

BLESSED ENDURANCE

THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION

LESSON ONE: THE HEAVENS OPENED

Introducing the book of Revelation

INTRODUCTION

Pliny the Younger, Roman governor of Bithynia and Pontus (Asia Minor), circa 110 AD:

Writing to the emperor Trajan:

“It is my custom, Sir, to refer to you in all cases where I do not feel sure...I have never been present at any legal examination of the Christians, and do not know, therefore, what are the usual penalties passed upon them, or the limits of those penalties, or how searching an inquiry should be made...in the meantime, this is the plan which I have adopted...I ask them whether they are Christians; if they say yes, then I repeat the question a second and a third time, warning them of the penalties it entails, and if they still persist, I order them to be taken away to prison...Those who denied that they were or had been Christians and called upon the name of the gods in the usual formula...should be discharged, especially if they cursed the name of Christ, which, it is said, those who are really Christians cannot be induced to do...on a stated day [the Christians] had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves to Christ as though he were a god...and their oath was to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and from breach of faith, and not to deny trust money placed in their keeping when called upon to deliver it.

...This matter seems to me worthy of your consideration...for the contagion of this superstition has spread not only through the free cities, but into the villages and the rural districts.”

The world into which the gospel came was changing.

- Christians are becoming distinct from Judaism. With this came new dangers.
- Roman Emperors were becoming gods. Worship was demanded.
- Prophecies, Calamities, and natural disasters rattled the empire.
- Christians were seen as increasingly dangerous to society.

Christians wondered: Where is God in all of this? What's going to happen to us?

This is the world in which the book of Revelation was written.

WHAT IS THE BOOK OF REVELATION?

1. Apocalypse.

The breaking in of the heavenly world, revealing the greater narrative in which events take place.

Highly symbolic (similar to Daniel)

2. Prophecy.

Meant to be read aloud in the Christian assembly (1:3)

Aiming to proclaim the fulfillment of OT prophecy in Christ.

3. Letter.

Writing to real people with real lives .

Meant to encourage , rebuke , and enliven believers.

DISCUSSION

Q: Why Should we study the book of Revelation?

Q: What dangers should we avoid when studying this book?

Q: What do you hope to get out of studying this book together?