

# "God's Love Story Sermon Outlines"

by Doug Hamilton

## Section 39: "Crossing the Finish Line of God's Love Story" (Revelation)

Revelation 1:1 refers to the writing as the "*Revelation of Jesus Christ*". The word revelation simply means *to reveal that which was hidden*. The message was given by Jesus through inspiration to the Apostle John who was to pass it on to the seven churches of Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. We must not pretend that the letter was being written to our twenty-first century audience. The things written therein are directly referring to that of their generation, not ours. Throughout the letter, the beginning, the middle and the end seem to convey that principle.

- Rev 1:1 "...the things which must shortly take place..."
- Rev 1:3 "...for the time is near..."
- Rev 1:19 "...which shall take place after these things."
- Rev 2:10 "...what you are about to suffer."
- Rev 2:16 "Repent therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly..."
- Rev 3:10 "...which is about to come upon the whole world..."
- Rev 6:11 "...a little while longer..."
- Rev 22:6 "...the things which must shortly take place."
- Rev 22:20 "...Yes, I am coming quickly."

We are reading their mail and what is about to happen concerns that generation of people. We must understand the recipients of the letter before we can make application to our modern-day lives.

### Their Situation

What was going on in the lives of the first-century Christians? It was about AD 89 and Emperor Domitian was on the throne in Rome. Through decades of the ignorant and superstitious populace seeking to deify emperors, it finally took root with Domitian. He declared himself god and demanded to be called Lord by the empire. The problem was that Christians believe that Jesus alone is Lord. They were not about to take a little incense, throw it into the fire and declare Domitian as Lord. The Empirical response was severe persecution and even murder to the Christians.

- They would have animal hides strapped to them to be torn to pieces by wild dogs.
- They were being fed alive to lions.
- The Romans would cook them alive in bull-shaped frying pans.
- They were being dipped in oil and burned alive at the stake.
- Sometimes they would throw young children of Christians and catch them on the end of their spears.
- Tens of thousands were being beheaded, hung on crosses, run through with the sword.

Revelation is styled as *apocalyptic literature* which was a sort of encrypted writing designed to be understood only by the persecuted. It used meaningful numbers, colors and Old Testament

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references that any practicing first-century Christian would have understood. The pagans and heathen would not likely understand it at all.

Of the 393 verses in the letter, 265 or 67% directly or indirectly go back to the Old Testament. It would be logical to understand the OT in order to make application.

## Symbolism of Numbers

- **1** -unity (John 10:30 "I and the Father are one.")
- **2** -strength of companionship (Prov 27:17)
- **3** -deity or trinity (Mt 28:19-20; Isa 6:3)
- **4** -creation (Gen 13:14-15)
- **6** -human failure (Rom 3:23)
- **7** -divine fullness, perfection (Gen 2:2)
- **10** -divine completeness (ten plagues of Egypt, Ten Commandments, ten virgins)
- **12** -the people of God (12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles, 12 disciples)
- **1000** -complete (Dt 7:9; Ps 50:10; 2Pet 3:8)

## Symbolism of Colors

- **white** -purity
- **black** -evil
- **red** -blood, war
- **ashen or green** -death
- **purple and scarlet** –adornment, royalty

## The Outline of the Letter

Revelation 1:19 is the simple outline given by the apostle John. *“Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”* For the sake of time brief summary of the three sections are as follows.

### 1. The things which John had seen (chapter one)

Chapter one not only introduces the letter, the writer, the recipients and the background, but also to the eternal priestly warrior Jesus Christ. His hair is as white as snow, indicating His holy and pure thoughts. His Eyes are like the flames of a fire, indicating there is vengeance in His sight. He has bronze feet with stomping power and the bold, forceful voice like the running of many waters. He had a sword coming out of His mouth, pointing to the strength of His words. His face shined like the sun in relation to His righteousness. He is the holder of the keys of Hades, for *“for He was dead and alive for evermore”*. He is the *“alpha and omega”, “the first and the last” and “the beginning and the end”*, indicating he is timeless and eternal. Jesus was clearly depicted in the first

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chapter as the Eternal Priestly Warrior. To this John fell down like a dead man out of reverence of Jesus.

