playing an excerpt from Dr. Reagan's video program called Revelation Revealed. It's a 75-minute survey of the entire book of Revelation and as you will see, it's full of charts, maps, pictures, historical footage and video animations. Later in the program we'll tell you how you can acquire a copy.

Dr. Reagan: Following each video clip we will then return here to the studio and the three of us will discuss various issues related to the segment of Revelation under review.

Dennis Pollock: Now, our first segment is going to cover chapters 1-3 of Revelation. These chapters constitute a fascinating introduction to the book and Dave's treatment of them will make it very clear that the book of Revelation can be understood by anyone who's been born again and has the Holy Spirit residing within them.

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks, let's begin our journey through the great book of Revelation.

Video

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our Blessed Hope. I'm Dave Reagan, Senior Evangelist for Lamb and Lion Ministries and I want to welcome you to this visual overview of the amazing book of Revelation. When studying the book of Revelation, most people seem to get bogged down in the details. And tragically they often focus on the Antichrist rather than Jesus Christ. In the process, they miss the big picture, and the fundamental message. So let's go for the big picture, and let's seek the central Biblical message. Let's engage in a sweeping overview of the book, chapter by chapter.

As we begin with chapter one, let's consider the name of the book. It is not the book of Revelations – plural. There are many revelations in it, but that's not its name. If you have a copy of the Authorized King James Version, you will note that the title is stated as "The Revelation of John." Well, that title is also incorrect. The proper title is the one contained in modern translations, "The Revelation to John." It is not John's revelation, it is the revelation or unveiling of Jesus Christ that was given to John by God the Father through Jesus. John refers to it in chapter one, verse nine as "The testimony of Jesus."

Now, who was this John? He does not clearly identify himself, but the testimony of all the early church fathers is that this was the Apostle John. All he says about himself is that he is a brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance, which are in Jesus. It is interesting that John says he was a prisoner on the Island of Patmos. His imprisonment there is one of the clues to the dating of the book around 95 A.D., because that was when the Roman Empire turned against the Church. This happened because the Empire declared Caesar to be God. And every person in the Empire was required once a year to go before a Roman magistrate and declare, "Caesar is Lord." Well, no Christian

could do that, and therefore Christians were considered enemies of the Empire. The result is that they became the target of terrible persecution.

John tells us something very important in verse ten here, he states that he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” Now folks, I don’t think John is referring to Sunday here. I think he was referring to what the Hebrew prophets called “The Day of the Lord,” which was a term for the end times. So I believe John is telling us that “in the spirit” he was catapulted forward to the Day of the Lord, to the end times, and given a preview of what will happen when the Church Age comes to a close.

John was about 95 years old when this book was written. He was the only Apostle left alive. The thing that you need to keep in mind is that by the time this book was written, the persecution of Christians had become so terrible that it is evident from the book of Revelation that many were wondering if the Church would really continue to exist. They were beginning to have second thoughts, wondering if Jesus really was who He said He was – wondering if Jesus really cared for them, wondering if He really meant it when He said, “Upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

The Church needed encouragement, and that’s really one of the main purposes of the book. It is designed to give encouragement and comfort to those who are suffering terribly. For that reason, the book of Revelation has always been a book that has given tremendous comfort to anyone going through persecution or suffering, whether it be individual, family, or national in nature.

The book begins therefore with a tremendous vision of Jesus Christ the glorified one. He is victorious over death and the heavenly glory which He surrendered when He came to earth has been restored. John sees Jesus resurrected and glorified. Keep in mind that this is 65 years after the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. Jesus has returned to give the Church a second touch, a touch of encouragement. He has returned to say, “Yes, I care. Yes, I love you. I know what’s going on. I’m walking among you.”

