

Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

This morning, I'd like for us to turn in our Bibles to probably the most popular New Testament book in today's society. If I were to take a poll this morning as to what book in the New Testament do you think people want to hear preaching from more than any other book in the New Testament, what book do you think that would be? I think it would have to be the book of Revelation. I want you to turn with me to Revelation 1. With Hal Lindsey's book, The Late Great Planet Earth, and all the emphasis today upon prophecy, people want to know what the book of Revelation has to say. I'd like to preach from the first chapter this morning, a message entitled A Vision of Christ. A vision of Christ.

Paul H. Dixon:

The book of Revelation tells us that there is special blessing to be gleaned as we would study this book. Revelation 1:3 says blessed is he that readeth. In a very special way, God has said he will bless those who spend time in this book. I also think that most study the book of Revelation so they can learn more about signs of the times and the nearness of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Certainly important. That's not why the book was written.

Paul H. Dixon:

The book was written to reveal something. Why? Well, you say it's written to reveal signs. No, no. It's written to reveal the Savior. In fact, the word revelation comes from a Greek word, and a Latin word as well, that means unveiling. What we have in the book of Revelation is a very special unveiling of Jesus Christ. You see Christ in Revelation like you see him in no other book of the Bible. In fact, one of the most fascinating ways to study Revelation is to just go through it and to study all the names and the titles and the ways that you would see Christ in this book.

Paul H. Dixon:

What we're going to do this morning is study the first unveiling of Christ. It's found in the first chapter, and we're going to study verses 9 through 20. Rather than read all of those verses, I'm going to give you the outline. Now, let me encourage you to do this. You retain three to four times more when you write something down as to when you just hear it. You just hear it, generally, it's so easy to forget it. But if you'll take notes, this week, you'll have something that will stick with you better, even if you lose the notes. Secondly, if you keep the notes, it'll be something you can reflect back upon later. I would like to think that any ministry we have in the Word is not just for the present time, but for the future, and that God would even enable us to share it with others. So I want to give you the outline. You might like to write it down.

Paul H. Dixon:

The first thing we're going to study this morning is the Revelation. We're going to see how Christ is revealed in this first chapter. The second thing we're going to study this morning is the reason for the revelation. Why is he revealed in such a manner? The third thing we're going to study today would be the results of that revelation. We're going to see the revelation, how Christ is revealed, why he is revealed in such a manner, the reason for it. And then the results of that, at least how it affected John, who gave us the revelation, and therefore, how it ought to affect us.

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Paul H. Dixon:

Let's look at the revelation first of all, shall we? The unveiling of Christ has to be one of the most unusual pictures of Christ that anyone could imagine. I don't think that any master painter could ever put this on a canvas. In fact, I think that when John saw Christ like we're going to see him today, I think it must have been totally overwhelming. It was only by the inspiration of God that he could pin it, because it almost seems like some of the things would cause you to overlook some of the other things, the way that he sees Christ. It's filled with meaning, with rich symbolism of the Old Testament. It's very interesting. The Greeks were known for their artistic beauty and the Hebrews were known for their spiritual truth. You have a combination here, but especially this painting that we're going to see that John gives us in words is going to be filled with spiritual truth for you and for me.

Paul H. Dixon:

The first thing I want you to notice is the title given to Christ. In this revelation, the first thing that John tells us is his title. Let's start with verse nine. "I, John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation and the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." He had been imprisoned. He's being persecuted because of his preaching and his teaching of the gospel.

Paul H. Dixon:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet." Another interesting study, the trumpets of the Bible. When God spoke from Mount Sinai, the Bible tells us he spoke with the voice of a trumpet. The Bible tells us that when the temple was open, first thing in the morning when they would call the people to worship, they would announce the worship with the blast of the trumpet. The scripture tells us that on that great day of Jubilee and the great year of Jubilee, it was always started with the blast of trumpets. Scripture tells us in connection with the second coming of Christ, the Lord shall descend from heaven with the sound of the trump. And here we find again the voice of a trumpet.

Paul H. Dixon:

"Saying I am Alpha and Omega the first and the last. What thou seest, write in a book. Send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia, unto Ephesus, unto Smyrna, unto Pergamos, unto Thyatira, unto Sardis, unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. I turned to see the voice that spake with me. Being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man." His title is Son of Man. Now, you Bible students know that this was his human title. Jesus is so called 85 times in the gospels the Son of Man.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now, what's significant about that? The impact to me is here is God, who was made man, who became man, who took upon him flesh, who could identify with our trials and our tribulations because he passed through them, Hebrews 4 tells us, with the exception of not experiencing sin. Therefore, because he has passed through this, he even has a greater reason for being our judge. You're going to notice this, that this revelation of Christ is the revelation of Christ as the judge. He is our judge not only because he's the Son of God, but because he's the Son of Man.

