

Revelation

Revelation 1:1-3

Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:

Rev 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Rev 1:3 Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand.

In describing the former Soviet Union, the late British Prime Minister Winston Church said that country was “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” That is the way many people view the Book of Revelation. Even many Christians will not read or seek to study the Book of Revelation—they go into the study with preconceived thoughts that it is too difficult and makes no sense! Even many preachers will not touch on the subject of Revelation. So the people do not hear the word of God, they are not blessed by the study of God's revelation to us, and thus we are not challenged, inspired, encouraged, and equipped!

Lehman Strauss said, “Man has attempted to do with this book the very thing that God, in the book, told him not to do, namely, **‘Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand’** (Revelation 22:10). It was written to be read and understood.”

The apostle John was the human author of this Book. The Book of Revelation was given to the angel that passed it on to John. The apostle John also wrote the Gospel according to John, the epistles of John, and the Book of Revelation.

- In the Gospel Jesus is revealed as the Savior
- In the Epistles Jesus is revealed as the Son
- In Revelation Jesus is revealed as the Sovereign
- John wrote the Gospel to convert the sinner
- John wrote the epistle to confirm the saints
- John wrote the Revelation to comfort the sufferer

I. The Person of Revelation.

Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ,

The first words of this Book reveal the title of this Book. This is the “Revelation of Jesus Christ.” This is not a book of “revelations,” but the book of Revelation. Though there are many things revealed in the Book—in essence the Book is about Jesus Christ. He is the central Person of Revelation.

This word Revelation is the Greek word *apokalypsis* and it means a disclosure, appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed, revelation, an unveiling.

This Book is about the Lord Jesus Christ—He is unveiled in this Book. In the Gospels we read about the meek and mild Jesus Who came as the Lamb of God. In Revelation we see the exalted Son of God Who will come again as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah!

David Jeremiah wrote, “The primary focus of the Book of Revelation is not to paint a picture of the end times, though it does help us do that. It is primarily to unveil the Lord Jesus Christ in His role as coming King over all the earth.”

The Book of Revelation is not about beasts, marks, numbers, and wars, trumpets, curses, and plagues. This Book is about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Note this carefully—this is not the Revelation of John—it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

- I find my Lord in the Bible wherever I choose to look;
- He is the theme of the Bible, the center and heart of the Book.
- He is the Rose of Sharon; He is the Lily Fair; wherever I open my Bible; the Lord of the Book is there.

He is the primary focus and main character of this Book. John's prophecy is primarily the revelation of Jesus Christ, not the revelation of future events. However you can't separate the Person from the prophecy, for without the Person there could be no fulfillment of the prophecy.” Question: If someone were to write a book about your life where would Jesus come in at? Where would Jesus be at today? How long would they have to read to find any mention of the Lord Jesus?

After another horrible news report of violence in the Middle East, catastrophes, local and national news that showed jobs reports down, inflation high, the stock market unstable, kidnappings, murders, rioting, picketing, and protesting ... a man said to his wife, “Honey, what is this world coming to?”

A much better question would be, Who is this world coming to? You may have never thought about this—but the world is coming to the Lord Jesus Christ! He is coming again—He will set things right—He will rule the nations—He is King of kings and Lord of lords! “We are not looking for something to happen, but we are looking for Someone to come.” John tells us about the unveiling—the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Then he proceeds to tell us:

A. Who this Revelation is from.

Rev 1:1 ... which God gave unto him,

The Revelation has been handed down from the Father. God the Father passed on to God the Son the Revelation. John didn't make it up—he didn't get overheated on the Isle of Patmos—he

wasn't delirious, light headed, or on the verge of a mental break down! The Lord Jesus received from the Father what He would pass on to John.

- The Lord first received a crucifixion; then He received a coronation.
- He received shame; then He received splendor!
- He was given a tree; then He was given a throne!
- He came and stood before Pilate; now Pilate will stand before Him!
- He received ridicule and rejection; now He has received Revelation!

The Book and the contents thereof were given as a prophecy of things that were and the things that would come! The Lord gave Himself on the cross in humility—He was raised in power, ascended to glory, and has been given the Preeminence! The Lord Jesus is the Person of Revelation. We've noted who Revelation is from—lastly we note:

B. Who this Revelation is for.

Rev 1:1 ...to shew unto his servants

John sent these letters to the seven churches in Asia as he was directed. This book is for God's servants. Lost people are puzzled by the contents, professors and educated people alike have trouble receiving and believing this Book. Revelation is given by God through His Son to a willing bond-slave of Jesus Christ to hear with the understanding the truths set forth in this book. It was never God's intention to hold back the meaning of the Revelation, but rather to show, to exhibit, to make known its meaning. All who willingly submit to Christ will have little difficulty with this book." The saints of God will learn about their future destination, their *fight* with the *devil*, and their *foes* ultimate *doom*!