John proceeds to describe Jesus in His glorified form. He sees Jesus dressed as a Priest because that’s what Jesus is now He is our High Priest before the throne of God, our Mediator before God. John sees Jesus with white hair, which indicates His purity and wisdom. His eyes, feet and voice are all presented as symbols of judgment because all judgment has been given to Him by the Father. He has stars in his right hand, which are the angels, or messengers of the

churches, showing that He cares for those churches and their pastors. He's walking among seven golden candlesticks, which we're told in verse 20 represent churches. They represent all of the churches, and through this image the Lord is trying to give to John and the church the message that He is walking among them, that He cares about them, and that He loves them. He is not some distant and impersonal God who is aloof and uncaring.

John is so overcome by this glorious vision of His resurrected and glorified Lord that he falls at Jesus' feet as if dead. Jesus responds with one of the most comforting statements in all the Word of God: "Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last. I am the living one. I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Jesus is saying, "I am the beginning of history, the end of history, and the meaning of history. I am in control of history and I have power over life and death." Again, Jesus' appearance and words are intended to reassure a church that's under severe persecution. The hearts of first Century Christians, including John's, must have been greatly encouraged even as Christians today are encouraged by these words.

As we move to chapters two and three, the focus shifts from Jesus the glorified one to Jesus the overcomer, who is encouraging His church to persevere and overcome with Him. Chapters two and three present us with seven letters written by Jesus to seven churches. These are very interesting letters because first of all they are letters to seven real churches located in the area we know today as Turkey. But these churches were selected for a reason, and that's because they are representative of all churches existing at that time and today. Let's just look at the types of churches that are represented in the seven letters.

The first church addressed is Ephesus, which was a legalistic church. It was a church that dotted the I's and crossed the T's, but it had lost its love. In verse eight we are introduced to the church of Smyrna, which is representative of persecuted churches. In verse 12 we have the church of Pergamum, which is the liberal church. It's the church that doesn't care anything about doctrine – it's the opposite of Ephesus, it embraces everyone. Then in verse 18 we have the church of Thyatira, which is the pagan church, the church that is full of cultic practices. Chapter three begins with the church of Sardis, which is representative of dead churches, it has a reputation of being alive, but in reality it is dead. The next church mentioned, the church of Philadelphia, is the church that we would all like to be a member of because it is the alive church, for which Jesus has no criticism whatsoever. And then, finally we have in verse 14, the church of Laodicea. In many respects it is the most pathetic of all the churches because it's

the worldly and apathetic church, the church that is “neither hot, nor cold” because it could simply care less. Now, as I said, these seven churches are representative of every kind of church that exists today. You will find your church in one of these seven, or in a combination of them.

I think they are also representative of seven different kinds of Christians. So I want to ask you something. Are you a legalistic Christian, persecuted Christian, liberal, worldly, are you dead, are you alive, are you apathetic?

I believe these seven churches are also representative of seven periods of church history. All seven types of churches have always existed and exist today, but one type has dominated each period of Church history. The church at Ephesus is representative of the apostolic period from 30 A.D. to 95 A.D. when the church was concerned about organization and doctrine to the point that it became legalistic.

The church at Smyrna represents the persecuted church, or the martyr church that existed from 95 A.D. to about 312. It's the church that existed at the time that the book of Revelation was written.

Then we have the liberal church of Pergamum, representing the apostate church that existed from 312 A.D. to 590. This period developed after the emperor Constantine was converted and the church and the state were welded together. As is always the case in such unions, the state began to corrupt the church.

The church at Thyatira represents the dark pagan period from 590 A.D. to 1517 when the Papacy developed and the church became full of Babylonian occultic practices.

When we come to the reformation in 1517 we think of it as a time of life, but you know it was really only partially so. The Reformation produced the Protestant state churches of Europe, churches that had a reputation for being alive but were really dead because of their union with the state. So the church of Sardis, the dead church, with a reputation for being alive represents the post reformation period from 1517 to about 1750.