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Then we notice his garment. The Bible says he was like unto the Son of Man clothed with a garment down to the foot. Evidently, it was a long robe. The robe was indicative of official dignity. Back in that day, of course, your kings would attire themselves in a robe. Old Testament priest wore the robes. But also, the judges would dress in a robe. It's wonderful to behold Jesus Christ as the sovereign God, as the King. It's tremendous to study him as the intercessor for us, the priest. But we also need to study him as the judge, and that's how we see him here.

Paul H. Dixon:

Then we notice his girdle. The scripture says he was girt about the paps with a golden girdle. Gold is always symbolic of deity. It's interesting in the Old Testament that gold was woven into the girdle of the High Priest. But this gold is not woven into that girdle. The Bible says that it is solid gold. It's also interesting to note that this girdle did not go about the loins, as generally is the case, it went about the breast. Because this judgment that he's going to render is not rendered just out of a mind, but it's rendered out of his great heart. It's judgment based upon love and based upon affection. His love can never be questioned because he has demonstrated at Calvary that truly, he's the lover of our souls beyond all others.

Paul H. Dixon:

Scripture talks about his hair. It says his head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow. Remember back in the book of Daniel, Jesus is pictured as the Ancient of Days. This white hair is symbolic of someone who's been around for a long time. Here he is, the Eternal One who has the right to judge us. It's also indicative of someone who's aged, has great deal of wisdom. It pictures the fact that he is eternal wisdom and he has a right to be our judge.

Paul H. Dixon:

Then we notice his eyes. The scripture says that his eyes were as a flame of fire, verse 14. Eyes speak of knowing. I remember going to Oberlin College to visit, trying to find out something about Charles G. Finney, the great evangelist. It was an interesting experience. I'll tell you about it sometime. I don't have time this morning. Trying to find out something about the man who founded the college, and they don't want you to know anything about it because they don't take great pride in their founder. But as I went around there, one of the people said, "Did you ever see the picture hanging in the library of Charles G. Finney?" I said, "No." So I went over to the library to find it and I couldn't find it. They said it was down the basement under some books or something.

Paul H. Dixon:

They said, though, the one thing about that picture that stands out was the man's eyes. They said that man had such eyes, they say, that he could look at you and you would almost wilt. They said his eyes just seemingly pierced right through you. Did you ever meet someone like that? I know that personally when someone is preaching, I have a difficult time if they won't look at me. I like for someone to look at me. There's an amazing value in eye contact with people.

Paul H. Dixon:

But I want you to know that the one who's looking at us here, this is the one who totally looks right through us. Eyes as flames of fire, burn up all the veneer. All of us put on so much veneer. There's so much in the way of trappings and there's so much in the way sham that we clothe ourselves in. We put on the front so much. But Jesus looks right through us and sees us as we really are. What a judge.

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Paul H. Dixon:

It's very interesting, in fact, to look at Hebrews 4:13. You might just want to put a finger in Revelation 1 and quickly note Hebrews 4:13. Verse 12, of course, says, "The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart." Keep that verse in mind. We're not going to turn back again, but you're going to see that again in Revelation 1. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked." The word for naked is stripped away and opened. The word for this is looking God in the eye. "Opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Paul H. Dixon:

Then we also notice not only his eyes, but we notice his feet. The scripture says his feet were like unto a fine brass as if they burned in a furnace. Brass always speaks of judgment. This is fine brass. In other words, there is no taint, no tarnish of rust, no imperfection. Can you imagine a perfect judge? Never makes a mistake. He walks in perfect righteousness and judgment. His feet were as fine brass.

Paul H. Dixon:

We notice his voice. His voice as the sound of many waters. Did you ever go through the scripture and notice the many voices that God spoke in? Sometimes he would speak in a still small voice. I don't believe that generally Jesus, when he was upon this earth, raised his voice many times. But the voice that he uses here is a roaring voice. It's a loud voice. It's the voice of many waters. It's the voice of authority. Do you ever notice when you speak to your children, there are times when you speak just a low tone? There are times when it may be just light, but there are times when you want to get across the point. You don't have to yell, but you just speak with the voice of authority and they get the message. That's the voice that Jesus uses here.