God gives His servants hope, inspiration, encouragement in the midst of darkness and persecution. This book is for the servants of God. Notice the word Servant. It is the Greek word *doulos* which means a *slave*; or bond servant.

Those who don't know Jesus Christ cannot expect to comprehend this book ... Unbelievers couldn't grasp what Jesus meant when He was teaching about present spiritual realities. Neither can they grasp the future realities. Divine truth is hidden from the worldly-wise. The unbelieving skeptic finds in the book of Revelation nothing but chaos and confusion. But to the loving, willing bond-servants of Jesus Christ, this book is the understandable unveiling of prophetic truth about the future of the world."

This book is about Jesus—and as we study we should come to know our King better, come to love Him more, come to serve Him faithfully, come to worship Him and stand in awe of Him. It's all about Jesus folks! If you know Him and He's your Lord—you can and will understand the Book of Revelation as He teaches us through His word! John tells us first about the Person of Revelation—then we note:

II. The purpose of Revelation.

Rev 1:1 ... to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass;

God the Father gave Jesus the Revelation that He passed on to John to give to His servants. These “things” contained in this book are given to the servants of God to show them what must shortly take place. “Must” means “it is necessary.” There are things in life that we get to do and other things in life that we've got to do. We have got to breathe air. We have got to eat! Unless Jesus comes first, we have got to die! And, one day we have got to stand before God!

The things that are revealed in Revelation must take place—it will happen—God has a program for the future and He is sovereign. The Lord tells us that these things must take place and they must take place shortly. This word shortly does not mean “immediacy, but it imminence.” This word doesn't refer to a point in time, but in the speed of execution. The Lord is telling us that when these things happen—they are going to happen quickly. When this book was written it didn't mean that the prophecies would be fulfilled immediately, for more than 1900 years have passed since John put pen to paper. The idea of the phrase ‘must shortly come to pass' is that when the prophecies begin to be fulfilled, they will happen suddenly, in rapid succession, and without delay. They ‘must' or will, of necessity, come to pass at God's appointed time.”

God's timetable is what really matters—men cannot and have not been correct in predicting the future and when certain things will happen. We need to be ready—we need to be watching while we are busy working. We need to be looking for Jesus while we are busy living for Jesus! The things given to John about the future must shortly take place.

Charles Eardman in his commentary on Revelation said, “This is also a book of judgments and of doom. The darker side of the picture is never for a moment concealed. God is just. Sin must be punished. Impenitence and rebellion issue in misery and defeat. Here is no sentimental confusion of right and wrong. Here is no weak tolerance of evil. There is mention of ‘the Lamb that hath been slain,' but also of ‘the wrath of the Lamb.' There is a ‘river of water of life,' but also a ‘lake of fire.' Here is revealed a God of love who is to dwell among men, to wipe away all tears, and to abolish death and sorrow and pain; but first his enemies must be subdued. Indeed, the Revelation is in large measure a picture of the last great conflict between the forces of evil and the power of God. The colors are lurid and are borrowed from the convulsions of nature and from the scenes of human history, with their battles and their carnage. The struggle is titanic. Countless hordes of demonic warriors rise in opposition to him who is “King of kings, and Lord of lords.' Upon them ‘woes' are pronounced, ‘bowls' of wrath are poured out, and overwhelming destruction is visited. A brighter day is to come, but there is thunder before the dawn.”

The Lord Jesus tells us the reason for giving the Revelation to John. It was to show His servants those things that must shortly take place. God is in control of history—He is Sovereign and He reigns. It may look dark—and it is going to get darker—before the Day breaks! We are to trust God and live for the Lord Jesus and His glory! If persecution comes—and it will—we are to stay

faithful to the Lord! Let us be faithful to the Lord Jesus—worship Him, bless His name, live for Him and trust in Him! If you do not know the Lord Jesus—today you can and should trust in Him! He came to earth the first time to take away our sins—He died, rose again, and now reigns forevermore. To all those who come to Him and trust in Him He will receive and give everlasting life. The future for those that don't know the Lord Jesus is bleak, awful, indescribable, and horrible! For the saints of God—He has given us this word to equip us, to prepare us and to encourage us.

Our purpose as Christians in studying this Book is not just for information about the end times—if it is for transformation in our time! “If a study of Revelation does not move you to holier worship, harder work, and happier witnessing, then you have missed out on the purpose of this book.” Prophetic doctrine and practical duty go hand in hand! May we be encouraged and challenged by this book and the Spirit of God to live a focused and faithful life for our Lord Jesus Christ. Adrian Rogers once said, “You are to get your head out of the clouds of prophecy and put your feet on the pavement of soul-winning.” God has given us His word to enlighten us, prepare us, equip us, and use us!

