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Sermon Notes

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Christ and the Future Unveiled

Revelation 1-22

I. A Panoramic View of the Book of Revelation

This is our final sermon in the Book of Revelation... this most mysterious book, this most complex book... we have walked through it line by line all the way to the end

Now, it is beneficial to look back over where we have been

I remember my son Nathaniel and I climbing Mt. Washington in New Hampshire, the tallest mountain in the White Mountains, and the most prominent mountain east of the Mississippi River... we went up the Tuckerman Ravine trail and as is often the case on that mountain, it was foggy and drizzly... I was disappointed because once we got above the treeline, there were no trees to block the view, and I knew it was a spectacular view if the weather would only clear. Then, over the course of about an hour, the fog and clouds lifted enough to give us an amazing view of the entire region – the Presidential Range of the White Mountains

It was a panoramic view of the entire valley, however briefly it lasted

It was an unveiling of majesty, and it was breathtaking

From that lofty perch, we could see for miles – other peaks and valleys, hundreds of thousands of trees, glistening rivers, low-lying clouds and fog way down below us

That is what I want us to do this morning... from our vantage point, to have the clouds of physical nature pulled back for a brief time, to give us an UNVEILING of the hidden truths of this book

That's what REVELATION means – the unveiling, the pulling back of the veil, to show us hidden spiritual realities...

Perhaps another image comes from a sermon I heard from John MacArthur years ago entitled "Jet Tour through the Book of Revelation". He did the same

thing in that sermon I am proposing to do in this one – a flyover of the entire book in a single sermon

In the Mall of America in Minneapolis, there is a flight simulation ride called “FlyOver America” that brings people on an aerial tour of some of the greatest landmarks and regions throughout the United States using virtual flight technology. It’s a full immersion experience including wind, mist, even scents they spray at you.

There’s no sermon that can do that for you, and given the overwhelming images of the Book of Revelation, I don’t think you would want it here this morning

When the prophet Daniel had some of his visions, he was left almost incapable of breathing or of anything at all:

Daniel 8:27 I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.

But I think just describing one last time some selected high points of this amazing book will suffice

A. Purpose Statement: Revelation 1

Revelation 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.

Two central topics revealed, unveiled: JESUS CHRIST and THE FUTURE

B. The Ultimate Author and the Human Author

Revelation 1:1-2 He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who testifies to everything he saw-- that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

God is the ultimate author of the Book of Revelation... mediated to us by Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, by an angel, and by the Apostle John

The triune God:

Revelation 1:4-5 Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

The human author: revealed (vs. 9) as John, exiled on Patmos

The blessing attached to this book:

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

C. Christ the High Priest Continually Tends the Lampstands (Rev. 1)

1. The book opens with a vision of the resurrected, glorified Christ moving through seven golden lampstands
2. Christ is portrayed in the garb of a high priest, but also with symbols of his status as the glorified Lord
3. The seven golden lampstands represent the seven churches of Asia, literal actual churches that existed in John's day
4. But they also represent ALL LOCAL CHURCHES in ALL GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS throughout ALL OF CHURCH HISTORY
5. They are lampstands in that Jesus said, **“You are the light of the world”**
6. Jesus walking in among them shows his constant vigilance over each and every local church in the world—ruling them, studying them, trimming their wicks to make them burn brightly, testing them, perhaps removing some of them because of their sins

D. The Seven Churches (Rev. 2-3)

1. Jesus speaks through the Holy Spirit to each of the seven churches
2. John is commanded to write down the words of Jesus Christ to each church and each church is commanded to read what the Spirit says to all the churches
3. The letters show that Christ KNOWS IN PERFECT DETAIL what is happening with each of the local churches around the world
4. He evaluates the churches in terms of their opportunities and their dangers...and their performance—the ways they please him and the ways there are sinning against him
5. In every case, he appeals to INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS within the churches to OVERCOME the Satanic attacks and to live victorious lives by the power of the Spirit
6. He promises rewards to those who overcome

7. In the end, all local churches are TEMPORARY, but the individuals within them are ETERNAL
8. From these seven churches, we are exhorted to LABOR DILIGENTLY IN THE GOSPEL WORK for the lost in our communities
9. We are exhorted to expose false teaching and not put up with it
10. We are exhorted to be sexually pure and to not tolerate sin in our lives
11. We are told to stand firm in times of persecution
12. We are told to perceive open doors of opportunity that Christ sets before us
13. We are warned to perceive Satan's specific attacks in our settings, the powers and dark thrones of evil he has established
14. Above all, we are warned to keep our hearts passionate toward Christ, to not forsake our first love, to not be LUKEWARM
15. We are warned that Christ searches hearts and minds and will reward each person according to what he has done
16. We are threatened as a church that if we do not do these things, he may remove the lampstand of our church from this community
17. We are promised eternal rewards—many, varied, rich rewards—if we will overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit

E. God the Creator Enthroned and Worshiped (Rev. 4)

1. The next vision in the Book of Revelation is the most important in the entire book
2. Indeed, it is the CENTRAL REALITY of the entire universe
3. John was given an invitation that no one else in history has received... to ascend from heaven and go through a doorway into the heavenly realms... an invitation that God gave that John could in NO WAY HAVE accepted if God had not sent his Holy Spirit to assist him in his weakness

Revelation 4:1-2 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

4. God enthroned is the CENTRAL REALITY of the universe

5. It is because Satan rebelled against this throne that he was hurled from heaven to earth in disgrace
6. It is because Adam and the human race joined Satan's rebellion against this throne that we walk under God's condemning wrath in desperate need of a Savior
7. It is in being reconciled to God and surrendering to this throne that we all find our salvation
 - a. (Rev. 7) The multitude redeemed from every nation stand before the throne of God
 - b. (Rev 22) The perfected saints in heaven serve the throne of God in the New Jerusalem
8. This throne is controlling all the events on earth and the judgments that are hurled from heaven to earth
9. THIS THRONE SHOULD BE THE CENTRAL REALITY OF YOUR LIFE
10. Around this throne are twenty-four other thrones, where the elders are worshiping God continually... falling down, casting their crowns before God, worshiping GOD THE CREATOR (4:11)

F. Christ the Redeemer Triumphant and Worshiped (Rev. 5)

1. This dramatic heavenly scene continues with the scroll, sealed with seven seals in the right hand of him who sat on the throne
2. And a search was made in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth for someone who was WORTHY to take the scroll and open its seals... and NO ONE WAS WORTHY!!! And John wept and wept because no one was worthy
3. The next moment is ETERNALLY DRAMATIC and significant:

Revelation 5:5-7 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, ... ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

4. Christ the Redeemer, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lamb that was slain for the sins of the world is the centerpiece of God's redemptive plan

5. Not only does he have the right to take the scroll and break open its seals, he also has the right to stand at the center of the throne itself... Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, is God the Sovereign Ruler
6. He is a terrifying Lion, whose roar is deafening, and who is an undefeatable enemy to the wicked
7. But for US, and for the rest of the Book of Revelation, he is THE LAMB... gentle, meek, humble, lowly, willingly slain for us, whose blood atones for all our rebellion
8. He is equally worthy of heavenly worship, as in verses 9-10... worthy because he was slain and redeemed people for God

G. The Seven Seals Broken One at a Time (Rev. 6)

1. Jesus breaks open the seven seals one at a time, and as a result things happen on earth
2. This is a powerful lesson of Christ's direct control on the unfolding events of history
3. The opening of the first four seals result in the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, bringing warfare, famine, and death to the earth
4. The fifth seal results in MARTYRS, Christians who have laid down their lives for Christ, slain viciously by Satan's servants on earth, crying out for JUSTICE and VENGEANCE... and they are told to wait because more martyrs will come
5. The sixth seal seems to bring the end of the world... and it does, but before that end comes, the events of the rest of the book will happen

Revelation 6:12-17 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who will be able to stand?"

6. This is the GREAT QUESTION of the Book of Revelation: HOW CAN SINNERS LIKE US SURVIVE THE COMING WRATH OF GOD?

7. Revelation 7 is the answer... by faith in the blood of Christ, both Jews and Gentiles are redeemed from their sins

H. The Countless Multitude Redeemed: Jew First, then Gentile (Rev. 7)

1. Revelation 7:4-8 depicts the elect sealed from the Twelve Tribes of Israel
2. Revelation 7:9-10 depicts “**a multitude greater than anyone can count from every tribe and language and people and nation**”
3. These are the treasure that Christ shed his blood to win, to rescue them from the wrath of God, to perfect them in heaven... these are the point of the history of redemption
4. Again, note they are **STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE** and in front of the Lamb—they are no longer rebels but are now and eternally his servants!!

I. The Seven Trumpets: God’s Judgment Poured Out on Planet Earth, Part 1 (Rev. 8-9)

1. The seventh seal produces the seven trumpet judgments... an ecological disaster such as the world has never seen before...
2. Revelation 8-9 are why I know this book is talking about the **FUTURE**, and cannot merely be symbolical... nothing like these judgments at this scale has ever occurred in history
3. Because of Adam’s sin, the physical creation was condemned to a ravaging devastation... there are **ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS** of our sins and God’s judgments—this beautiful planet is fragile under the awesome power of God

These seven trumpets unleash a series of horrific judgments designed to give sinners on earth one final warning to repent...