Paul H. Dixon:

We also note his mouth. "He had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword," verse 16. Remember Hebrews 4:12? The Word of God is that two edged sword. In other words, Jesus is going to measure us, judge us, by his Word. You go through the scripture and you'll notice that the New Testament teaches that all judgment is committed unto Jesus Christ. It also tells us that he's going to judge us according to the Word. All of his judgment is based upon truth.

Paul H. Dixon:

I want you to know, friend, it matters little what you think of scripture. It matters greatly what scripture thinks of you. We have a lot of people going around today giving their lives judging the Word, attacking the Word, not accepting the Bible. But I want you to know, friend, there is coming a day of truly higher criticism when the Word shall judge you and shall judge me. Doesn't make any difference how we measure up to some preacher and what he has to say, or how this church measures up to another church or how we compare to another Christian or someone else who lives in the community. What really matters is how we measure up to this book.

Paul H. Dixon:

Then you notice his countenance. His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. You imagine the brightness of the sun and the brightest day that you can find, and that's the kind of a countenance that Jesus had. It's glorious. It's pictured at the transfiguration. The splendor of his official dignity is seen

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here. In this picture, we've seen the intensity of his love, his perfection and holiness. He's consuming in knowledge, he's righteous in judgment, he's authoritative in his Word, he's all searching in truth, he's transcending in glory. I personally do not believe you can find a greater picture and vision of Jesus Christ anywhere in the Bible.

Paul H. Dixon:

What was the reason for this revelation? I want you to notice in verse 11, he says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and what thou seest, write in a book and send it unto the seven churches." Unto the seven churches? There were seven churches in Asia that he goes on to list, and they formed an irregular circle. And then you're going to find in chapter two and chapter three the various messages that this Jesus wants delivered by John to each of those local churches. He gives them in the order that a messenger who had a letter to deliver would follow in going in that irregular circle. So we notice that the reason for this, in verse 11, is he has something to say to the local churches.

Paul H. Dixon:

Notice verse 12. "I turned to see the voice that spake with me, and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks." What's that? Go down to verse 20. "The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks." He's going to interpret them for us. "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches," Or the messengers or the preachers of the seven churches. "The seven candlesticks which now sawest are the seven churches." If you'll notice that John saw Christ in the midst of the church. That ought to tell us something. Number one, it ought to tell us that the church, and I'm not speaking of the church, "universal church," whatever you want to call it, everyone who's saved that makes up the Body of Christ. I'm not talking about that. The emphasis in the New Testament is primarily upon the local church. That says that God's interested in the Southgate Baptist Church in Springfield, Ohio. That says that he wants to judge this church and he wants to judge the church I belong to, and he is vitally concerned about what's going on in our local churches.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now, you'll pardon me, but we live in a day when people don't like to emphasize local the church. They say that churches fail. I did quite a bit of work with some of the Jesus people and so forth when that was going strong. I enjoyed going into some coffee houses and so forth and talking to some of these young people. I have a real heart for them. I find out number one, that most of them have absolutely no idea what a New Testament Bible believing, Bible preaching local church is. Most of them come out of liberal churches. Most of them come out of dead churches. Most of them come out of churches where they don't preach the gospel and don't see people saved. If I came him out of a church like that, I wouldn't have time for the established church either.

Paul H. Dixon:

But I'll tell you what. You better not attack the New Testament local church that's spelled out in the Word of God as we have them today. Because when you attack the local church, you're attacking the organization that God has founded to get out the gospel and to disciple those who come to know Jesus Christ as personal Savior. God's plan for reaching a world is through the local church. If you're saved this morning, you ought to be interested in the local church.

Paul H. Dixon:

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That's why I believe that just as soon after you get saved as possible, first thing you all do is you ought to be baptized. Now, this is a message in itself. I'll be bringing a list of some of the tapes I have that are available, over 60 tapes. I have one message that just deals entirely with baptism. Why we ought be baptized, the way we ought to be baptized, and along this line. I wish I had time to give you more. But take my word for it, please. From the word of God, there's only one method of baptism, and that's immersion after salvation. After you've been saved, that's the first thing you ought to do to openly and publicly profess your faith in Jesus Christ. That's what they did in the New Testament. By doing that, you are identifying with Christ and you're identify with that local church that makes it possible. If you have been saved and are putting this off, you're a disobedient Christian. You'll not know the full blessing and joy in the Christian life until you do this.

