

Read. Hear. Keep. - Preparing for Our Journey in Revelation

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[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ.! I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and each week I seek to balance the truth of God's Word with the love of Jesus Christ.

Today, we opened Revelation by reading the bookends, the beginning and the end of Revelation. This is found in Revelation chapter 1, verses 1 to 3, and Revelation chapter 22, verses 14 to 21. Revelation calls us to read, hear, and keep God's Word, and invites us to place our hope in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ says, Surely I am coming soon.

And as we journey, we will look at the context of Revelation and its connections across Scripture, so our faith is strengthened and our lives are shaped by Christ.

Well, good morning, everyone. It's been a long time coming. I've been talking about doing this sermon series on the book of Revelation for several weeks.

[1:07] Some of you have known since the beginning of the parables, some of you through the middle, and some of you towards the end. We began, many, many weeks ago, a 38-sermon series through the parables of Christ.

And going through these parables, there were certain language that really began to kind of attract, to pull my own heart and my spirit to go into Revelation.

You will find, before we even begin here, I want to go over this booklet. Now, this is the culmination of many weeks, many hours of preparation, searching through the Word of God, searching the Scriptures.

At Ontario Community Church, we look at the context of the Word, but we also look at the connections that's found within the Word of God. Some of you have seen, how many of you have seen it by raise of hand?

You've seen a picture of a rainbow. And the rainbow is showing a picture of Scripture, and it's showing all of the cross connections within each other.

[2:23] It might have been a circle, it might have been a rainbow, showing all the color coding with it. And there's some 42,000 connections within Scripture, which is very, not only inspiring, but something that is overwhelming.

And we're not going to go over those 42,000 connections, that's for sure. But it goes to show you the beauty within Scripture. There are some references that are blatant, some that are inferred, some that are direct, and some that are indirect.

And so, I want you to open this little booklet real quick, and I just want to go over what was written on here and what you're seeing here. Because as we begin through this sermon series through the book of Revelation, let us all approach God's Word with a sense of humility, unity among each other, and a willingness to follow where God leads us.

As I've mentioned before and I'll mention again, our goal is to observe the text. What is going on immediately within God's Word, right? It's to observe, to read, to observe, and to hear.

It is to understand. It is to learn and to grow and to keep, to apply and to live out the Word, what God has revealed to us. And how blessed we are to have the Word of God, and also so many books, so much technology and resources that we can use to be able to help us to search the Scriptures.

[3:55] But most importantly, it's not just technology and tools. It is the guidance of the Holy Spirit as well. Can I get an amen? Because God reveals truth.

There is so much truth that's found within it. And I also wrote in here, it is in times such as these, the rise of political division, hatred among Christians, technological advances and cultural changes and other things.

I mean, that's just not, it's just a few things that are going on in this world. I know we can go on and on for hours and even days about so much evil, hatred, division, disunity, disrespect.

We can think of all of these things and they discourage us, they derail us. And I pray that we may come together, united as the body of Christ, in such times as this.

I don't even need to begin to talk about the recent, this last week, this last two weeks. We think about these things and how important it is for us to seek God and His Word.

[5:04] And I've written in here, may you search the Scriptures, find the context and the connections. And my prayer for all of you is that you will grow in your faith. If you don't know Jesus Christ, may you come to believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

May you come to believe in Him. Metanoia, repentance, the changing of mind for who Christ is. May you find the connections and grow in your faith and be moved to do good in His name.

It's not just about head knowledge. It's also about the changing of our heart as well and also our hands, how we act, how we speak.

Because God is the God of transformation. And I want to put on here real quick, no matter where it is, many of us come from different denominational backgrounds.

Some of us may be raised a conservative Baptist. Some of us may have come from a Catholic background. Some of us may have, may be one of those theological nerd, right?

[6:11] Or someone who knows the Word of God very well. No matter what approach you're going to take in the timing of Revelation, it is important for us to remain united.

Now, I don't know about you, but I cannot tell you how many times I have met people who are divided over Revelation. How many of you, you don't have to raise your hand, but I can speak for myself.

Revelation can be a very divisive book. People talking about the timing of things and rapture versus non-rapture, all-millennial versus pre-millennial versus post-millennial versus preterist, and all these different things.

But what's important for all of us is to search the Scriptures, find the meanings and the connections within God's Word. You may hold to rapture theology.

You may not. You may be a pre-millennialist and that's what you're sticking with. Then by the grace of God, may you remain firm in your faith. But the approach that we are taking is searching the Scriptures and its connections in here.

