

THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF SIDNEY EDWARD COX

Revelation – Chapter One and a Brief Overview

This appears to be the second session in which he presented an overview of Revelation. This tape ends abruptly and the audio is only 17 minutes – much shorter than most of his class sessions.

Editorial Note: This is a lecture by Sidney Cox that was part of a series of lectures on the Book of the Revelation that he taught while on the theological teaching faculty at the Toccoa Falls Bible Institute during the early part of 1962. He was 75 years of age at the time.

During the latter part of his life, Sidney Cox had developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (“CMA”). CMA operates as a vast network of churches, similar to a “denomination.” Toccoa Falls Bible Institute was closely affiliated with the CMA, provided support to the Institute and the Institute sent many of its graduates into ministry within CMA churches. CMA and The Salvation Army, in which Sidney Cox served as an officer for 30 years previously in his life, share a similar theology and emphasis in Christian outreach.

From 1956 – 1960, Sidney and Violet Cox lived in Miami, Florida where Sidney was on the theological teaching faculty of the Miami Bible Institute, another CMA supported institution. They moved to Toccoa Falls, Georgia in 1960, where he served on the staff at the Toccoa Falls Bible Institute from 1960 – 1962.

As a lecture, he was obviously assuming that his students had prepared for class by reading and studying the pertinent scripture and other class material. Thus, his comments were not like a sermon, but lectures to enhance the students’ theological understanding. He emphasized a detailed study of the scripture and incorporated analysis that he gained from his study of Bible commentaries and books on the related subject matter. These lectures are remarkably free of any personal opinions, personal illustrations or “sermonizing” of any kind. While at other times in his career he was very much the preacher and evangelist, in these late-in-life roles of Bible Professor, he was very much the educator.

Lastly, it might be helpful to at least comment on the historical context in which these lectures were delivered. Many biblical scholars of that day associated some of what is found in the Book of Revelation with the Catholic Church – symbols of paganism, the movement of Satan/antichrist to establish one world church, etc. Many people viewed the Catholic Church with much skepticism and fear. Further, John F. Kennedy had just been elected the first Catholic president of the United States in 1960. His election was quite controversial and many non-Catholics were concerned about Kennedy’s catholic background. Elements of these concerns and mindset are found in these lectures. In 2008, many of these fears have been discredited and some would find them to be offensive and intolerant, but they were quite prevalent and not at all unusual in 1962.

John Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. December 29, 2008.

I want us to just review some of the things that we have been doing, because this is the thing that we do all the time, there's no other way out of it. There's only one way of learning, and that is to review and reiterate and repeat. And if you check yourself on those three things, you'll find they all mean the same thing. But that's 9/10's of learning, just the same, is to go over it and over it and over it and over it. That's the only way. And so we're going to review it just a little bit so that we can catch the ends of it and then lead into something that follows on what we have already done.

First of all, we started in by review of the book, stating that it is a revelation of Jesus Christ. It is not a revelation of some man. It comes by a human channel, that's true. But it's the revelation of Jesus Christ, and revelation means 'pulling back of the veil,' and if you use the word, apocalypse, which you are entitled to do if you care to do so, it simply means the 'lifting of the cover.' It's exactly the same meaning. Something has been hidden. Something has been in the shadows. Now, it is made plain.

And in the revelation of Jesus Christ in this book we find four things: One, who He is. Two, what He says. Three, what He does. And four, from whence He came. Those four things are all given to us and their given to us right in the very beginning. Now don't be surprised if one or two of the things that I give you are not on your notes, because I didn't intend to just dictate those few notes there and say nothing else. There will be other things like that, for instance. Now, if you wanted me to stop and make a note of that, I'll do that gladly. The revelation of Jesus Christ. One, who He is. Two, what He says. Three, what He does. And four, from whence He came. Now don't forget that this is the final on all of those things.

We have seen a lot of information, both in the New Testament and the Old Testament, as to who He is, and what He says, and what He does, and from whence He came. We know that. But now we get the final complete word. This is the conclusion of the whole matter.

Now, it's a book that has a blessing connected with it in a way that no other book in the scripture does – “He that readeth, heareth and keepeth.”¹ There is the salutation. It is a message that is to be given to the seven churches, and these seven churches, as we all know, are actual churches. They're not mythical churches, although some of them are not mentioned anywhere else, and we do not have information as to how some of them commenced. But we do know that historically they were in a general area in Galatia and they were, more or less, connected with each other. There has been the suggestion that they were in a circle, a geographical circle, and that our Lord is seen in the center of them, standing in the midst of the churches. And these churches are actual churches.