John passed on to the saints what the Lord passed on to him. Christians are to receive God's word, relay God's word, read God's word, and respond to God's word. Are we witnesses for our Lord Jesus Christ? Have we believed the testimony of God's word and His servants? Do we believe that the end is near? Are we doing our part to get the Gospel to the lost in the world?

As we continue to look at the introduction of this book we move now to:

III. The proclamation of Revelation.

First, let's look at :

A. Who it was sent through.

Rev 1:1 ...and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:

The Lord God gave the Revelation to His Son which in turn passed on the Revelation through His angel to His servant John. We are reminded that God's word is not to be hoarded or hidden—it is to be read, believed, obeyed, and passed on to others! We are to relay to others what we have received from the Lord! The Lord sent His word to His servant by His angel. The Lord knew where John was, could get to him, speak to him, and make His message known to him. That does my heart good knowing that He knows where we are and what we are doing! The Lord didn't send an angel with a parchment—but he sent the angel with the words—John would pen what was revealed to him. He not only sent the letter, but he also signified it by His angel. The word signified is the Greek word *sēmainō* (*say-mah'-ee-no*) and it means to indicate or to show by a sign. This word is translated sign, wonder, and miracle in this Book. The vision of Revelation, the signs and wonders of Revelation, the symbols of Revelation was given to John through an angel of the Lord. We note who it was sent through—then we see:

B. Who it was sent to.

Rev 1:1 ...unto his servant John:

Rev 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

John received the Word of God and he was faithful to bear witness to the word of God! The angel of the Lord brought the word of the Lord to the servant of the Lord! The Lord Jesus communicated with His servant and the servant of the Lord received and transmitted the Word of the Lord. This verse reminds us that God's Word, the Holy Bible, in particular here, the book of Revelation, is given by God to His people. 2 Timothy 3:16 says,

2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2Ti 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

John bore witness to the word of God—you and I must be faithful to the word of God! Look back at our text.

Rev 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ,

John testified to the testimony of Jesus Christ. Testimony means *evidence* given (judicially or generic) record, report, testimony, witness. John received the word of God and he relayed the word of God! It is the testimony of Jesus Christ—John received from the Lord Jesus the word of God!

The Bible is the word of God—He has preserved the Word of God and we can have confidence in our Bibles—it is not just another religious holy book—it is the living Word of the living God! Let us be faithful to bear witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. We can never be true to one without the other! Just a thought:

- We cannot be faithful to the Word of God if we deny the Son of God;
- if we are true to the Son of God we will be true to the Word of God!

Look back at verse 2.

Rev 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

John bore witness to the word of God, to the testimony of Jesus Christ, and to all things that he saw—he didn't leave a word out, a scene out, a symbol out, an exhortation out, a rebuke out, a fact out—he told it all! John saw some things that people in the world today think are crazy—they would have thought that of John's day—the old man has lost his mind—they might say! John told it all—he was faithful to bear witness to it all!

John Phillips wrote, “John wrote down only what he saw and heard. He was meticulous in recording the revelations which were made to him. We must be just as careful in reading this book as John was in writing it.”

John faithfully proclaimed the Revelation as it was proclaimed to him. Christians have a responsibility to pass on and proclaim to others the Gospel of our salvation, as it was shown to us, according to scripture. It's the only way that it works.

The Bible tells us about the **Person**, the **Purpose**, and the **Proclamation** of Revelation. Lastly we see:

IV. The promise in Revelation.

First, I would like you to see:

A. The promise of favor.

1. On those who read the prophecy. (3a)

Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, ...the words of this prophecy,

American humorist Josh Billings once said, “Don't ever prophesy for if you prophesy wrong, nobody will forget it; and if you prophesy right, nobody will remember it.” God's word gives us clear inspiration and encouragement to read this book of prophecy. We are not to treat the book of Revelation like the plague—we are instructed to read it and we are blessed when we do.

Louis Talbot spoke to this—he said, “Many people treat the Book of Revelation like the priest and Levite treated the man who was beaten and robbed in the story of the Good Samaritan ... they pass by on the other side. The devil has turned thousands of people away from this portion of God's Word. He does not want anyone to read a book that tells of his being cast out of heaven ... Nor is he anxious for us to read of the ultimate triumph of his number one enemy, Jesus Christ. The more you study the Book of Revelation, the more you understand why Satan fights so hard to keep God's people away from it.”

This is the first of seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation. Blessed is he who reads the word of Revelation. God promises a blessing on those who read this book! We should not steer clear of the book of Revelation, but we should read it, believe it, receive it, and obey it.

