

A Guiding Light in the Darkness

Revelation unveils hope for those
who feel overwhelmed by the
darkness.

The stories of WTC survivors are ones of terror and confusion.

They did not know what was happening.

The building and stairwells were dark, they did not know where they were going, or even where they should go.

They did not know what to do.

The book of Revelation was originally written for those who felt this way. Early Christians saw the total destruction of Jerusalem, and the deportation of the Jews. They saw the rise of an evil empire. They were afraid.

And today Revelation is for those who feel that way all the time. We feel like life is beyond our control. We don't know why things happen the way they do. We don't know where things are going, is the future bleak? Is there any hope? And since we don't know what is happening, and we don't know where we are going, we don't know what to do.

Revelation is for those overwhelmed by the unknown. Revelation unveils hope for those who feel shrouded with doubt, despair and darkness.

1. The Darkness, 2. The Revelation 3. The Key to the Code

1. The Darkness

- What is Happening?

In the WTC they heard an explosion, the lights went out, and they were lost to figure out what had happened.

In Revelation the Christians saw the fall of Jerusalem, the complete collapse of God's people, the widespread persecution of their Religion. What Happened?

We have those same questions today

Tornadoes in Piedmont and Joplin

Good people get sick and suffer

Irresponsible teenagers have unwanted pregnancies and have healthy babies, Godly adults suffer with infertility

Children and young people die -- car wrecks, college students and high school students

Christians Persecuted abroad and at home -- Campus Minister, family trying to fire him

Everyone of us at some point or another want to look up at the dark skies and cry out -- Really?

1. The Darkness

- What is Happening?
- Where are We Going?

What is going to happen?

In the WTC many had no idea what would happen. Would the fire dept. control the blaze? -- we need to know where we are going so we can plan accordingly

Imagine how the Christians of Revelation felt -- The Romans absolutely destroyed Jerusalem, the center of true Religion

Pagan temples were everywhere

Those who worshipped Caesar were prosperous and at ease

Those who worshipped Jesus alone were persecuted, ostracized, impoverished, and sometimes killed

Where is our culture going? BAIC letter bemoaning how things are getting worse

How about the Church? A mega-church pastor in South Carolina bothered to tell people if they are sexually immoral they are not Christian and some walk out

We have entire denominations embracing immorality, others are preaching a prosperity doctrine that is untrue, harmful and the opposite of the bible. What are we destined to become? Europe?

1. The Darkness

- What is Happening?
- Where are We Going?
- What Should We Do?

If we don't know what is happening, and we don't know what will happen, it is pretty much impossible to know what to do.

WTC -- Should we wait in our offices, or go down the smoky stairwell?

What should the early Christians do?

What should we do?

Send our kids out into the world, or surround them with believers only and protect them.

Pour out our lives as missionaries, give up all our money, or work with our hands and lead a quiet life?

Do we involve ourselves in politics or public arenas such as local schools, or do we run away?

We need a revelation telling us what is ultimately true.

We need a prophecy telling us where this world is going

We need a letter telling us how to live and what to do

2. The Light Revealed

- A Revelation

1 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, **2** who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Revelation is a Revelation -- it is a glimpse behind the curtain, an unveiling of What God is doing behind the scenes. Revelation gives us the heavenly perspective upon all the events on Earth.

Of all the books in the Bible, this may be the most divine. All of them are inspired, but in this one John literally receives it, he writes down exactly what he sees and hears.

2. The Light Revealed

- A Revelation -- What did he see?

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, **5** and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

He sees the Spirit amidst the Church -- you think you have been abandoned, but you haven't been. The Holy Spirit is in your midst.

He sees God, the Alpha and the Omega, He who is, and was and is to come, upon the Throne. God hasn't changed, and he has not gone anywhere

He sees Jesus, the lamb who was slain unsealing the scroll of history. He rules the kings, he is at work in all the events of history. He knows what he is doing.

He sees Jesus, the lamb who was slain

Jesus is not a cruel puppet master. He himself has gone through the fire for us, he has suffered more than any of his people will ever suffer. He sees Love demonstrated -- love incarnate.

2. The Light Revealed

- A Revelation -- What did he see?
- A Prophecy -- Where are we going?

the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

He tells us what will happen in the world -- Tribulation is here, and will remain here until the end of days, no one will escape it

He tells us what will happen to God's people -- they will remain faithful through the tribulation, and when they die they will be with the lamb, he will be their shepherd and will wipe every tear from their eyes.