The first trumpet resulted in fires raging on the surface of the earth, burning up 1/3rd of all the trees as well as all the green grass

The second trumpet: 1/3rd of the sea turning into blood, 1/3rd of the sea creatures dying, and 1/3rd of the ships destroyed

The third trumpet: poisoning 1/3rd of all the fresh water on earth

The fourth trumpet: 1/3rd of the sun, moon, and stars darkened

The fifth trumpet: unleashing a billowing cloud of demons pouring forth stinging and tormenting people for five months

The sixth trumpet: a massive demonic army numbering 200 million poured like a flood over the earth, slaughtering one third of all mankind... ONE THIRD!! Almost three BILLION people dying

And despite all of this horror, the saddest statement of all:

Revelation 9:20 The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent

J. The Scroll and the Two Witnesses (Rev. 10-11)

1. God deeply desires to warn the sinful earth about the judgment that is coming
2. These two chapters have in common that goal: WITNESSES
3. In Revelation 10, God sends an awesome, glorious, overwhelmingly huge angel who holds a scroll in his hand that John is commanded to eat... and in his mouth it tasted sweet, but it turned his stomach sour

Revelation 10:11 Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

4. Revelation 11: the TWO WITNESSES are deployed by God to Jerusalem to stand before the Antichrist (who we're about to meet in the next chapter) and proclaim the coming wrath of God with great boldness and power... they have the power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain for 3 ½ years

K. Satan's Savage Attack on the People of God (Rev. 12)

1. Revelation 12 depicts the reality of Satan, that ancient serpent, called the Dragon in these two chapters
2. He attacks the radiant, pregnant woman who gives birth to Christ... this represents Israel, the people of God... the Jews
3. Satan tries to kill Jesus before his time, but he fails
4. Then Satan is depicted as trying to take over heaven, and he fails... defeated by the archangel Michael and his angels; Satan and his demons are thrown down to the earth
5. Then the devil assaults the people of God on the earth viciously
6. Satan is thus depicted as a very powerful foe who is frustrated again and again in his violent designs against God and his people
7. BUT who is able to do much damage through his two greatest weapons: the Antichrist and the world system of Babylon

L. Satan's Greatest Weapon: The Antichrist (Rev. 13)

1. Satan is depicted as standing by the sea and summoning up out of the sea a BEAST
2. Almost exactly like Daniel 7 in which four successive beasts come up out of a turbulent sea, each representing a WORLD EMPIRE
3. But now, this is the final WORLD EMPIRE... and it all focuses on a single individual, called "The Antichrist" in 1 John 2
4. This world ruler is given power over the entire earth; whereas earlier emperors only had at most ¼ of the earth or far less... this ruler, under the direct power of Satan, takes over the whole world... he is empowered to make war against the saints and conquer them; he is also WORSHIPED by every non-elect person on earth
5. Thus this beast is BOTH a political ruler AND a religious figure... he will be worshiped AS GOD
6. The last part of the chapter concerns a second figure, the "False Prophet" who uses false miracles, signs and wonders to persuade people to worship the Beast
7. He also takes over the economic systems of the world and uses them to force allegiance and worship for the Beast... to receive the MARK OF THE BEAST

M. The Warning from God Proclaimed (Rev. 14)

1. During this terrible time of ecological judgments on planet earth and nations obeying and worshiping the Beast, God will have courageous witnesses who will proclaim his power and his kingdom
2. God sends angels flying in midair to give the world a clear warning concerning the mark of the Beast... in that warning is the terror of hell... ETERNAL CONSCIOUS TORMENT

Revelation 14:11 And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

3. Then comes the clear encouragement to all of the saints, the believers:

Revelation 14:12-13 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. ¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from

now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

N. The Seven Bowls: God's Final Judgments on Planet Earth (Rev. 16)

1. These are the most dreadful judgments ever poured out on planet earth
2. The seven trumpets were dreadful... these will finish the job

The First Bowl: Malignant Sores on the skin of people all over the world

The Second Bowl: The Entire Sea Turned to Blood, Every Living Sea Creature Dies

The Third Bowl: All Fresh Water Turned to Blood

The Fourth Bowl: People Scorched by the Sun's Heat

The Fifth Bowl: Darkness

The Sixth Bowl: The Way Opened for the Final Battle at Armageddon

The Seventh Bowl: Massive Earthquake, Hailstones

The Cumulative Effect: Suffering, but no Repentance

Revelation 16:8-9 they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.

