

# **The Book of Revelation**

## **Session 2 - Empowered to Remain Faithful (Chapters 2-3)**

### **Course Overview**

The Book of Revelation can be divided into five sections:

1. Introduction: Establishing Context and Conflict (Revelation 1-5)
2. Action: The Main Story - Focus on God's Perspective (Revelation 6-11)
3. Action: The Main Story Retold - Focus on Satan's Schemes (Revelation 12-14)
4. Action: The Main Story Retold - Focus on Mankind's Sinfulness (Revelation 15-19)
5. Ending: Resolution (Revelation 20-22)

Chapters 2-3 introduce John's visions to us, underlining their purpose and their profound relevance to all God's people.

The Book of Revelation can also be seen as a repeat of the Exodus story, where through signs and wonders God delivered his people out of Egypt and into the promised land. These chapters are about God preparing His people for all that will come.

### **Chapter Overview**

These chapters can be divided into seven sections:

1. To the Church Facing Persecution (Revelation 2:1-7)
2. To the Church Facing Death (Revelation 2:8-11)
3. To the Church Compromised by Deception (Revelation 2:12-17)
4. To the Church Compromised by Immorality (Revelation 2:18-29)
5. To the Church Asleep in Complacency (Revelation 3:1-6)
6. To the Church Facing Rejection (Revelation 3:7-13)
7. To the Church Ensnared by Earthly Comforts (Revelation 3:14-22)

The focus of these chapters is helping us understand how to apply the rest of the Book of Revelation to our own lives. They help us see that the visions John received were given to strengthen, instruct and guard us in our present-day walk, so that we would be prepared for the times ahead. The better we understand the visions that John received, the more deeply we will take hold of the encouragements and warnings in these letters. We are to prepare for the times ahead not through passive observation, but through active participation in the way of life Jesus has called us to so we will not be caught out as the pressures and trials increase. The messages of these letters are for all generations, but will find their full relevance to the church in the times to come.

### **To the Church Facing Persecution (Revelation 2:1-7)**

Verse 1:

*“These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven lampstands”* - Jesus declares to the church in Ephesus that He is close and deeply involved in our lives. Through John’s visions we see a clear picture of Jesus’ love, care and desire for His people.

Verse 2-3:

*“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance... You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary”* - Jesus sees us and is moved when we suffer for His name. The Book of Revelation encourages us that our perseverance will be worth it.

Verse 4-5:

*“You have forsaken the love you had at first... If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place”* - Jesus warns of the dangers of becoming disconnected from Him and letting our love grow cold. John’s visions teach us that human resolve is not enough to keep us from falling away. Only love has the power to sustain us through persecution and trial.

Verse 7:

*“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life”* - If we are victorious in prioritising first love even through trial, we will inherit eternal life in paradise. The more time we spend in the Book of Revelation, the more real these promises become to us.

### **To the Church Facing Death (Revelation 2:8-11)**

Verse 8:

*“These are the words of him who is the First and Last, who died and came back to life again”* - Jesus declares to the Church in Smyrna that He is before and after all things, and the One who has overcome death. John’s visions detail Jesus’ final and ultimate victory over death, and empower us to live in confident assurance of our destiny.

Verse 9-10:

*“I know your afflictions... I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not... Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer... Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown”* - Jesus walks with us amidst our suffering. The Book of Revelation reminds us that death holds no power over us, and that our true lives are safely hidden with Christ (Colossians 3:1-4).

Verse 11:

*“The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death”* - If we are victorious in not shrinking back from death, we will be resurrected to eternal life and saved from eternal torment.

John's visions give us a beautiful glimpse of the joys of heaven, and a horrifying vision of the lake of fire (John 5:28-29, Revelation 20:14).

### **To the Church Compromised by Deception (Revelation 2:12-17)**

Verse 12:

*"These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword"* - Jesus declares to the church in Pergamum that He is the Word of God, and He alone is true. John's visions give us confidence to stand on God's Word and remain faithful to Him, because the ultimate victory belongs to Jesus.

Verse 13:

*"I know where you live - where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name"* - Jesus sees and takes great delight in our faithfulness to Him. The Book of Revelation reminds us that we will one day all stand before Him and give an account of our lives.

Verse 14-16:

*"There are some of you who hold to the teaching of Balaam... you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and fight against them with the sword of my mouth"* - Jesus warns of the dangers of falling into deception and rewriting scripture to suit our own desires. As John's visions unfold, the true cost of compromise and false teaching is laid bare - thinking we are Jesus' friends when in fact we have become His enemies. We must guard ourselves vigilantly against deception, which will only increase in the days to come (1 Timothy 4:1, Matthew 24:10-13).

Verse 17:

*"To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna"* - If we are victorious in remaining true to God's Word, we will be satisfied forever by Him.

### **To the Church Compromised by Immorality (Revelation 2:18-29)**

Verse 18:

*"These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze"* - Jesus declares to the church in Thyatira that He is full of zeal and desire, and ready to bring judgement upon the world. John's visions give us a glorious and terrible picture of Jesus, the judge of the world, who is ready to pour out God's wrath upon all the inhabitants of the earth. The more we understand the nature of God's judgements, the more urgently we are motivated to walk before Him in holiness.