[7:20] And so no matter who you are, where you are, when you are watching, whether you're watching online or here in person, all are welcome into this study.

I can't tell you how many pastors and people I've talked to from different denominations who are interested in going into this. Let us grow together and look towards the victory in Jesus, the hope in Him, as we await the new heaven and the new earth to reign with Him forever.

And I also want to point, it's important for us to know the Word of God says that no one knows the day or the hour when Christ will return. But how many of you have read a book or a magazine and it says that Christ will return on this day?

My favorite one is Y2K. I was trying to find a picture of Time Magazine. They had a picture of the Y2K bug and like a ticking time bomb kind of thing.

That imagery, which was showing fear towards the masses. And to be very honest, we think of the year 2000, that was a very scary time for sure. The unknown of technology and what was going to happen around that time.

[8:36] Or many of you may know the Mayan calendar, 2012. People thought the world was going to end in that. But it's important for us to know as we're even just beginning in this prelude of Revelation is that no one

knows the date or the time.

How many people have tried? And I don't know the answer, but there have been many people who have tried to find the timing of it. Or they'll say that, you know, what is the beast or the mark of the beast?

It's important for us to know that not only is there the mark of the beast, but there's also the mark of God that we find within Scripture. It's also important for us to know when we look at the seven churches, may we, when we think of oil and lamps, may we be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Much like how Scripture talks about, let your light shine. this little light of mine. You know the song. We know the parable. We don't want to hide our lamp under a bushel.

We start seeing these connections that are very clear. And so in this, I've also put that, that I'm honored to journey through Revelation with you.

[9:55] What you'll find in this book is your reading guide. Some of you may not. Some of you will read ahead and do it. Some of you may just read Revelation.

Some of you may want to find the connected readings in here. And I've put also the gospel and the parable connections with it. In searching and doing much research on this, I wanted to ensure that everything was as blatantly clear as possible.

Some of it, you might get a little confused with the symbolism for sure. But when we read Revelation, there are things that are just confusing. Amen? But the reality is, despite the mystery, we still seek the God of clarity.

And so in here, you see your, the connected readings. We're not going to go through all of these. This is for you. If you want to read ahead, just read in Revelation at least. If you want to go into the connected readings, by all means do it.

I can tell you, when you start going into the middle of Revelation, that's some heavy stuff right there. One of the things that I found as not only a one who studies scripture, but as a pastor, is the connection we find with the tribulation and the judgment and what we find with the story of Moses and the Israelites.

[11:19] That a lot of the, remember how the water turns into blood? Or the plague that was of locusts that's found? That's also found in Revelation. Revelation. And I'm like, how many times have I read this and I know it's there, but how blatant it is there.

So the next time you watch the Prince of Egypt and you see all of those judgments happening, a lot of that is connected in Revelation. How amazing is that?

To see that what was found in the Old Testament is now showing towards the end. And then towards the end of this booklet, I have also put these symbols and the parables and symbols of the parables in Revelation where you have things like the virgins in the banquet where we talked about the ten virgins that were awaiting the wedding feast, the parable of the banquet where they are anticipating the marriage supper and the white garments.

There's a verse in Revelation that says, blessed is the man who washes his robes. Whenever I read that, I think we'll just go do a load of laundry, right? Put some bleach in there.

Some of you get the joke, right? But it's much more than that. Like how we find connected going from filthy rags into white garments, how it's connected with that.

[12:40] And so I know this is a lot, but let this be your guide. Keep it at home. Bring it with you. And you'll find a lot in there. And I'm just very excited. I want to give that kind of as the prelude. With that in mind, I want us to open to Revelation.

Let's open the word together. We're going to go into the, it's going to be on page 1218 in your ESV Bible.

Or you can turn to Revelation chapter 1, verses 1 through 3. What I want to do as we're starting off here, I want us to look at the beginning and also the end.

Because you'll see that there's some connections here. Okay? Are we all there in Revelation? Revelation? Alright, so Revelation chapter 1, verses 1 through 3.

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ.

[13:52] Even to all that he saw, blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy. How about we read that together, yeah? Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear and keep what is written in it for the time is near.

There's a lot of depth in that and I want us to go into the end of Revelation. Let's turn there. We're going to go ahead and turn towards that ending piece here.

Make sure that we're good. Hold on there. Very good. We're going to turn to Revelation 22 and we're going to start on verse...

Let's go to verse 14. I put in my notes verse 16, but I want to show you right at the end. Are we all there?