## 2. The things which are (chapters two and three)

This was the present state of the seven churches of Asia. As a prisoner from the Island of Patmos, John addresses the church at seven locations. Each one of the congregations would be asked to overcome something in their lives.

- Ephesus: The Lost Love Church –In their efforts to wipe out false teachers, they forgot to treat people with love and compassion. If they overcame this, then they shall eat of the tree of life.
- Smyrna: The Faithful Unto Death Church –The only negative was that they would undergo a short, but deadly persecution. If they overcame, then they shall not suffer the second death in the afterlife.
- Pergamum: The Stumbling-block Church –They were causing others to sin in the church. If they overcome that problem, then they shall receive the hidden manna in the presence of God and carry the white stone of innocence.
- Thyatira: The Tolerance Church –They were a great church family, except there were some among them whom taught a subjective tolerance of sin. If they were to overcome, then they shall rule the nations and possess the morning star of the hope of a new day in eternity.
- Sardis: The Graveyard Dead Church –They were named in such a way because the congregation was simply going through the motions. If they were to overcome, then they shall be clothed in white and their names would be in the Book of Life on that last day.
- Philadelphia: The Open Door Church –They were the open door to all Asia, being the furthest East. They were simply to hold tight to Christ and if they did, then they shall become a pillar in the temple of the LORD,
- Laodicea: The Materialistic Church –They were a rich community with equally rich attitudes in the congregation. If they overcome their problem, then they shall be permitted to sit with Jesus in His kingdom.

All seven congregations were told to overcome just as Jesus did the same. Revelation 3:21 *'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

3. The things which shall take place after these things (chapters four through twenty-two) *Revelation 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."* The phrase "after these things" is

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mentioned only in this third section (Rev 4:1; Rev 7:9; Rev 9:12; Rev 15:5; Rev 18:1; Rev 19:1; Rev 20:3). Obviously this is the third and final section of the letter.

It is important to note that when passing through the portal, time is no longer a factor. In eternity with God, all things stand outside the realm of time. This is key to understanding the remainder of the letter, for it is not chronological, but simply the same theme of victory snatched out of the hands of defeat, played over and over again, communicating the need to stay faithful unto the end.

## Vision 1: Default Position (Chapters 4 and 5)

Before revealing the near future events for the Christians, it was necessary to establish the default position. Chapters four and five do just this. In chapter four we find God on the throne and all heaven focusing on Him. The cherubim, the elders, the angels and all creation with confidence knows that God is on the throne. Chapter five turns the focus on Jesus, the seven-horned, seven-eyed, all powerful, all seeing Lamb which was slain, but is now alive. He is in control overall. If God is on the throne and Jesus Christ is in control, then no threat is a danger to the Christian. With that as default it is now time to reveal the revelation. For the remaining of the letter, Jesus establishes the track record of God to deliver the people of God from an evil world.

## Vision 2: The First Generation Christians Overcame (Chapter 6 and 7).

Chapters six and seven looks back to the first generation of Christians, from Pentecost to the Nerodian persecutions. Seal one revealed the white horse of the evangelistic Christians conquering with the gospel of Christ. Then came the red horse of local persecution. Then a black horse of economic persecution. Seal four revealed death and Hades for that generation because of deadly persecution, culminating in the Nerodian persecution. Seal five revealed a cry from those Christians from under the altar of God. They cried out for vengeance for those who spilled their blood. Seal six revealed the cataclysmic judgment which God was about to unleash upon the world. In the midst of the chaos and terror there was a numbering from twelve tribes of God's people. The total of the group is 12x12x1000 or 144,000. It was not a literal number, but that which is symbolic of all the people of God. By the end of chapter 7 we find the people of God in the complete solitude of deliverance to the realm of heaven (7:16-17). When the readers listened to this, the natural questions were "How did they go from torture to glory?"

