

Daniel and Revelation Series

Sermon 1

The Time is Near

Text: Rev 1: 1-3

Hymn: 214

I wish to do something different this morning. In my conversations with church members I have come to realize that we Adventists have not only forgotten the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, but in many cases, have no real wish to study them. This, I consider to be a dangerous state of affairs, for it is exactly what Satan wants. We so badly need to be aware of the events taking place in the world today, and so badly need to be able to interpret them in the light of end-time prophecy, that I have decided to give one sermon per month on this subject. Therefore I am going to ask you to turn to Revelation chapter one which will form the basis for what I want to say today.

Let us pray.

Read 1:1-3

Revelation of Jesus, not of John. This is the same John who wrote the gospel. The Greek of Revelation is rather poor. It is simple – as though the writer did not know Greek well. However, when John wrote it he was a prisoner on an island

called Patmos. It is possible he had no secretarial help, and no one to correct his grammar.

Blessed is the one... This is the first of seven beatitudes in Revelation. For those who wish to take notes, the other six are: 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7 and 22:14.

The seven beatitudes are the first mentioned of several “sevens”. (Suggests perfection). We will continually run into the number seven; let’s look at some of them:

1:4 seven churches

1:4 seven spirits

1:12 seven golden lamp stands

1:16 seven stars

5:1 seven seals

8:6 seven trumpets

15:1 seven angels with seven plagues

16:1 seven bowls

17:3 seven heads

And we shall run across many more including some which are less obvious. For example we shall later see that the entire book is divided into seven sections.

The time is near. What did John mean by this? Did he mean the same as what we mean? We are referring to the Second Advent. Turn to Mark 13:28-30. Implies that end was not near then (AD31). But John writes around AD68. The great event that was soon to take place was the Fall of Jerusalem in AD70. From our perspective we assume John referred to the 21st Century, but in John’s mind Christ would probably return at the time Jerusalem was destroyed.

This may not seem very important, but it is important because it gives us a clue how to understand the Book of Revelation. This book was written by a Jew. John was a man who came out of a Jewish culture and who was raised on the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore when we try to understand this book, we must ask ourselves what John had in mind when he wrote it. This will keep us out of trouble when we get to some of the more difficult passages.

So let us apply a few principles that will serve as guidelines in understanding the book.

1. Where possible let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures. Isaiah 28:10
2. Believe it or not almost the entire book of Revelation refers one way or another, to the Old Testament. (Quotes). Therefore in interpreting any passage we must ask ourselves what OT passage John had in mind when he wrote these words.

It is useful to know that there are four major events recorded in the OT, and much of Revelation can be seen to allude to those four events. They are Creation, the Flood, the Exodus and the Exile. Interestingly these four events follow a pattern. The Flood is actually an undoing of Creation. Creation separates the waters; the flood brings them back together. The pattern is followed in the Exodus where again the waters are separated and dry land appears. The people are tested with food and with snakes. Finally in the Exile, the

land of Israel is symbolically swallowed up as dominion is finally taken away from the Jews. As we study the Book of Revelation, we shall again see Creation being undone prior to God's setting up of the new heavens and the new earth.

3. Whilst the majority of Revelation alludes to the OT, there are many allusions to the Gospels and to the New Testament. Remember that Revelation is a Christian book. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ and points to Him. We will see examples of that in our studies.

Finally, I want to look briefly at the structure of the book. I mentioned the four themes of Creation, Flood, Exodus and Exile that permeate the book. There is additionally another theme that runs through the OT as well as through the Book of Revelation. That is the Temple theme. So much of the OT refers to the earthly sanctuary and its services; similarly the heavenly sanctuary weaves through the book of Revelation.

You may remember I mentioned that the book is divided into seven sections. In fact it is in the references to the heavenly sanctuary that these divisions are created. Each section begins with a sanctuary scene, a scene in heaven, and then describes the next image that John sees. I should point out that all references to heaven in the book are actually references to the heavenly temple. Let's have a look at these divisions and then we can start looking at the text – which we will do next time. They are as follows:

1. 1:12-16. Holy Place. The seven churches.
2. 4:1-3. Look into the MHP. The scroll, 6 of the 7 seals.
3. 8:1-5. Holy Place. The 7 trumpets and the 2 witnesses.
4. 11:19. MHP. The conflict between good and evil.
5. 15:5-8. MHP. The 7 plagues and fall of Babylon.
6. 19:1 No Temple. The 2nd Advent and millennium.
7. 21:1-22. No Temple. The new earth.

By now you are beginning to get just a glimpse of the beauties of this book which people say cannot be understood. Next time I take up this theme we will look at chapter 1 and begin to explore some of the truths that have peered out at us this morning.

It is my wish that we all will come to understand and love this book, because as we enter into the dark and troubled time ahead it is our knowledge of the Scriptures, and especially of prophecy, that will provide the strength we shall need to remain true to God. Remember, *“None but those whose minds are fortified with the truths of Scripture will stand in the last conflict”*.