Revelation 22 verse 14? There's that verse. Blessed are those who what? Who wash their robes, right?

[15:07] So we're not talking about a load of laundry here. We're talking about the cleanliness, the purification that comes from the Lord so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for who?

For the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. The spirit and the bride say, come. And let the one who hears say, come.

And let the one who is thirsty, come. Let the one who desires take the water of life without price. Do you see even the connections right there? Like when Christ is talking about the water that you drink, you will never thirst when he's talking to the woman at the well.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them, God will add him the plagues described in this book.

[16:19] Let's not add to this book, yeah? And if anyone takes away the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city which are described in this book.

He who testifies to these things say, surely, let's read that together, surely, I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all of you. Amen. And so, when we're looking at this, Scripture calls for us to not only read the Word of God but to hear it and to keep it.

We follow Jesus through revelation much like we find in the Gospels or in the Old Testament. And we can see these wonderful connections that help us understand revelation.

Now, for many of us, if you feel compelled to raise your hand, by all means do it, how many of you have been afraid of this book? I know growing up I was.

[17:27] I know growing up I, quite frankly, had wanted nothing to do with revelation because of how scary and confusing this book is. But when we think about it, just because it is hard to digest or even difficult for us to comprehend doesn't mean we should ignore it.

Much like how there are, are there not difficult concepts in the Word of God that sometimes we don't want to hear but yet we need to hear it? when we go through revelation, this will challenge us for sure and that's okay.

I pray that all of you will grow in Christ, that you will become stronger in faith and let it be known then that you will receive a blessing.

Isn't that interesting that in this book of revelation it talks about the blessing of reading it? And when I think about how we're going over revelation now, it is by the hand of God that we are in times such as this.

There's so much division and darkness and distractions. For many of us we may know that. How many of you have been discouraged recently by turning on the news and seeing the ugliness of people?

[18:58] We can see controversy happen, tragic events happen. It's important for us. Let us seek God who is our firm foundation in times such as this.

Political division, hostility among Christians, cultural and technological shifts as I was mentioning. This is why we turn to God and his word.

And I just have felt so moved by the fact that all these things are happening and now we're going through revelation because this book should give us comfort and the hope that is in Christ.

Revelation can feel scary but it is the unveiling of Jesus Christ given to his servants as the text mentions. And we know that this book is for churches.

The tone of this is pastoral. It is prophetic and it is apocalyptic. Now for many of us we think of the apocalypse, right?

[20:06] I know for me personally I think of how oh we got the door? Looked like okay yeah looks like someone wanted to come in. I think of how the zombie apocalypse not that I watch these things, maybe I have once or twice, maybe a few times.

We think of apocalypse like the cities are completely destroyed, right? There's no running water and electricity, right? The apocalyptic language is very similar to what we've actually found in the parables.

There's symbolic language, there is some mystery in it as well. It's nothing we should be afraid of. And that is why not only are we going to read the word of God in its context but also its connections in here.

I want to turn to the next slide here, right? So that's our observation, right? We've gone over the bookends of Revelation and I want to make it clear.

The intention in going through this we need to have guard rails. Why? Because there is really no other book that has caused so much more division than Revelation.

[21:22] So as I've been mentioning we will focus on the context and the connections of the word. We want to know where does the sea show up in Revelation and why does Revelation say there will be no more sea?

I used to read that and get so confused. When it's talking about in the new heavens and the new earth the sea will be no more. What? That sounds terrible when you read that. But there's much more than what it's talking about when we talk about the sea.

So looking at the context and the connections. The second thing is that we will not divide on the timelines and this is where my heart is at. Where you may feel convicted to look at Revelation literally then by all means do it.

You may be a post millennialist. Your conviction may be that of the rapture. What matters is that we're still going to seek God's word and find these connections.

And quite frankly this may actually strengthen your own view, your own how you view Revelation.

Because a lot of times when churches go over Revelation they're going to say we're premillennial or we're preterist or we're post millennial or we're amillennial.

[22:35] Those are just ways to divide us. Because when we think about it how we view Revelation should not divide us. We should be united on the things of Christ.

Bringing people to Christ to believe in Jesus Christ the way the truth and the life. And so I'm looking at some of you guys and I know exactly where you stand on that and that's okay.

We may agree to disagree but may that not be a dividing wedge especially in times such as this.

And so I hope that you'll take to heart these guardrails, right?

We will focus on the victory, hope, and preparation of Christ. So many people are so focused on the fear and the beasts and the four horsemen and all of this language that we have to be afraid of this imagery.