In the beginning of the message, we find the Trinity; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit mentioned very, very distinctly. The Father, what He is, and he is described as the one which is, which was, and which is to come.

There is the Spirit, the seven spirits. Now let's be quite clear that we know what we mean by that. We do not mean at all that the Spirit of God is seven persons, but just as we speak of God the Father in His attributes, and we say God is love and God is light and God is power and God is mercy and this sort of thing - and we don't mean by that He is a distinct person in each one of those, but that in Himself, He includes all of these things.

¹ Revelation 1:3.

The best description of the seven-fold plenitude of the Holy Spirit is given in the eleventh chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. Let's just turn to it in the second verse. Isaiah, the eleventh chapter, second verse. And you will see it given there. Just as the Father has attributes, ways in which we see Him, so in the case of the Spirit. You see him in seven different ways. Now here they are: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of might, the spirit of knowledge, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord." And there are seven aspects of the Holy Spirit, Himself; not dividing His personality, but seven aspects of His person and His ministry and His work. And so we find this is there.

We find the Son presented to us as the prophet and the priest and the king. The prophet as the faithful witness, the priest as the first begotten, the king as the prince of the kings of the earth. And we see what He did for us there, this wonderful opening statement. One of the most marvelous little digests of the work of our Lord that you can find anywhere. "He hath loved us. He hath washed us or loosed us from our sins. He hath made us kings and priests unto God."²

Now immediately following, is the introduction of the great event. "Behold, He cometh."³ Now, we've seen indications of His coming elsewhere. In this book, you find the final revelation of it. What will be included; what will be the manner of His coming; what will be the purpose of it all, and so on. It is mentioned elsewhere, partially revealed elsewhere, now it is completely revealed.

And we notice that the writer is John, and he is on the Island of Patmos. I was very interested last night, late last night, as I was checking one or two things with this class and other classes in mind, and I was reading Dr. Merrill Tenney's introduction to the New Testament.⁴ We have it in the library. It's a very fine volume. And you will see in connection with his little digest of the Book of Revelation, included in it is a photograph of the Grecian coast with a town on the coast there and the little Island of Patmos right out in the ocean.⁵ Strange little place, just a tiny little spot of a place, that has a cone shaped elevation, almost a little mountain - looked as if it might be a miniature volcano, or something like that. Just a little bit of a place.

But it was like Alcatraz, in the fact that prisoners and those who were at variance with the laws of the country were isolated on that place. And this was the place where John was - similar place to Devil's Island off French Guiana, and so on.⁶ And you will find places like that. It's very interesting. I would suggest some time, while you're in the library, it'll only take you a moment, get that book and just glance at that picture. It's a most illuminating thing, because sometimes we have a foggy idea of what the Island of Patmos really would look like. And you wouldn't know, of course, until you find it there

2 Revelation 1:5,6

3 Revelation 1:7

4 Dr. Merrill C. Tenney (1904 – 1985) was a theologian and writer and at one time the Dean of the Graduate School of Wheaton College.

5 The Island of Patmos is located in the Aegean Sea.

6 Devil's Island is the smallest and northernmost island of the three Îles du Salut located about 6 nautical miles off the coast of French Guiana (South America). It has an area of 34.6 acres. It was a small part of the notorious French penal colony in French Guiana until 1952.

in actual photograph. But there it is just the same.

He was there and we know why he was there and when he was there and something happened. Now, there are two views about what happened. He was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and all I need to remind you about this is, the two points of view – whether it was an actual point of time like the first day of the week, or whether God in greatness and because of this revelation had lifted John on to a point long in the future there, future as far as we're concerned, not future as far as God is concerned. There is no such thing as future with Him. It's one eternal now with Him.

And so, just as He had lifted people, like Philip, the Evangelist, and lifted them physically, so now the thought is, he lifted John and projected him almost two thousand years on, and let him see things that would be happening then and happening in the interim. Now, that's the two points of view and it's not a matter of great importance. It's a matter of interest, that's all, that there are two points of view. There's nothing about either one of them that will minister against you in your understanding of the Book of Revelation. Neither one. Now, when you find one person has one point of view and one another, it's a matter of which one appeals to your own heart, I think in that case. Fuller and many others think that God projected him on into the future. He's the writer there. Now we know what happened.