## Vision 3: The People of God from the Old Testament Overcame (Chapter 8-11)

If the deliverance of the persecuted Christians was not enough encouragement, then perhaps the entire Old Testament faithful might give them greater boldness. Chapters eight through eleven demonstrated through seven trumpets that God has an incredible record of deliverance from enemies spanning the Old Testament. Each trumpet blown calls into remembrance of past judgment against the Old Testament persecutors of God's people like falling brimstone, blood-filled and poisoned waters, pits of darkness, locusts and deadly forces invading from beyond the

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Euphrates. During all the Old Testament times of persecution there was still the call to carry God's word to the world. The Christians were called to do the same with the oath-taking angel in chapter 10. It was further symbolized in chapter 11 through the two witnesses. The witnesses are symbolically Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil and religious leaders upon returning after captivity. They also ended up in the heavenly realm by the end of the chapter just like the Nerodian Christians. The point being: Overcome in this world and you will overcome in the next.

## Vision 4: Jesus the Overcomer (Chapter 12)

Chapter 12 advances to yet the greatest example of an overcomer, Jesus Christ. Satan could not destroy Him in the earthly ministry, could not gain a grip on Jesus' heavenly realm and could not even beat Jesus' messenger Michael. The devil had every attempt to destroy Jesus, but failed in the end. There was nothing left but to war with the generation at hand, the recipients of the letter (12:17).

## Vision 5: The Prediction of the Recipients Overcoming (Chapters 13 and 14)

Chapter 13 reveals that Civil Rome (Sea Beast) and Religious Rome (Land Beast) will be the persecutor of the recipients. Caesar, propped up by Romish priests, and with the support of his worshippers with the mark of MAN, 666, will be the culprits. They will do everything in their power to crush the Godly. Just when it looks like all hope is lost, they again are transported to the heavenly realm of chapter 14. One layer at a time, the Domitian Era Christians are being encouraged and educated for preparation of what is to come.

## Vision 6: How the Christians will Overcome (Chapters 15 through 20)

Chapters 15 through 20 goes into greater description of the destruction of the Roman Empire, referred to as the Seven Bowls of Wrath. The wrath of sickness, poverty, thirst, fire, darkness and of the earth is what the persecutors have in store for them. All of the evil get clobbered, the heathen nations, the Whore of Babylon, the land and sea beasts of chapter 13 and even the devil will be crushed in the end. No longer will Rome be a tool in the devil's hand to persecute the Christians.

## Vision 7: We made it! (Chapters 21 and 22)

With all evil conquered, it was time to celebrate. Chapters 21 and 22 reveal the heavenly realm at the end, including symbols of a new heaven and earth, a New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, the Tabernacle of God, the river and trees of life and eternity with God. There will be no longer any pain, sorrow, tears or anxiety. All the people of God from all times will be there celebrating with Him for eternity. What better way to close out the series of God's Love Story than to experience a glimpse of heaven in the end.

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### Application

Through inspiration John encouraged persecuted Christians to hang onto the faith, to be overcomers. They were shown the authority of Jesus as being the priestly warrior. They received the charge to overcome just like Jesus did. They were given seven visions to help the envision victory. They were reminded of all those others who overcame that preceded them, the Nerodian-era Christians, the Old Testament followers of God and Jesus Himself. Then they saw their own victory and then the details of that victory. Finally they saw their victory! With that letter in hand they were able to look Caesar in the eye and say "Bring it on! I am ready for victory!" They became more than conquerors through Jesus.

We need to always be helping one another to see the victory of Christ from many different angles. We need to be reminding each other of the previous victories to the overcomers of the past. We need to see our own challenges with clarity and envision our own overcoming of the same. We need to be reminding each other of the specifics of how God is going to deliver us in the end. We need to stare victory in the face and embrace it fully. That is how we help each other to cross the finish line of God's Love Story.