But the reality is when we know God there's nothing to be afraid of. We trust in the living God regardless of what's going to happen to us.

[23:42] We can think immediately in times such as this in the culture that we live in but we can also think well doesn't scripture tell us so much?

Do not be afraid. Or if you're a KJV-er, fear not. Let us not be afraid of God in his word.

Let us focus on the hope that is found in Jesus Christ and how we together can be united in Christ regardless of how we view revelation.

Because the victory is in Jesus. And if there's anything we take away from revelation is that we are to live our lives in preparation for the return of Christ.

That is what is important. And as I mentioned here, we will respect each other's theological convictions, journey in Christ, and keep the main thing the main thing.

[24:39] What's the main thing, church? It's on Jesus. Let's try that again. What is the main thing? It's focusing on Jesus, right? And so I expect that as we go through this, we will be challenged and that's okay.

Let us respect one another because where you are at in your spiritual journey is different than the person next to you. I can't tell you how many times I've met a young Christian and I want him to learn like all the deeper things that I already know.

They may not be ready. You've got to give them time, right? And what conclusions you have come to in viewing revelation may be different than the person next to you. I don't want to raise hands and be like, who's a premillennial here?

Who's a rapture person? I don't want to do that. Let us come humbly before our Lord and our God. Let's turn to the word. Let's open it. Let's see what it says and where it's connected.

Maybe it will. And I hope it does strengthen your faith and strengthen your conviction. And so let's keep the main thing, the main thing, right?

[25:47] Jesus Christ and the victory and the hope in him and the preparation that's to come. And then finally, I put here that, do you know the day or the time when Christ will come?

Just say no, right? Right? If you do, we're going to talk after, right? We think about it. Nobody knows the day or the hour. And that's okay.

Because our trust is in Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter when he's going to return. It matters is that I'm living my life that's going to honor and glorify God. I'm going to follow in the footsteps of Christ and I'm going to live every day in anticipation.

If he comes tomorrow, then so be it. Praise God. If he comes in our lifetime, praise God. When he comes, we'll be on God's timing.

We don't know. And I just want to put that in this prelude here. Let's go to that next slide then in here. And so in going through this, we are to keep, how do we apply this then, right?

[26:55] We have these guard rails and this stuff. Pastor's trying to restrict these different things. No, it's to ensure we don't attack each other. I think, in my humble opinion, I've gotten, I've never gotten in more heated arguments and debates with people than in Revelation.

because they talk about, you know, is Senator so-and-so the Antichrist? Or does this country have a Jezebel spirit?

You guys know what I mean, right? It goes on and on with that. But how we should apply this is that we need to keep Jesus Christ at the center of our lives for such a time as this.

We are living in this earth that is broken. There are many people who are in darkness. So a lot of people don't even know they're in darkness. And I've put on here for such a time as this in Babylon, right?

We think of the world. There's some people that are afraid of living in Babylon or living in the world. But there's really nothing for us to fear because we have Jesus Christ and we have his salvation.

[28:15] That is why we are called to share in the good news of the gospel. We are to share in the words of our testimony. We are to speak words, be present with others.

We are to do these things, to live and love like Jesus Christ, to bring one more person, not just one person, but to bring the next person to Christ, that they may know the way, the truth, and the life.

And I've also put in here speaking truth in love. We speak the truth and we deal with others in love. It's that balance of grace and truth, right?

We've got to love everybody, but we've got to speak truth at the same time. And how many of us, that's difficult, right? Sometimes we want to speak truth and we get real aggressive in the process, right?

And sometimes we want to be all loving. Well, you've got to speak truth as well. It's a nice balancing act for us. And we are to live that life in grace and truth united in Christ.

[29:25] Just as it says in scripture that a house divided cannot stand. Some of you may know that as a famous quote. It's a truth nonetheless. When we go through revelation, the last thing that I want and the last thing I hope you would want is for us to attack each other.

What matters is that we believe in Jesus Christ and we are a work in progress. That we're growing in the faith and the knowledge of the word of God, but also the transformation, the healing that comes from him.

The continued repentance, right? Metanoia, the continued changing of mind, being open and obedient to God's word and God's call for our own life.

I've always been amazed when, and you may identify, you may know someone who, man, when they were not a Christian, they were something else. But God convicted them.

God stirred their heart and they came to the Lord and that was the beginning and they continued to be transformed, becoming more like Christ.

[30:36] And so we are to live in that grace and truth, united in Christ. Having that confidence in the firm foundation, it is building up that house upon the solid rock.

