

September 2009

Revelation: the book of the end of world. What does Revelation have to do with starting a church?

It is so easy for us to get lost in the details of starting a church, of reaching out to the community, of planning what needs to happen next, of raising children, of being married, of life in general. And yet, through all of that, we need to hear our Lord calling out to us as his people, as his church.

Letters to the Church

by Per

Revelation opens with letters to seven churches. Letters from Christ. Letters calling his church to himself.

This is the foundation, the basis for the letters. That they come from Christ. Scripture emphasizes this by opening Revelation with a description of the author of the letters.

We are told that he is one "like a son of man" and yet the description goes on to describe how he exceeds humanity. It describes how he is more glorious than a normal person and how he has the right and the authority to write letters calling the church to himself.

His own description of himself in 1:17-20 continues this same emphasis, echoing both Colossians 1:15-20, which makes clear his preeminence, and the letter to the Hebrews, which speaks of his surpassing all others.

Revelation opens the way that the Gospel of Matthew ends, with Christ calling his church to his work, to himself - and basing this call on his authority. In Matthew 28 Christ states, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go therefore..." And here in Revelation 1 we see him begin by emphasizing himself and his authority.

We wrestle with who we are as a church: to what God is calling us, what is next for us, what we are to do, and who we are to be. And in the midst of our wonderings, Scripture reminds us that it all begins with the one who is calling us.

Because of the one who has called us we have no choice but to respond. We think that we can follow without answering the call. We think that the call is great and we hope that somebody else hears and responds. We sit back and congratulate ourselves for responding instead of resting in the beauty of the one who calls. When we do these things thinking that we can respond later, that we will get to it just as soon as ..., we have lost sight of the one who calls to us.

This is the call from the first and the last and the living one, the one who died and yet is alive forevermore. It is this call that we need to hear as a church. It is his letters to his church that remind us of who he is and to what he calls us. This is what we seek as Free Grace, as his church and his people, by his grace and for his glory.

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Free Gracer Kaylie Stewart with Jason after a karate demo



Kyle, Scotty, and Jason on top of Mt. Battie with Camden harbor in the background

Defining Terms

Ken Morris

Communication between two people is sometimes hard; communication between two people using separate languages is really hard.

I remember once calling my father-in-law to solicit advice on a do-it-yourself water drainage project. He was somewhat familiar with the area of our back yard that needed repair, so I emailed him a photo of the area then called him from my back yard. As we talked, he mentioned something about how the "McAdam" might affect the project. "McAdam?" I asked.

Mr. McAdams was my elementary school principal; I heard his name only after first engaging in some unsavory behavior. Here, some thirty years later, was my father-in-law invoking that scary name once again. All I asked for was advice, not to be sent home to my mother! As it happens, "McAdam" refers to the gentleman who invented pavement. Where my father-in-law grew up, they simply referred to pavement as McAdam. Thankfully, my father-in-law graciously defined this term for me. Without his explanation, our conversation would have been fruitless.

This need to define terms arises often in our relationships here in Maine. My neighbor, a committed Catholic, is one example. He enjoys talking about God, the Bible and church. As our relationship has progressed, we have had to explain that Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are not protestants, that Sola Scriptura does not mean legalism and that "evangelical" is not a dirty word.

It's amazing how much damage we wreak in our relationships through basic misunderstanding of terms. This happens when we are slow to listen and quick to speak. As I begin seeing clients, pray that I will be slow to speak and quick to listen. Although the experience of emotional pain may be somewhat universal, each hurting person's heart speaks its own unique language and yearns to be understood.

PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

- ✎ Praise for the way we see the Spirit working, confronting different people here with the wonder of his grace. For the struggles we are having to understand and live it - and the opportunities we've had to share it.
- ✎ Pray for God to bring hurting clients to Jordan's Bridge, and for the counseling center to build a strong reputation in the community by applying God's comfort and wisdom to the difficult issues people face every day.
- ✎ Pray for encouragement as Ken continues the slow process of building clientele and networking with area leaders.
- ✎ Pray that we would hear God's call to us as his church through our study of his word. Pray that we would respond as he would have us and not as we would.
- ✎ Pray for us to continue to be in the community and not sequestered unto ourselves. Pray that each of us would joyfully love our friends and neighbors as we pray for them. We rejoice over recent opportunities to pray with them.



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