The opposite of Sardis is the church at Philadelphia, the alive church. It represents the period of church history from about 1750 when the church began to send missionaries out all over the world, until about 1925 when the German

school of higher criticism invaded seminaries worldwide and destroyed many people's faith in the Word of God.

The church of today is represented by the church of Laodicea, a church that says to the world, "I am rich, I have become wealthy and have need of nothing." But Jesus says to that church, "You are wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked." It is a worldly, apathetic, apostate church that will not even let Jesus in the front door.

You know, the best summary of these letters I have ever encountered is the one penned by John Stott in his book, *Basic Christianity*. He sees the message of Jesus as threefold in nature. To a sinful church, He is saying, "I know of your sin – repent." To a doubtful church He is saying, "I know of your doubt – believe." To a fearful church He is saying, "I know of your fear – endure." Repent, believe and endure; that's a very relevant message for the church today.

One final thing about these letters, please note that each of these seven letters end with promises to overcomers. I would exhort you to go through and make a list of them. And you know what? You will find a total of 13 promises. Look for example at Revelation chapter 2:26. It says, "He who overcomes and he who keeps my deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." That's just one of the 13 promises. His promise is that the redeemed will rule over the nations of the Earth and that of course is speaking about the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. There are 12 other marvelous promises, and all of them are made to overcomers. Are you an overcomer? Are you an heir of these 13 wonderful promises? An overcomer is defined in I John 5:5 as, "He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Such a one," John says, "overcomes the world."

Return to Studio

Dr. Reagan: Ok fellows, let's get into a discussion now of these first three chapters of Revelation and the first thing I'd like to emphasize is the fact that in the first chapter, John appears, rather Jesus appears, dressed as a high priest. Do you see any prophetic significance in that whatsoever?

Dennis Pollock: You know, Dave, I think that it reveals Jesus' present day ministry. He is serving as High Priest. You know, a lot of people talk about Him being King of Kings and Lord of Lords, well, ultimately He is that, but right now

His present day ministry is as High Priest. And you look at the book of Leviticus for example, you look at what it said about the priests and it talks about them making atonement for sin. It would talk about individual sins, you'd come to the priest who'd make atonement for the sin. They'd be forgiven. The high priest would make atonement for the whole nation of Israel on the Day of Atonement. Well, Jesus as High Priest, He deals with sin right now. But the wonderful thing is He does more than just make an atonement, atonement means covering. Their sins were covered in those days, but He has made a cleansing. So He is serving right now, functioning as High Priest. He's gonna come back and He's gonna come back as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Dr. Reagan: So He came the first time as Savior.

Dennis Pollock: Right.

Dr. Reagan: He is now serving as Priest, and He will return as King.

Dennis Pollock: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: Now, don't you think this is pretty hard knock for those who have the Amillennial viewpoint? And you know the majority viewpoint in Christendom today is the Amillennial view which is the view that Jesus is reigning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords right now. Well doesn't this pretty well knock that in the head when He appears as High Priest?

Don McGee: I think it very clearly indicates that Jesus is not working as a King today. If Jesus were a King today we would not have an advocate with the father. The French people in south Louisiana refer to this as Jesus being our advocate which in their terms means attorney. And what he does is He sits at the right hand of the Father and He intercedes on our behalf which is what an attorney does in a court all the time. Jesus is there interceding in our behalf as an advocate, as a high priest if you will, not as a king.

Dennis Pollock: Right. He's king of our hearts but He's not a political king, He's not the king of the world at this point.

Dr. Reagan: Well, I often say to those who try to argue with me that He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords right now, that if He is He's doing a very poor job of reigning over this world because all the nations of the world are in rebellion against Him.

Don McGee: I don't need a king right now, Dave, what I need is someone to stand in my stead before the father is what I need.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, at the end of that particular video clip I mentioned 13 glorious promises that are made to overcomers in chapters 2 and 3. I mean it's amazing how many promises are made there. And, for example, in Revelation 2:7 it says, "He who has an ear let him hear what the spirit says to the churches, to him who overcomes I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God." Well, that's pretty obviously a promise of eternal life, that we will have access to the tree of life. But there are 12 other promises there and what about these promises? Which ones jump out at you? Which ones would you like to comment on?