It is producing fruit. It's important for us to learn these lessons, but it's also important for us to bear fruit. How will people know that we are Christians if we don't speak the truth in love?

If we don't do the works that God has called for us to do? And I always like to mention to people, we're not saved by what we do, but we are saved so that we can do works.

So that we can do good in the name of Christ. That is so critically important for us. I also want to make it clear in here that we are to live in anticipation and preparation for the end.

We are to persevere, right? When we're living in this world, there's going to be many battles that we face. For some of us, it may be of the mind. Some of us, it may be spiritual attacks, but we continue trusting in the living God because he is our firm foundation and we will not be shaken.

[31:51] We persevere, we endure, we follow Christ, we grow, and we act accordingly. That is all important for us. And then finally, I put, just as I was mentioning earlier, we are saved by grace, but we are saved for good works.

You've got to be careful. I know I'm talking semantics here, but imagine the implication being saved by works. Oh no, that is not the Christian faith.

We are saved by grace through faith so that we can grow and so that we can do good in his name. And it's good works. It's not evil. It's not sin.

That's why I put saved for good works. And so Christ invites all of us into the fold to come and see that the Lord is good.

Just like in Revelation, it keeps saying, come and see, come and see. Just like what we found in the gospel accounts. And so if you're not a Christian, if you're not a believer in Christ, may you enter into that saving grace by believing in Jesus Christ.

[33:04] First Corinthians mentions believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And may that not be the end.

Rather, may that be the beginning of your spiritual walk in the Lord, growing in him, being transformed. I love that imagery of the potter and the clay.

Or like how I mentioned last week when we celebrated our 80th anniversary here at Ontario Community, the broken plate that gets put back together and becomes more valuable than it once was before.

Sealed with gold, right? That's very cultural. The art of Kintsugi. You can think of many different ways. Going from darkness into light, right? Just as vessels were being carried.

And when we found in Ezra, vessels being carried from the place they didn't belong into the place that they do belong. Or just as Christ is going to lead his sheep into the pin.

[34:02] The journey may not be the most ideal. If you've walked, maybe had horses go from one place to the next or cattle or sheep, sheep are going to trip and fall from time to time and you're going to need to help them.

But in any case, to come and see that the Lord is good, to become a believer in Christ and to grow in the faith and be moved to do good and be encouraged here.

Let us invite others to let us speak the words of truth, sharing in the gospel of Jesus Christ, sharing in your own story and how God has worked in and through your life.

And let us be reminded to do good in the name of Christ. And so, yes, we did go over only a few verses. This next week, we're going to go into chapter 1, verses 1 through 8.

But I wanted, as we are beginning, to set the guard rails and for us to prepare for this journey through revelation, I encourage for all of you to invite someone to come to know the Lord.

[35:18] Invite one person to come to church or think of someone you can share your faith with. Think of someone that you can show the love of Christ through action.

Think of these things. Let us remember that God is at work just as we have celebrated 80 years of faithfulness and blessings from God. Let us boldly move forward into this sermon series, being faithful to God and to his word.

May we be thankful to God and may we approach him being ready in anticipation, not just to grow, but in anticipation for his return.

Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you for this time and this opportunity for us to gather together as we have touched the surface of revelation.

Father, we pray that there will be a sense of unity among the body of Christ, that we won't argue, but rather will seek you and your word.

[36:26] We pray that this church body and those that are watching online, that there will be a sense of protection from any evil. We know that there's a spiritual war that is happening.

We pray for protection. We also pray that if there's anyone that is wrestling with the decision to believe in Christ, may they be encouraged and moved to believe in the death, burial and resurrection of your son. We pray that we may not only grow individually, but we may grow collectively as a church body.

I pray for all of those that are here today, those that are not here, that are traveling or sick. And I pray for those that are watching online. May you come to know Jesus Christ, grow in him and be moved to live out the faith.

It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray and we all say together, amen church. Amen. Thank you for joining us for today's message from Ontario Community Church.

If this message encouraged you, I encourage for you to share it with a friend or family member. Remember the blessing that comes from reading, hearing and keeping God's word.

[37:40] Today, we set our guardrails by hearing the beginning and the end of revelation and focusing and fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ. Next week will be week two as we continue with revelation chapter one verses one through eight.

And we are going to focus on Christ as the alpha and the omega, and we will connect it with many verses throughout scripture. Until next time, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you as we continue to encourage, equip and engage lives for Christ.

God bless. God bless.