He tells us what will happen to those who remain in the world -- they will continually be shaken, and if they do not repent they will face judgment.

He tells us what will happen to Jesus -- he will come in judgment and rule over the world.

But a prophecy is much more than simply telling people what will happen. Prophecy lays before people choices. Prophecy opens peoples eyes to themselves and allows them to see what is going to happen if they do not change.

-- Two friends fighting, one blames the other, the other blames only herself

The prophet comforts the one who blames herself, and confronts the one who blames the other

The prophet tells them both where they will end up if they do not change.

Some think I am a prophet. -- Bryan Carter -- not rocket science Let me tell you my prophecies for you.

2. The Light Revealed

- A Revelation -- What did he see?
- A Prophecy -- Where are we going?
- A Letter -- How shall we live?

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, **5** and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

Finally, Revelation is a letter. It is a letter composed by John written to the Church.

First code word -- 7 it is the number of completion, why to the seven churches? Because by that number he represents the perfect church, all the churches, the complete church. He writes to you by writing to the 7.

And he writes very specifically -- this is how you are to live.

You are to love God, and never let that love die out.

You are to pursue holiness with all your might, and keep your robes pure.

You are to maintain the church, not only your personal holiness but the holiness of your community.

You are to suffer patiently.

By doing all these things, you are to conquer.

3. The Key to the Code

- By suffering you are to conquer?

If you were paying attention you should be a little confused.

You don't conquer by loving God, loving each other, pursuing holiness and suffering. You conquer by going to war, by competing mercilessly, by doing whatever you must to win. By walking as close to the line as you possibly can. You don't conquer by loving your enemies, serving them and dying.

Every code has to have a key. A = 1, whatever. Well Revelation is certainly no different

3. The Key to the Code

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, **5** and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood **6** and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

What does conquest look like in God's economy? It does not look like all of his enemies lying at his feet dead. It looks like his former enemies becoming his faithful and loving sons surrounding him and looking to him with love and devotion.

How does he win that conquest?

1. The firstborn from the dead -- he has defeated death and everything that is dark on our behalf. We are no longer slaves of death, and no longer fear.
2. He has loved us and freed us by his blood.
 - he has freed us -- our sin is a slavery. You cannot get to a new destination because you refuse to walk a different path
 - He has freed us by his blood -- by his sacrifice, by suffering all the punishment we deserve he has paid our ransom, we are free
 - He has made us a kingdom, priests -- no longer dead, no longer slaves, a kingdom of priests -- testimonies of prayers answered -- our hands

3. The Key to the Code

Salvation, freedom, a kingdom of priests all through the suffering and death of Jesus.

The Key: God does beautiful things with broken people and events. Nothing could be darker than the cross. Yet he used it to redeem the world.

When you think God has abandoned and forgotten you, it is then that he is nearest to you and hardest at work in and for you. He loves to bring beautiful results out of dark and ugly situations.

This is the key, first because it enables us to follow him.

Why does nobody listen to the prophet? Because they are scared, they think their destructive friends are all they will ever have. Unless they are moved by how much God loved them, they will never change.

Lost Illustration: He saw the death he deserved to die, and he saw the love his brother had for him, so he was moved and changed.

Second it is the key to understanding what is going on in the world.

Look at you, look at me. He could and should have punished us and cast us away -- but he chose to beautify us and make us his sons. He is doing the same thing throughout the world.

3. The Key to the Code

Salvation, freedom, a kingdom of priests all through the suffering and death of Jesus.

The Key: God does beautiful things with broken people and events. Nothing could be darker than the cross. Yet he used it to redeem the world.

If you are discouraged it may be because you are hoping for the wrong thing. You are hoping for a nice world where nothing bad ever happens. In that world no one would ever turn to Christ and be saved from their sin.

Who do you know whose testimony sounds like this -- everything went perfectly for me, so I thought I needed to Jesus to keep it going?
No, every Christian I know, especially those converted from unbelieving families will tell you -- I reached rock bottom, and found life.

On the weekend after 9/11 where was everybody -- football games, soccer matches, auto races? No, all those things were cancelled, only Church was open. And every church was packed. Why? For a moment we regained our sanity. But we have completely lost it since, haven't we.

Every single thing about this world will fail you. Stop clinging to it like a life preserver, it will only sink you.

WTC -- man on phone, grabbed two ladies and said, no you are coming with me

The message of Revelation is life is here for the taking, but it can only be taken by receiving the salvation earned by our savior. Stop running away and submit to him, let him carry you from the stairwell.