

OASIS:
REVELATION 1:9-20, 2:1-7
“WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH”
DONE IN SYNC WITH
THE “LIVING GOD’S STORY” JOURNEY



Preface: Welcome to our LC Bible study in our sermon series “Living God’s Story.” We are now in our 35th week in our sermon journey as we go through the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading.

Note to Newer Leaders: I am delighted to learn that some LCs have started to use the Oasis Notes this spring. They are intended to give you a head-start in your prep time. Please know that all these questions cannot be asked in a single night and still have time for a good conversation so please read/edit/select the best ones for your LC. For more instruction, please read the footnotes and feel free to email me at tghali@grace.org with any questions or comments. Peace and strength as you serve the Kingdom!

Starter Questions:

Let’s revisit the Classic questions: If you were stuck on an island alone, what three things would you want with you?

If you were stuck alone on an island, what three books would you want?

If you were stuck alone on an island, what three things would you do?

Transition:

For the apostle John, it seems he wanted scrolls, pens and a good chair ;)

There’s an old saying that says, “When things get bad, we comfort ourselves with the fact that they are not worse. And when they are worse, we comfort ourselves with the fact that things have to get better.” The book of Revelation offers a similar sentiment. Things will get worse before they get better. The distinction is that when things get better, they will be the best possible, for at that time God’s glory will be fully revealed.

Study’s BIG idea: To follow Christ is to follow wherever the road of life leads.

Revelation 1:9-20 (NIV ©2011)

⁹ I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹ which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

¹² I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

¹⁹ "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Revelation 2:1-7 (NIV ©2011)

¹ "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. ² I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³ You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

⁴ Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. ⁵ Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. ⁶ But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Context:

According to Christian history, John has been exiled to the island of Patmos after being thrown in a vat of boiling oil under the reign of Emperor Domitian.

The island of Patmos has a good bit of ancient history. It is a part of Greece and is located west of the mainland. In looking at its history, it was believed that the Dorians were the first inhabitants, followed by the Ionians. Archaeological evidence suggests that it was densely populated and the culture was saturated with mythological belief. Later during the Peloponnesian Wars, the Lacedemonians came to the island to escape from the Athenians. However, the island of Patmos declined when the Romans conquered it. It was then used as a place of exile for convicts.

It's here where John writes what God has revealed to him. "Revelation" translates to the Greek word "apokalypsis," which is where the English gets the words "apocalypse" and "apocalyptic." In fact, John is writing in a genre called "apocalyptic literature" which was common in the First Century. It's helpful, think of it as "ancient science fiction" for that audience.

John is trying to prepare the church to be faithful in the midst of further persecution and assure the young Christian Church that the final ultimate victory will be found in God.

Discussion Questions:

O – What imagery strikes you as most interesting in reading John's vision in 1:12-20?

I – According to v. 20, the lampstands in v. 13 represent the aforementioned seven churches. What is John symbolically illustrating by having the Son of Man placed here?
(That Christ is with us always. During times of hardship and persecution, it's often easy to wonder where God is. This vision is reminding and assuring the 7 churches that the Lord is with them.)

O/I – John description of the Son of Man is taken from different parts of Scripture. Can you identify any of them? His use of imagery is not intended to be journalistic or merely to be captured in art. What do you think he is trying to communicate?
(That this is the God of Israel and He is the risen Jesus who holds the keys to death and life. References mentioned are from Ezek. 1:24, 26, 9:2, 11; Dan. 7:9, 10:6; Isa. 49:2; Jud. 5:31).

A – What images of God found in the Old or the New Testaments give us assurance and comfort?
(Shepherd, Friend, Savior, Tower of Refuge, etc.)

O – How does the "son of man" describe himself to John in verses 17-18?
("... the first and the last ...").

I – What is the significance of the terms Alpha and Omega? What do they mean to you?
(It's important for us to remember that "Christianity" was considered a new teaching at the time of this writing. These terms are asserting that this is not a new God being proclaimed but the only, everlasting God that is being revealed to them).

A – Though it’s difficult for us to apply the symbolisms to our context (because they were tailored for a different audience), we can focus on the theme that Jesus is the Alpha and Omega. What does this mean to us personally in our lives that are filled with the extremes of feeling fast-paced yet slow-moving, dangerous yet stable, exciting yet mundane?

O – Ephesus is the first church given a message (Ch. 2). What praises are expressed, what warnings are given, and what are the consequences? What else strikes you as interesting?
(Praises begin in v. 2; major warning in v. 4; consequence in v. 5.)

I – What do you interpret verse 7 to mean? Why do you think the imagery of the tree of life is used here?
(The faithful Christian joins in the victory of God and the tree of life is the ultimate return of the “paradise” of what God originally intended.)

A – The Nicolaitans were considered a pagan group that adopted some Christian practices and language but also advocated the teaching of Balaam. The church of Ephesus considered their leaders to be false teachers/apostles. Ch. 2 credits the church with being attuned to their evil. While we must humbly test all teaching against the authority of Scripture and be under the submission of the Holy Spirit, what does this imply of the importance of doctrinal belief in the Church?

A – What hardships do believers in the West face? How can we faithfully respond to the challenges we face in the Northeast?

Text notes (you can access biblical texts via www.Biblegateway.com)

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single night.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.