**PREACHING NOTES: THE CHURCH THAT JESUS WANTS (REVELATION 2-3)**

**WEEK 1: REVELATION 1 (ENCOUNTER)**

(Leon Mileham)

This series ties in with Game Changers, the study of Nehemiah in connect groups and Leon’s recent ministry.

General Points About Revelation

It is not easy reading! (imagery, maths, timeline of events)

This series is not designed to make us scholars, but better disciples! (the church Jesus wants – “make disciples …”)

How should I read/treat it?

Ask God to reveal how it applies to you/CCM in our day.

Allow God to hold up his word up like a mirror to you and ask:

* Show me what is good/right;
* Show me what needs changing;
* Show me what is to come;
* Show me how to respond;

Jesus’ Second Coming

We may not understand all of Revelation, but it is important to remember that Jesus is coming back (see esp. Matt 24-25; 1 Thess 4-5). Rather than try and second guess when it will happen, we should rather seek to constantly ready ourselves for when it happens.

**Read Revelation 1**

Revelation was likely written in circa 95AD, historically a time of intense persecution. Its author is the apostle John (one of the original 12), now an elderly man, exiled for the sake of the gospel on the island of Patmos. He was also closely associated with the seven churches he is writing to and, as tradition holds, was a bishop of Ephesus

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**The Book of Revelation begins with an encounter with the risen and ascended Jesus.**

The verses tell us some useful things about him:

1. "Like a son of man" (see also Daniel 7:13) – Jesus’s description of himself – he is fully God and fully man.
2. Long robe/sash - priestly robes – Jesus is our Great High Priest (see Hebrews 4:14) who stands in the gap for us.
3. White hair (see Proverbs 16:31) is a symbol of Jesus’s righteousness/sinlessness.
4. He is awesome and glorious! (his eyes; his feet; his voice; his face).

We could not stand and behold Jesus – like John, if we saw him we would fall down as if dead!

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**JESUS’S RIGHT HAND:**

V16/20: The “seven stars” are the “angels” of the churches – this also translates “messengers” and even “bishops” (overseers/elders).

Some interpret that these are angels assigned to individual churches (see Matt 18:10; Hebrews 1:14);

Some interpret that this refers to the leaders of the church.

But however it is translated, with the hand he holds these in, he reaches out to touch John – “Do not be afraid”.

Jesus consoles and encourages us – he reaches out to us with his right hand. Jesus’s desire is intimacy with us. He reassures us that he is in control. His desire is for his church to succeed. The letters that follow are letters of love written to his bride. We should bear these things in mind as we read the letters and apply them to our own situations. The letters say some strong things, but they are written from a place of love.

**Some verses about God’s right hand:**

Psalm 63:8/Isaiah 41:10 - his right hand upholds me

Psalm 139:10 – his right hand will hold me fast

Psalm 48:10 - his right hand is filled with righteousness

Psalm 80:15 – his right hand plants

Psalm 18:35 - his right hand sustains

Psalm 44:3 - his right hand brings victory

Psalm 78:54 – his right hand takes ground

Exodus 15:6 – his right hand shatters the enemy

Exodus 15:12 – his right hand works miracles

Isaiah 48:13 - his right hand creates

Psalm 60:5/108:6;17:7; 98:1; 138:7 – his right hand saves us and helps us.

**Revelation 1:5b-6:**

**To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, [6] and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father---to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.**

**An additional word about the sword in the left hand.**

*As I was reading and studying this passage I felt God break in and the picture I had was of the sword coming out of Jesus’s mouth in his left hand whilst he holds the seven stars and reaches out with his right. I felt God give me a word for certain people in CCM; as with any prophetic word/picture, please test this out against the Bible and pray about it.*

**Read Judges 3:12-30 – Ehud.**

(The Israelites were under the control of Moab – the people cry out to God for a deliverer and he raises up Ehud, a left-handed warrior.

Ehud brings a tribute to King Eglon of Moab – he tells Eglon he has a secret message for the king, which enables him to enter Eglon’s chamber alone. Being left-handed, Ehud has concealed a double-edged sword at his right-hand side. Ehud kills Eglon with the concealed sword. The king is so fat that his belly encloses around the sword completely.)

**Word:**

In the natural left-handers are unorthodox, think differently, approach from a different angle. Left-handedness can look a bit unusual and it used to be attempted to be corrected. Left-handed sports people/fighters can have an advantage in that most train against right-handed opponents – the “unexpected left hook”!

God is raising up **spiritual** left-handers in Connect Church - unorthodox people, unexpected people, the sort of people who used to be corrected because their way of doing things didn't fit into the acceptable expected norm, who approach things from a different and unexpected angle.

God is going to use them to deliver the word, the sword of the Spirit, in such a way to not only penetrate into situations/people's lives, but where it will be completely absorbed and become a part of them.

Being unorthodox and unexpected, some people are going to struggle with them and their methods, but they are to proceed the way God has made them and the way he directs them.

(700 left-handed fighters were chosen from 26,700 Benjamite soldiers, who could sling a stone at a hair and not miss! (See Judges 20:15-16))