

Class 11 – Applying the Lessons of Revelation

The overall message of Revelation: *Despite Satan's efforts and the evil in the world, God will ultimately vindicate his people, end evil, and live with them forever.*

The Pressure to Compromise

- Satan presses God's people to abandon him
- He uses political power (13:5-7), economic power (13:16-17), and social pressure (13:4)
- He also uses the offer of security and luxury (18:3, 7, 9)
- We can see this kind of pressure in growing acceptance of homosexuality, evolution
- From the Christian perspective, many will encourage compromise with contemporary trends and pagan society (2:14-15, 20)
- We will be encouraged to stomach morally problematic practices and not "rock the boat"
- Revelation teaches us to see the dark reality behind these threats and pressures

The Danger of Lukewarmness

- When Jesus addresses the churches, one of his major concerns is a lack of spiritual passion
- Ephesus has abandoned its first love (2:4), Sardis is dead (3:1), and Laodicea is lukewarm (3:16)
- When Christians – or even entire local churches – lapse into heartless religion, they will be unprepared for the hardships of life and persecutions of Satan
- This dovetails with the fact that judgment simultaneously refines the righteous and prompts sinners to repent. It wakes everyone up.
- Revelation encourages us to wake up (3:2) by promising Jesus' judgment (2:22-23, 3:3) and reminding us of the joys of eternal life with God (3:5, 20)

The Bigger Perspective

- Sometimes it looks like Satan is winning. The whole world worships the beast (13:3). There is hardship in the world. Christians are persecuted. It is hard to see that Jesus is reigning.
- Revelation furnishes us with the bigger perspective: God is still on his throne. Jesus has conquered Satan. God is aware of the condition of the world. God hears his people's cries for justice. Even the hardships are part of God's plan to bring justice.
- The perspective of Revelation also encourages us to see earthly events through heaven's eyes. Everyday life is not morally neutral.

A Christian's Relationship to Government and Political Power

- Revelation paints a grim picture of a government as an evil beast and instrument of Satan
- This depiction is the same as how Daniel saw governments in his day (Dan 7-9)
- Christians are generally encouraged to be respectful of and obedient to government (Rom 13:1-7, 1 Pet 2:13-17), but this is not true when government calls on them to disobey God (Acts 5:29)

- Revelation reminds us that government can become corrupt and evil. Christians are encouraged to resist (nonviolently) and not give in
- Revelation also shows us that many political power plays borrow religious imagery, language, and demands (13:3-4, 5, 12-13, 16)
- Christians must remember that their first allegiance is not to their country, but to their God
- While in a vacuum patriotism is neutral, it can become a way Satan gets us to compromise our fundamental commitment to God

We Have Something to Look Forward To

- Revelation closes with a look forward to new heavens and new earth in which righteousness – with no evil – lives
- All the pain and hardship of life is removed and the scars healed as we live in the presence of God
- Hope and anticipation make hardship bearable