He heard a voice. He not only heard the voice, but saw it as well. It was the voice like the sound of a trumpet. You'd better be listening for that trumpet because we're going to hear it someday and you hear it over and over again in the Book of Revelation. Now, there are two things: there's the words that he heard and the command that was given. You write these words and send them to the churches. And the vision was not only the vision of a voice but of a person, and we know what happened to John when that vision came. He was smitten to the ground.

Now, the thing that he saw, or the person he saw, this person is described, there are seven things that describe him - his head, his eyes, his feet, his voice, his right hand, his mouth. And you need to be quite sure when you get to that point, that you observe what it is that is in his mouth. The sharp, two-edged sword, because as we have said, you can always identify the Lord Jesus, we shall see that in just a minute or two, from some mark that appears here in this first chapter. You can always identify Him. You never need to be in doubt as to whether it's the Lord Jesus that is in view, because you'll always find Him there.

Now, this particular thing we're looking at, this sharp two-edged sword, you see again when the Lord comes riding upon a white horse and His saints with Him, and that last great picture of Him coming in the 19th chapter of Revelation, out of his mouth, the sharp two-edged sword. And we do not need to stop long and remind ourselves why that sword was two-edged. It was two-edged because it was an offense against the enemy and defense for those who belong to Him. It was our defense on the one side and our weapon of offense on the other. It was our protection and that which would take care of the enemies, there. The effect upon John, the command, the key verse is Verse 19, "Write the things thou hast seen and the things that are and the things that shall be."⁷

And the interpretation of the symbol that is given to us for the very first time. Don't forget symbols are explained either in this book or somewhere else in the scripture, and when you find them explained in

7 Revelation 1:19

this book, they are in the main explained right where the symbol appears. Now here's the first instance of this. You find it in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks and immediately that symbol is explained. Now when you go from there, you get into the second section of it.

By the way, there's so many things that, I'm not sure whether you have them in your notes or not, so many things that we could, as we move along, observe about this book and its symbolism. For instance, you will find symbolism in so many different things. For instance, you will find the symbolism of numbers all the way through. We have heard that and detected that up till now - things that occur in the number seven. You will find the number seven and things occurring in the number seven, 40 times in this Book of the Revelation. Now, we've got them right at the very beginning: the seven churches, the seven spirits, the seven candlesticks, the seven stars. As you go on, you've got the seven seals, and trumpets and vials and white things and beatitudes and songs and thunders and so on.

And you will find very often such words that are mentioned seven times. Let me give you one or two of them. This is a little parentheses here, nothing to do with our actual study. But such words as patience, altar, earthquake, worthy, pit, right hand, Jesus Christ – the two names together, and wrath. And you'll find those words are mentioned seven times in this book.

There's the symbolism of color as you find it there. And that's very interesting, because when you get into the 4th chapter, you begin to find yourself surrounded by it. You begin to look at a rainbow that is emerald in color, and that's a very interesting thing. You've never seen an emerald rainbow in your life. You've seen a rainbow that had the emerald color as one of the seven, but never an emerald rainbow. You see, that's a rainbow we're going to look at forever. And the only color you can ever look at forever is green. That's the only color, that's the reason why God spreads green everywhere. Supposing it was a yellow thing? You couldn't look at yellow for all eternity. Heaven deliver us. (audience laughs) You see? But it's the emerald rainbow. You've never seen a rainbow like that. The only rainbow you've ever seen has been a partial one. Now, we've got a complete one. Never seen anything like that before. But there's the symbolism of color and it's very interesting. White and red and purple and green and black and each one of them, of course, has his own peculiar significance.

When you get into the 6th chapter and you find a rider on one colored horse, and a rider on another, you don't need to ask what the black means and the red means and the rest of it. They're all so very obvious. But they're interesting. You find the symbolism of animals in here, and again, you will find each one of them has a meaning. Now, we're not going to spend time going into this. I'm just mentioning it to you - like the horse and the lamb and the eagle and the frogs and the locusts, and the lamb is mentioned 28 times in the Book of Revelation. The lamb. By the way, did anybody do a little mental arithmetic right there? Did you by any chance divide 7 into 28? Did you? Because all 28 is, is four sevens, that's all, that's all. And so, you've got it there, but these things occur right before us there.

The quotations from the Old Testament. The natural elements that you meet in here like the air and the earth and earthquakes and sea and clouds and thunder and lightning and etc. And you find all of these things.

Now, from that point on, we come to the second section of the Book of Revelation. It's the things that are. Now, he has recorded the things that he has seen, and a very interesting record that is. This book

with its magnificent beginning that is the key to so many things that might otherwise be mysterious to us. Now, let's have a look, if you please....

(audio ends)