Paul H. Dixon:

Secondly, after person's saved and baptized, they ought to be a part of the local church. I'll tell you, I get a little irritated. I go across the country and I find people who've been living out in California for 20 years, and their membership is back in Ohio. Church membership back in Ohio. "Well, how come your church membership is back in Ohio?" "Oh, that's where my grandma's granddaddy went to church. In fact, my great granddaddy's buried out in the church yard. Boy, I just think that I have to identify with that church because that's where my relatives always went."

Paul H. Dixon:

Is that why God established the local church? God established the local church so he could gather his people together to get his goals accomplished, to accomplish his purposes listen, friend, you in a community, you ought to belong to a local Bible believing, Bible preaching church. You've been coming here for a while. You know what this church stands for? You ought to to join us. If you don't like what this church stands for? You ought to go someplace where you can find one that you do like, and you ought to join that one. I don't see just going church hunting.

Paul H. Dixon:

When I was going to school, I know everyone doesn't do it this way, just to tell you how sold I am on the local church. I went to school in Tennessee, I joined a church in Tennessee. I got down there to go to school, I joined a church. I'd come home for the summer, I'd move my letter back to that local church there in Cincinnati, I joined that church for the summer. I'd go back to Tennessee to school, I'd move my letter back there to Tennessee. I wanted to be a part of that church. I didn't want to just go and sit there, I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted to be able to go out on visitation, tell people about Jesus. I wanted to say, "Come on and attend the Southgate Baptist Church. I don't belong to it, but we sure would like to have you come and belong to it." I wanted to be a part of it.

Paul H. Dixon:

I think that it's important that we identify and be a part of a church. I think that's why you ought to be there. Don't have much time for this business of people getting saved, showing up Sunday morning belonging to the church, never coming back Sunday night, never show up for prayer meeting. Your prayer meeting on Wednesday? Wednesday night. Some people Thursday night and so forth. I just have to check and make sure. But I believe when you're part of that church, you ought to be faithful. You ought to be there Sunday morning, you ought to be there Sunday night, you ought to be there Wednesday night.

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Paul H. Dixon:

Well, I'm through. I'm bringing a fellow with me tomorrow night. The Lord started working in his life just a few months ago, one of our assistant coaches there at Cedarville High School, and he's going to be coming tomorrow night. Boy, I'll tell you, that fellow is growing like leaps and bounds. Everything you throw, he just eats stuff. He comes over to the house and he asks questions and he wants to study the Bible, and he's just going on. He told me two weeks ago, and it's just been going a couple months, he said, "I don't want to just go to church and sit." He said, "I want go to church," and he said, "I think I probably ought to join your church here in Cedarville because," he said, "I want to be able to give something out." He said, "I don't want to just take in all the time. I want give out."

Paul H. Dixon:

That's the way it is. Sure. Well, you ought to want to be used and teaching the word of God. Anything you could do in the local church to help carry out God's program, you ought to say, I want to be involved in. God gave this vision of the local church. We see him in the midst of church here as judge.

Paul H. Dixon:

He also wants to come in to the midst of the churches and bless. A lot of people use Revelation 3:20, and they use it in this capacity. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me." Now, wait a minute. That is closing out his messages to the seven churches. Incidentally, there's so much to study in this. We could spend a week in it. Every time he spoke to one of those seven local churches, he reflected back on some part of this revelation of Christ that we spent the bulk of our time in. He doesn't let them forget how they ought to see Christ. He always is going back, stirring up their remembrance. Then he's written something to every one of the local churches.

Paul H. Dixon:

And then he says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I'll come in to him, will sup with him and he with me." He's especially saying it to Laodicea, but he's saying it to all seven churches and he's saying it to this church this morning. I thought that was for the unsaved. No way. The Christian church can use it if we want to in getting out the gospel, but that was not the primary reason. You say he's standing outside the church, knocking on the door? I thought he was already inside. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst" is what he said, right? I thought that he was already in the midst of the church here. We saw him standing in the midst of the churches. He's already in our church, right? The judge. Revelation 3:20. He says, "I want to come in and bless." The question is, do we see in the midst of our church, blessing, demonstrating his power in the salvation of souls of reaching out in the community for Jesus Christ.

