



Session #1: Paradoxes

OPENING PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you tell us to fear nothing except that which can separate us from you. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear now, Lord, all that you wish to tell us. We ask you to send your Spirit upon us here, to help us focus, to offer us wisdom and to calm our souls as we grow closer to you. Mother Mary, Queen of Heaven, we ask you to be with us and to pray for us throughout this study, this night and this week. *Hail Mary...*

INTRODUCTION: Christianity is filled with apparent paradoxes. If you don't understand this, then you probably won't understand the Bible. As you may know already, a paradox is a statement that appears self-contradictory, like "jumbo shrimp."

In Scripture, we read many things that are seemingly paradoxical:

- "He who believes in me, though he die...shall live." (John 11:25)
- "Whoever loses their life will find it." (Matthew 16:25)
- "If you wish to be the greatest, you must become the least." (Luke 9:48)
- "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." (Mark 10:31)

You get the idea.

People think that the book of Revelation is a prophecy about the "end times," a book brimming with fearful imagery and life or death consequences (literally). Many see it as a "dark book" filled only with angst, fear, wrath and death.

Christians, however, who see with the eyes of faith, should not view Revelation this way. We know our God is a loving God. We know that He is merciful. So we know it is not God's plan to scare us. It is also not God's plan for us to die but to live. Now, you might be saying, "Then why will I die?" God wants you to live, eternally; God wants you to live forever, with Him, in heaven. The devil wants no such thing. The devil wants you in hell, where there is no God, no love, and, therefore, no true "life" within you. Make no mistake- there is a battle being waged for your soul. The devil's plan is to keep you from life, from God. God's plan is to save you from eternal death.

In the coming lessons, you will hear a lot about judgment and punishment, heaven and hell, good and evil, etc. What you will be challenged to do is to choose between believing the lie or believing the truth...just like Adam and Eve had to choose. God wants you to live, so first you must die.

If you want to learn the "truth" about Revelation, first you must forget everything you think you know.

The paradox is that this book is not about fear at all; it is about hope. The question is whether you are willing to let God increase your vision, as He did St. John's vision. Before you embark on this journey, ask God to give you "eyes to see." (Psalm 119:18).

Chapters to Read: Revelation Chapters 1-5

Key Verse: Revelation 5:6

Break It Down: (Answer these before the study)

- 1) What five persons or groups are involved in communicating Revelation's message?
- 2) What is the significance of there being seven Churches?
- 3) What three things must we do to inherit God's special blessing (See Revelation 1:3)?
- 4) What does the title "Alpha and Omega" mean (See Revelation 1:8)?
- 5) On what day did this vision given to St. John occur (See Revelation 1:9-10)?
- 6) What does the figure in the first vision tell John?
- 7) What do the seven lamp stands represent in Revelation 1:20?
- 8) What does John witness in God's throne room (see Revelation 4)?
- 9) What do the 24 elders represent in the throne room?
- 10) How does the Lion appear in Revelation 5:6?

