

As I was studying the book of Revelation, and various published books, I observed some views explained by pastors/authors that could be misleading. These views concerned me as they could unintentionally mislead a believer into a false sense of security about these end times and put that believer in a position of not being ready.

Jesus tells us to be ready; reference His parables. The apostles and prophets teach us to be ready and to run the race. We are not to know the time of Jesus return, but we will know the signs to watch for as described in Matthew 24 by Jesus Himself.

The way John has written Revelation makes it easy to be misinterpreted. God had a reason and purpose for this. Consider the following:

- John was in prison on an island called Patmos. He had to write in terms so that the jailors wouldn't destroy his work. If the jailors believed what was written was crazy talk, they might leave him be.
- John was brought in the Spirit to see things he had never seen before. A future time of indescribable wonders. He described them by association of what he knew from his time. It was, and is, prophecy on things yet to come. It is hard to describe what has never been seen.
- As technology and the human race continue to advance, things that didn't make sense to the human consciousness before, have now become very easy to comprehend. "Every eye will see Him..." Satellites and the internet make this possible no matter where Jesus arrives.
- God worked through John's writing to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to individual people in a way they would be most influenced by the words. Let's face it, we all have different interpretations on most things. If the manner in which I interpret the text leads me to a closer walk with Christ, how is that bad?

An example of this may be with the different beliefs on when the rapture will happen: Pre, Mid, or Post. In the Bible there are specific references to people being caught up, but a true "rapture" is never specifically stated. Is this reason to get into a fight, break up a church or destroy a friendship; no. A person's understanding and belief may be leading that person to a closer spiritual walk with Christ and helping that individual to be ready. I know I have personally had several changes in what I believed I knew about Revelation, while doing this study, as the Holy Spirit revealed new things to me.

Anytime someone wishes to debate with me the intricate points of Revelation, I am not often moved to do so. I like hearing and reading different thoughts and interpretations, as they may lead me to dig even further for a greater understanding, but many points will always be based on how a person perceives the specific text, and agreement is often not possible. I would encourage a person to pray and meditate on how the Spirit speaks to them concerning the end times and tribulation. Remember the focus should be on making ourselves ready.

With respect to being ready, let's talk about devotion. It is not easy to measure a person's devotion to Christ, and quite honestly, it isn't our place to do so. A person, especially an elder in the Church, might think that shouldn't be difficult at all. But the point is that as the human race continues to grow and become more tolerant, church culture is becoming even more and more accepting of values that go against the values Christ left with us. That is why the church at Laodicea is often associated with this generation: the lukewarm church. And while the younger generation is becoming more lukewarm, the older generation is often becoming less focused on discipleship and ministry to sinners. Many people

start separating themselves from anyone who doesn't believe as they do and stop trying to reach others. Before you know it, a person could start hating the sinners and not just the sin.

Are all believers the same? This can usually spark a debate rather quickly. It is not for us to judge, but speak in truth and love, and let the Spirit do His work from there. Consider "confessing believers", "professing believers", and "overcomers". The only church referenced in Revelation that receives affirmation that they will be kept from the moment of trial is the Philadelphia church. Does your devotion to Christ and righteous living match that of the Philadelphia church? We will cover this in more detail later in this study.

- Confessing Believer: Someone who confesses their sins to Christ and works to lead a righteous life as described by Christ and the Apostles. They are focused on winning crowns and storing up rewards in Heaven as a result of their work on Earth.
- Professing Believer: Someone who claims to be a Christian but does not do as Christ and the Apostles have instructed. Does not demonstrate loving God or others. Believers should ask themselves, am I doing anything that is building or contributing to the Kingdom of God? Am I leading others to Christ, or driving them away from Christ?
- Overcomers: People that are "victorious" as Christ describes in John's letters to the churches of Asia. This group is often referred to as "full overcomers". Keep in mind, "...all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." However, this group best demonstrates a righteous walk with Christ, allowing the Holy Spirit to minister to them every step of the way.

This study of Revelation is broken up into a few key sections to help with your personal study. During this study I try to call out key points as they are written primarily in the NIV version of the Bible. I find that every time I read through Revelation, do a comparative study in Daniel, or read something another prophet wrote, something new is revealed to me. I have no doubt this study will continue for the remainder of my days. The sections to review:

- Revelation Chapter Reference – Quick breakdown of each chapter and key points.
 - Ages and Key Events Chart
 - 7 Churches Reference Matrix
 - Timing of Events Chart
 - Chapter-by-Chapter Analysis
- ***Please note as I continue to study and learn, additions and revisions may occur; I will continue to share as long as I have that opportunity.

At the end of this study, I will provide a list of all references used when putting this together. Since many Pastors and Authors have similar views on many topics, it is difficult to specifically represent and quote all references at all times.

May God bless your time in this study, grant you wisdom and understanding, and speak to you through His Holy Spirit.

Love in Christ,

Michael Collins