

## **A Bible Overview, Session 12: “Letters and the Revelation”**

### Student Handout

- Everything in creation and everything in redemption history is centered in Jesus Christ
- The Bible is about: Creation -> Rebellion -> Redemption -> Re-creation
- Jesus Christ did not come into the world to make bad people good.  
Jesus Christ came into the world to make dead people alive.

### **LETTERS**

- 21 letters written by Peter, James, John, and Paul.
- Many issues are addressed in the letters to the new churches. Within them is doctrine- or Christian beliefs-, encouragement to believers, and instructions for Christian living.
- Because of the distinct way believers lived they were first called “Followers of the Way.”

Using the twelve themes we’ll see how they are incorporated in the Letters.

#### **Creator/Sovereign God**

- God is eternal, perfect, holy, the **Creator** of the universe. The only true God.
- Thus, He is **sovereign** having all power and authority over all things.

Paul: *20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.* Romans 1:20

#### **Relationships**

- God is a relational God who desires a **relationship** with people who, alone, are made in the image of God.
- God desires that people live in right **relationships** with each other and with the created world.

Paul: *10 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. 11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.* Romans 5:10-11

John: *...God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.* 1 John 5:11-13

Paul: *There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Galatians 3:28

Paul: <sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:29-30

## **Spiritual Conflict**

- We are in a spiritual battle between self and God.
- We have a choice: to obey God or follow Satan, the world, or inner desires.

Paul: *The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.* Galatians 5:17

Paul: <sup>6</sup> I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News <sup>7</sup> but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ. Galatians 1:6-7

Paul: <sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord... <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

<sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:10-12,17

## **Theme: Human Heart**

- The **human heart** encompasses our mind, will and emotions. It's from our heart that we make choices.
- Since the Fall, the **human heart** is rebellious, self-centered, deceitful, and a "slave to sin".
- The **human heart** is alive to God through Christ Jesus and dead to the power of sin.

James: *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire...covet... quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.<sup>3</sup> When you ask...you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.* James 4:1-3

Paul: <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ... 1 Corinthians 5:17-18

Paul: *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.* Colossians 3:1-2

## **Judgment**

- God is holy and the **human heart** is self-centered and rebellious (sin), thus we are separated from God. God is righteous and must **judge** sin.
- God will **judge** everyone.

Author of Hebrews: *Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...* Hebrews 9:27

Paul: *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.* Romans 2:5

John: *16...God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. 17 And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.* 1 John 4:16-17

## **Blood Sacrifice**

- Sin (disobedience) separates unholy people from the Holy **Creator God**. God **judges** sin.
- God, out of love, established a system by which sins could be forgiven: the **blood** from the sacrifice of an unblemished, innocent animal.
- Jesus' **blood** provided: atonement for one's life, redemption, justification and forgiveness of sin.
- There is power in Jesus' **blood**.

God: *11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.* Leviticus 17:11

Author of Hebrews: *In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.* Hebrews 9:22

Author of Hebrews: *11 But when Christ came as high priest...12 ... he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.* Hebrews 9:11-12

Paul: *21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21*

## Grace

Grace is God's riches at Christ's expense. Grace cannot be earned; it is a gift to be received. The Creator God was born into the world to redeem us from the power of death and Satan by ransoming us with His blood so we may have a relationship with Him.

Paul: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—... it is the gift of God— 9 not by works...* Ephesians 2:8-10

Paul: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Romans 6:23

## Redeemer

- Redeem means to buy back something that was lost.
- Sin separates humans from relationship with God.
- Jesus, the God-Man, redeemed us from the consequences of sin with His blood so we may have relationship with God.

Paul: *22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe... 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* Romans 3:22-24

Paul: *5For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people...* 1 Timothy 2:5-6

## Covenant

- God made seven covenants- or promises- with His people that may be either conditional or unconditional.
- The New Covenant is the promise that God makes with humanity that, by His grace, He will forgive sin and restore relationship with God with those whose hearts are turned toward Him.
- One may only enter the New Covenant by faith in Christ, who shed His blood to take away the sins of the world.

Paul: *23... The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread...and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way... "This cup is the new covenant in my blood..."* 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

## Faith

- Faith is a gift from God to trust in, rely on, and adhere to Jesus Christ and God's Word.
- Faith includes intellectual assent about who Jesus is and trusting in what Jesus accomplished for our salvation.
- Biblical faith is always accompanied by heart repentance.
- Without faith it is impossible to please God, to be saved, or to live in obedience to what the Bible says.

Author of Hebrews: *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see... 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible...*

*6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:1-3, 6*

Paul: *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Romans 5:1-2*

## Obedience

- For the Christian, obedience means complying with everything God has commanded.
- We obey him because we love Him.
- Obedience is surrender to God's will and trusting Him for what happens in our lives.

Jesus: *"If you love me, keep my commands."* John 14:15

James: *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22*

Paul: *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, ... 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ... 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature...: Colossians 3:1,2,5*

John: *4 Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar... 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them...: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did. I John 2:4-6*

## Remember

- God wants us to remember who He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do.
- We remember through His Word, Psalms, memorials, annual festivals and Communion.
- Remembering helps us trust, obey and rely on Him and focus on what is important

Peter: <sup>2</sup> I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.<sup>3</sup> Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers... will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised...<sup>5</sup> But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water... <sup>8</sup> But do not forget... 2 Peter 3:2-8

## **REVELATION: A book of prophecy revealing coming events.**

Chapter 1: Description of Jesus and He states the reason for the *Revelation*.

Chapters 2 and 3: Letters to seven churches. Jesus both commends them for their strengths and warns them about their weaknesses.

Chapter 4: Describes God's throne in Heaven and the worship of God that takes place there.

Chapter 5: Jesus and the Scroll

*5...See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.*

*6Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain...*

*9... "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation." vs. 5,6,9*

Abrahamic **Covenant**: "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:3

Chapters 6-18: Tribulation

*The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. <sup>21</sup> Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts. Revelation 9:20-21*

There is a lot of symbolism in Revelation which leads to various interpretations. But most people agree on the following three points:

### 1. Chapter 19-20: Jesus Will Return and Defeat Evil

*I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. Revelation 19:11a*

*On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords. 19:16*

*With justice he judges and wages war. 19:11b*

*He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 19:13*

## 2. Chapter 20: Final Judgment

In Genesis 3:15, we learned the promised Redeemer would “crush” Satan’s head.

*...And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur... tormented day and night for ever and ever. Revelation 20:10*

*11 Then I saw a great white throne... 12 And I saw the dead... 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... 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15*

## 3. Chapter 21-22: New Heaven and New Earth

*21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth”... the Holy City, the new Jerusalem... 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people... 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.”*

*5 He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Revelation 21:1-5*

*22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. Revelation 21:22-23*

Revelation 22:21: *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.*