Don McGee: The 11th verse of chapter 2 is interesting to me because it speaks about he who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. This is something that can be kind of confusing if you don't look at everything the Bible says about this. In the Ephesians letter in chapter 2 it says that, "And you when you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world," on and on and on...indicates that we were born with a propensity or an inclination toward sin. And when we got to that point in our lives where we understood that we were sinners before God we were dead. It's a spiritual dead. The word death there means a separation from God. So we all died once. Every person that's ever been born dies once. The thing that we have as Christians is that if we die twice, if we die to ourselves and have Christ as our inter-mediator, then we don't have to face the second death, which is eternal separation from God, which is mentioned in the book of Revelation.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, that's a wonderful promise, a wonderful promise. Is there another one there that jumped out at you, Don?

Don McGee: The idea of God having us reigning with His son Jesus. When we reign over the nations, I can't wait for that. That is a wonderful promise. And I think it's one that we don't think about very often because it has to do with the physical world. So many times we believe that this idea of salvation and heaven and all that kind of thing is so spiritual it's almost like we're apparitions on a cloud kind of thing. But this idea of reigning with Christ is something that is literal, it's real. It has to do with the earth. It has to do with time and space and activity and people and circumstances and we are going to participate with Christ in that reign.

Dr. Reagan: Well, what do you say to those who claim that we're reigning with Christ right now?

Don McGee: Well, I don't see that I'm having a whole lot of influence being an administrator for Jesus Christ today. I don't think anyone else is either.

Dr. Reagan: You know, this promise is so important Don, and I think we ought to read it. It's in Revelation 2:26 where He says, "He who overcomes and keeps my deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." Now, I don't know how you can spiritualize that into saying that we're doing that today. We're not ruling over the nations with a rod of iron.

Don McGee: We don't have authority over anybody right now.

Dr. Reagan: Well, we do have authority over some of the demons in the name of Jesus we do.

Don McGee: But not over the nations.

Dr. Reagan: Well, that's right.

Don McGee: And the word nations has something to do with people not the demonic spirit world.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, right. What about you Dennis, are there any promises that jump out at you?

Dennis Pollock: Well, pretty much they all do I mean it's an incredible section of Scripture and one that we would all do well to study. But one of the ones that I like is where he says, "I will confess His name before my father and before His angels." You see, right now, the confession is on us. We are to confess right. A very important part of knowing Christ and being born again is confessing, believe in your heart confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus. And that's what we're to do. But the day is coming when it's gonna be reversed and we're gonna stand before God and Jesus is going to confess us. He's gonna say, "That one is mine." I don't think there'll be any sweeter words we'll ever hear than to have Jesus acknowledge we belong to him. What a privilege.

Dr. Reagan: And I think some of those are gonna be good Cajun names Don, like Thibodaux, Broussard...Fontenot...

Dennis Pollock: Do you think Jesus can pronounce them?

Don McGee: He can talk like that with that accent.

Dennis Pollock: And the other one that I think is so amazing, and is really one that, you first read it and its a little puzzling. He says, "I'll make them a pillar in the temple of my God." They'll go out no more. Well, you think about a pillar. What does a pillar speak of? It speaks about stability. How many times have you seen pillars hopping around the streets? They don't go anywhere. They're stable. They're strong. Some people wonder, "Well what if we get to heaven and a thousand years later we blow it and then we end up losing it all?" No, you'll be a pillar in the temple of God. You ain't going anywhere. Pillars are important they are a vital part of the building. Paul talked about Peter and some of the other apostles being pillars in the church and we will be pillars in God's family, in God's household for eternity as overcomers, an incredible declaration of the importance of the saints in the eternal realm.