O. Babylon the Great Revealed and Destroyed (Rev. 17-18)

1. The Book of Revelation now goes BACKWARD to reveal the awesome work of Satan in setting up a wicked, complex world system called symbolically "Babylon the Great"
2. It is the world with all its alluring enticements... the power and material wealth and sexual allure and sensual pleasures and food...
3. Babylon is portrayed as a whore dressed in purple, drunk on immorality and the blood of the saints
4. Babylon is also portrayed as a powerful massive city, a port city, in which ships captains come and deposit their wares and which is thrown down powerfully by the wrath of God
5. And all the people of the earth LAMENT and MOURN over her
6. This world system is Satan's masterpiece, designed to assault our souls with alluring temptations to pull us from Christ

7. So God gives us a TIMELESS WARNING from heaven about the danger of Babylon

Revelation 18:4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues

P. The Second Coming of Christ the King (Rev. 19)

1. As we saw earlier, God opens the way for the wicked kings of the earth, in service to the Antichrist, to assemble for a final battle at a place called Armageddon
2. They are there at Armageddon to slaughter the people of God who are resisting Antichrist
3. Christ will come lead his armies down from heaven to defeat Antichrist and his massive armies

Revelation 19:11-16 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The beast and the kings of the earth assembled to fight Christ, but they lost... and the beast and the false prophet are captured and thrown into the LAKE OF FIRE

- Q. Satan Bound for a Thousand Years (Rev. 20)... to keep him from deceiving the nations

After the 1000 years, Satan is released ONE LAST TIME and there is a final battle, and Satan is finally thrown into the Lake of Fire

R. The Final Judgment: the GREAT WHITE THRONE...

Rev. 20:11-15 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books... ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire

S. The New Heaven, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22)

1. The New Universe will be free from all death and suffering

Revelation 21:1-4 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

2. The New Jerusalem will be radiant with the glory of God

Revelation 22:1-5 *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

T. A Final Invitation from Christ (Rev. 22:17)

Revelation 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

II. Seven Timeless Lessons

A. God the Creator Rules the World

Revelation 4:11 *"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

1. God enthroned is the central reality of this universe and the one to come
2. God's active control of human history is our greatest comfort
3. This is the central lesson of the Book of Revelation: God Reigns!

Therefore, seek him continually; seek to honor and serve him totally; do not fight his rule, but make it your goal to please him in everything you do

B. Christ the Redeemer Will Triumph Gloriously

1. The second greatest lesson of the Book of Revelation is really the first lesson extended and clarified... God reigns WITH and THROUGH CHRIST HIS SON
2. Christ the redeemer perfects the sovereign plan of God in the face of human sin
3. Christ the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has triumphed
4. Christ the Lamb of God was slain and risen
5. By his blood he purchased people for God from every nation on earth
6. Christ is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals
7. The unfolding of the history of the world... even to the end... is in Christ's hands
8. At his Second Coming, he will slaughter his enemies effortlessly
9. In the New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem, Christ will reign with God gloriously
10. **Therefore** worship him now and thank him for your salvation
11. Trust in Christ NOW so that you may be delivered from the wrath to come

C. Satan is a Relentless Foe Who Will Finally Be Defeated

1. No book so clearly reveals the deadly power and wickedness of Satan
2. Revelation 12 depicts him as a mighty dragon relentlessly at war with God, with the angels, and with the people of God
3. Revelation 13 reveals the Beast from the Sea, the Antichrist, Satan's most brilliant and powerful attack on the people of God
4. Yet for all of the dragon's power, he is clearly portrayed as a loser
5. So beware of his power and vigilant against his assaults

Beware of Babylon and its alluring power... do not love the world

D. Christians Must Overcome by the Spirit

1. This is a massive battle for your souls

- Each of the letters to the seven churches promise rewards to those who
OVERCOME

Revelation 2:7 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:11 He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Revelation 3:21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

- By our faith in Christ and by the Spirit alone we can stand holy in this wicked world

Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

E. A Countless Multitude Will be Redeemed

- All this spiritual warfare and struggle is to one end... the GLORY OF GOD in the salvation of the elect from every nation on earth

Revelation 5:9 you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Our task is to be committed and faithful to spread the gospel to the lost... IT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL!!!!

F. Satan's Servants Will be Condemned

Revelation 20:15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8 the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

Revelation 14:10-11 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. ... ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night

G. The Present Universe is Cursed, the Future Universe Will Be Glorious

- The present universe is going to be destroyed... everything we see with our eyes is temporary... BUT
- The New Heaven and New Earth will be eternally, radiantly glorious

3. The New Jerusalem will have the throne of God and we will see his face!