Paul H. Dixon:

In those seven churches, there were things that hindered them from experiencing God's blessing. They lost their first love. They got caught up in idolatry. Some of them started tolerating false doctrine. They became lukewarm in their Christianity and they lost the blessing. I suppose this matter of losing the first love easily characterize many of our churches. He said this to the church of Ephesus. The church of Ephesus, he commended for having a good doctrinal statement, defending the faith, working hard. But he said, "I have somewhat against thee, though hast lost thy first love."

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Is it possible to be a working church, a busy church, a church that studies the Word, that teaches the Word, and yet still somehow not have the blessing of God? Oh yes. Because what happens to us is somehow, we just get used to it all. It becomes old hat. Some of us here this morning have been saved quite a spell. We have some second, third generation Christians here, and that's all you've ever known. You've been raised in church, in Bible preaching churches. What about your love for the Lord? What about the reality of his Word? Do you really get into it because you love the book or because you have to? What about the reality of your prayer life? Is there a heart relationship with the Lord when you pray? What about your soul when you're evangelizing?

Paul H. Dixon:

You know when you're first married and up to that time before you get married, how you love to just be around each other? I forget who it was, was telling me the other day that they were away from each other and they called each other, and would talk every night long distance until they'd fall asleep. Now, if you could see my phone bill for last month, you'd think that would've been me. I think it was close to \$100. Someone said, "Do you talk to your wife that much?" Well, it's cheaper than alimony.

Paul H. Dixon:

When you're dating and when you just get married, you're just so excited to be around each other. You want to be around each other and you want to write to each other and you just can't stand to be apart. You want to tell others. You're not ashamed to let others see you holding hands and somehow let them know that you love this person. And then after you've been married a few years, it's easy to fall into a rut. Never tell each other you love the other person, not do those little things anymore, take each other granted. That's what happens in our relationship to the Lord. You just lose it, somewhere along the line, it got lost. There's no heart in it. There's no closeness to it. Only you can answer this today. Have you lost that first love? The reason for the revelation was to judge the church, and the church is made up of individuals like you and like me.

Paul H. Dixon:

It's fascinating how it affected John. Closing, notice the results in verses 17-19. "When I saw this vision, I fell at his feet as dead. He laid his right hand upon on me saying unto me, 'Fear not. I'm the first and the last. I'm he that liveth and was dead. Behold, I am alive forever more, amen, and have the keys of hell and death. Write the things which thou hast seen and the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter.'" The first result produced is fear. Well, we need that today. There is so little fear of God today, it is unbelievable. The unsaved don't fear God, the Christians don't fear God, churches don't fear God. We need a fresh fear of God. We need to see him as judge. Job saw God and fell on his face. Isaiah, Peter, now John. He said, "I saw him and I fell and his feet as dead." It produced fear.

Paul H. Dixon:

Second thing it produced was a humility. Falling at his feet, in essence, saying I am nothing. True repentance only comes from a heart that will deal with pride. Did you get that? True repentance only comes from a heart that will deal with pride. Do you know why a lot of Christians would never walk forward in a service and make a decision? Too proud. It's too humbling. That's why we got some churches, and there been deacons in that church for 25 years who've never made any kind of a move. Leaders in that church. Not that they don't have decisions that they need to make, not that they've arrived, but that there's just too much pride. I think there's a need for us as preachers, there's a need for

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all of us at times, just to admit before God and to admit to ourselves and a time to admit to others, there are some real needs in my life and I need to deal with those needs.

Paul H. Dixon:

Then it produced a peace and prosperity, usefulness. Jesus reached down and he touched him. There's something amazing about the touch of Jesus as you study it throughout the gospels. And he said unto them, "Fear not." God is the only one who has the power to take that fear away. "Fear not." And then he gave him something to do. I like that. He said, "I got something I want you to write." When we get right with the Lord, deal with that pride, see him as he really is, humble ourselves before him, admit that our hearts have been cold, that we've been backslidden, I'll guarantee you when we do that, he's going to give us something to do. It always produces that.

Paul H. Dixon:

Let the Spirit of God speak to our hearts this morning. If some of you would hear me, this message has not been primarily to you because you've never experienced the grace of God. The same Christ who's judging the church here in Revelation 1, if we were to go on and study Revelation today, would find there is coming a day when he's going to judge the sinner. Be an unsaved person and there's an eternal hell that awaits that one who dies in his sin. There's a great white throne judgment when you must face this same Jesus Christ. Can you imagine facing the one who went to a cross, shed his blood, went through the sufferings of Calvary, died for you? You rejected that salvation instead of knowing him as Savior and must face this judge.