Dr. Reagan: What a wonderful promise.

Don McGee: That's interesting. You know, Jesus is the cornerstone.

Dr. Reagan: There you go.

Don McGee: I like that, I like that, never thought of that before.

Dr. Reagan: That'll preach brother.

Don McGee: Yeah, I like that.

Dr. Reagan: Well, you know one that I like is in 2:17 where it says that two promises, I will give to the overcomer a white stone and on that stone will be a new name. Now the white stone comes from the fact that in that day and age when people were tried before a court and the jury went out and made the decision. The jury foreman would come back and the person would walk over and hold their hand out. If they dropped a black stone, it was guilty. If they put a white stone in their hand, they were innocent. We're gonna be given a white stone. That means that all of our sins will have been forgiven and forgotten as far

as God is concerned. They are put as far away as east is from west and the deepest part of the ocean and we will be innocent before him. And then on that stone's gonna be a new name. You know, God loves to give new names. Throughout history he's given people new names. He gave Abram a new name, Sarah a new name,

Don McGee: Jacob.

Dr. Reagan: Jacob a new name. He gave Paul a new name; he gave Peter a new name. He loves new names. And I think we're gonna have new names for eternity and it's gonna be interesting to look at that stone and see what your new name is. I have a suspicion it's gonna be related to our walk right here and now. Wouldn't it be great to look and see and it says your new name for eternity is perseverance, or faith. Wouldn't it be terrible to look at it and it says, well, your new name for eternity is wishy-washy. [Laughter]

Dennis Pollock: I wonder if they have a name-change office in heaven.

Dr. Reagan: Well, I don't know, maybe so. Another of these promises that jumps out at me is in chapter 3, verse 21 where it says, "I will grant to the overcomer the privilege of sitting down with me on my throne as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne." He's gonna let us sit with Him on His throne. Now, the day's gonna come when you're gonna sit at the right hand of Jesus on His throne. I'll have my day, Dennis will have his day. That's just almost beyond my comprehension. And the interesting thing is He says, "I'm gonna do that just as my Father has allowed me to sit with him on his throne." Again, this gets back to a very important theological point. And the point is that those who have an Amillennial viewpoint, those who believe that there's not gonna be any future millennial who believe we are in the millennial now believe it or not, they argue that Jesus is reigning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords on His throne right now, but the Bible teaches He is sitting next to His Father on his throne. And He says one day I will sit down on my throne, which indicates He's not on that throne right now. What is His throne? His throne is the throne of David. Where is that throne? It has always been one place. Jerusalem. He is coming back to reign.

Don McGee: That's what the angels said whenever he spoke to Mary. He said he's gonna have the throne of his father David.

Dr. Reagan: That's right. And it's always been in one place, in the city of Jerusalem. So He is coming back to Jerusalem. He is coming back to take the throne of David. And then, and only then, is He going to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all the earth. Right?

Don McGee: Great.

Dr. Reagan: I'd like to hear an amen, brother.

Don McGee: Amen! [Dave laughs]

Dr. Reagan: Is there a Cajun way of saying Amen?

Don McGee: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: Amen, okay, well that's great. Okay, well I think that we pretty well covered these thirteen promises and we can move on then to the conclusion of our program for today.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Well, those are certainly thirteen glorious promises and as I said before in the video clip, they are all made to a group of people called overcomers. And again, according to First John 5:1-5, an overcomer is one who puts his faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Dennis Pollock: What about you? Are you an overcomer? Are you an heir of these wonderful promises? If not, I want to urge you to act now before it's eternally too late. Reach out to God in faith, confess that you're a sinner, and receive Jesus as your Lord and your Savior.

Don McGee: And when you do that, be sure to seek out a Bible-believing church where you can witness your faith in public confess of Jesus an in water baptism.

Dr. Reagan: Well, that's it for this week, please be back with us next week as we take a look at chapters 4-7 of Revelation. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries saying "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near!"