Verse 19:

*"I know your deeds, your love and your faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first"* - Jesus affirms the church's desire for Him. The Book of Revelation reminds us of Jesus' great delight in our commitment to Him.

Verse 20-23:

*“You tolerate that woman Jezebel... by her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality... I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling... So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of their ways... and I will repay each of you according to your deeds”* - Jesus warns us of the terrible consequences of walking in sin and immorality. Through John’s visions the true nature of sin is revealed to us - it is utterly vile and repulsive. We must hold high the message of repentance, which is repeated over and over again in this book, and keep ourselves clean from all sin and immorality.

Verse 25-28:

*“Hold on to what you have until I come... to the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations”* - If we are victorious in overcoming sin and immorality, we will receive authority to rule and reign with Jesus. John’s visions give us insight into the literal nature of Jesus’ kingdom on earth and our invitation to be with Him.

### **To the Church Asleep in Complacency (Revelation 3:1-6)**

Verse 1:

*“These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars”* - Jesus declares to the church in Sardis that he is in union with the Spirit and also with His church. John’s visions highlight the need for deep union with the Spirit in bringing forth Jesus’ return (Revelation 22:17).

Verse 2-3:

*“Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God... if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you”* - Jesus warns us of the dangers of becoming complacent in our walk of faith. As John’s visions unfold, we start to appreciate the enormity and intensity of this storyline. We are in a kingdom that is at war and we must take this seriously (Matthew 24:44).

Verse 5:

*“The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father”* - If we are victorious in overcoming complacency, then will be honoured forever before God (Matthew 7:21-23).

### **To the Church Facing Rejection (Revelation 3:7-13)**

Verse 7:

*“These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David”* - Jesus declares to the church in Philadelphia that His testimony is the one that counts. He is the One who has heavenly authority to establish justice on the earth. John’s visions assure us of the certainty of Jesus’ victory and His ultimate authority over all things.

Verse 8:

*"I know your deeds... I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name"* - Jesus sees and knows us. Our faithfulness matters to Him.

Verse 9:

*"The synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars - I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you"* - Jesus' encouragement to this church is that He will vindicate them. This is a great encouragement to us in John's visions - that no matter what we face, or what others say of us, Jesus will vindicate us and our choices.

Verse 10:

*"I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth"* - Jesus is the One who protects us amidst trial. We see this theme throughout the Book of Revelation. We can have confidence in His power to deliver us.

Verse 11:

*"I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown"* - Jesus' return, and our eternal salvation, is assured.

Verse 12:

*"The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God"* - If we are victorious in overcoming rejection, we will forever be remembered by God and part of His kingdom.

### **To the Church Ensnared by Earthly Comforts (Revelation 3:14-22)**

Verse 14:

*"These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation"* - Jesus declares to the church in Laodicea that He alone has the final word, and He is the One appointed by God to rule over creation. John's visions assure us that God is committed to establishing the kingdom of His son Jesus on this earth.

Verse 15-17:

*"I know your deeds... because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say 'I am rich'... you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor blind and naked"* - Jesus rebukes this church for their lukewarmness. As we study the remainder of the book we see the true calling and destiny of God's church.

Verse 18:

*"I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich"* - Jesus urges the church to pursue things of eternal value. The Book of Revelation helps us to see what are the things of true value in this world (Philippians 3:7-11).

*Verse 19-20:*

*“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline... If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person”* - Jesus disciplines us because He wants the best for us. John's visions make it clear that Jesus' greatest desire for us is that we would escape the lake of fire and be with Him for all eternity.

*Verse 21:*

*“To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne”* - If we are victorious in overcoming the desire for earthly riches now, we will gain boundless power and wealth in the age to come (John 17:22).

### **Summary**

These chapters point us forward to the rest of the book so we will:

1. Be encouraged to remain strong amidst trouble (Revelation 2:3,10,25, 3:11)
2. Be guarded against the schemes of the enemy (Revelation 2:2,9-10,14-15,20)
3. Be prepared to face adversity in the future (Revelation 2:10, 3:18)

These chapters warn us of seven challenges we will increasingly face as we approach Jesus' return:

1. Persecution which leads to us become disconnected to God (Revelation 2:3-5)
2. The threat of death which causes us to deny our faith (Revelation 2:10)
3. Deception and false teaching that turns our hearts against Jesus (Revelation 2:14-16)
4. Immorality and sin which brings God's judgements upon us (Revelation 2:21-23)
5. Complacency that causes us to become spiritually asleep (Revelation 3:2-3)
6. Rejection and slander that causes us to lose heart (Revelation 3:8-9)
7. Earthly comforts that steal away our hearts (Revelation 3:17)

These chapters also highlight seven glorious rewards for overcoming:

1. Intimacy with God (Revelation 2:4,7)
2. Eternal salvation (Revelation 2:10-11)
3. Eternal satisfaction and delight (Revelation 2:17)
4. The right to rule and reign with Jesus (Revelation 2:26-27)
5. Being honoured in the presence of the Father (Revelation 3:4-5)
6. Being forever remembered for our faithfulness (Revelation 3:12)
7. Boundless riches and glory in the age to come (Revelation 3:21)