The word Read is the Greek word *anaginōskō*, and it means to *know again*, or by extension, to *read*. This word refers to the public reading of God's word—to read aloud. I get the privilege to read this Book to God's people and before God's people. I have a promised blessing! Week after week, whether in Sunday school or in the pulpit, I try to be faithful to call your attention to the reading of God's holy Word. I seek to honor the Lord by uplifting His Word! There is also a blessing:

2. On those who hear the prophecy

Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy,

I am promised a blessing for reading and you are promised a blessing for hearing! On those who hear the words of Revelation there is a blessing! We are to come together to hear the Word of God. The word hear is *akouō* and it means to give (in the) audience (of), come (to the ears), be noised, be reported, understand. Ladies and gentlemen, we are not here just to see and be seen, but we are to come together to hear God's Word!

The favor of God is on those who proclaim and hear Revelation. Do you want to be blessed? Come for the reading, proclaiming, and hearing of God's word.

There is the promise of favor on those read and who hear the prophecy. Then we also see:

3. On those who keep the prophecy.

Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein:

We are not only to read, but we are to heed the things written in the Word of God. The words “read, hear, and keep” are in the present tense in the Greek language and emphasize an ongoing and consistent habit. We are to be obedient to the Word of God!

Notice this word keep. Now when I first began to ponder this word I was a bit confused and troubled to say the least, I mean the Book of Revelation is full of symbols, and signs. It isn't in chronological order, and there is a lot of horror within its pages, especially from chapter 6 onward. So what was I supposed to keep. I also knew that because I am a blood bought child of God, I wouldn't be here after chapter 4 verse 1. But I also knew from reading, that this word was in the present tense, so keeping was something I was supposed to be doing right now. So what is a guy to do? Well the first thing I did was look up its definition.

It is the Greek word *tēreō* and it means to *guard* (from *loss* or *injury*, properly by keeping *the eye* upon; to *note* (a prophecy; figurative to *fulfill* a command); by implication to *detain* (in

custody; figurative to *maintain*); by extension to *withhold* (for personal ends; hold fast, preserve, watch.

Well the definition helped some, but I still wasn't feeling real warm and fuzzy about what I needed to do to gain favor. So I dug a little deeper and found that this word is used 74 times in the Bible and it is exclusively a New Testament word. Knowing that Scripture illuminates and clarifies Scripture, I looked to see how it was used in other places. Here are a few examples.

Joh 8:51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

Joh 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Joh 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Act 24:23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

1Ti 5:22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

As I looked through, I saw that most of the examples dealt with keeping or guarding, and I was sure that I would be a complete failure at this. I mean I have never completely, 100% kept or guarded anything. Then I was reminded about the ancient Phoenicians. I know this sounds completely random, but these people were the greatest sailors of their time. They sailed around the world and back in their canoes before the age of electronics. Science says that 70% of our world is covered in water. As a former sailor, I understand how big that ocean can be, and that once you are a 1000 miles from nowhere, everything looks the same. I had some very sophisticated equipment to get me from point A to B, and then back home again safely. The Phoenicians had none of that. So how did they conquer the oceans? They used the stars. They could tell where they were, and chart where they were going by keeping the stars. Sailors throughout history have also guarded their navigational secrets, or methods, and the Phoenicians were no different.

This gives me hope in not only keeping the prophecies of this Book but also the commandments of Christ. See the Bible gives me a starting point, or reference point as to where I am in this life right now. Through reading, and hearing, and studying I am able with the Holy Spirit's help to chart my course. I am keeping the sayings and commandments. As, I study and become more familiar with the text, I can recognize landmarks, and detours that would throw me off course and then correct my path. I can also recognize counterfeit paths that would throw me off and detour my journey. The Pastor once told me that Bible study is like eating fish, you keep the meat and throw out the bones. But it is only by reading, hearing, and keeping the commands that I am able to determine which fish is safe to eat, and thereby guard that which has been entrusted to me.

- We are to keep the commandments to the church—

- we are to keep in mind the prophecies,
- we are to keep in heart the promises,
- we are to keep active in our witness—
- we are to keep faithful to our worship—
- we are to keep steadfast in persecution—
- we are to keep the things written in this book!

Mexican jails do not have the reputation of being tidy and orderly. Years ago, when Luis Echeverria took office of President of Mexico—one of the first things he did was address this problem. Without giving any advance notice, he chose to visit the jails at midnight. He found guards away from their posts, prisoners not taken care of, and other discrepancies between the expectations and the reality. He proceeded to fire people and clean up the prison system. When the Lord Jesus comes back—how will He find Christians? How will He find the church?

There is a promise of favor on those who hear the prophecy and on those who heed the prophecy. We note the promise of favor—and John also tells us about:

B. The promise of fulfillment.

Rev 1:3 ...for the time is at hand.

The promises and the prophecies will be fulfilled. It is going to happen—not a matter of if, but a matter of when! John gives a word of warning and fact about the coming of the Lord, the fulfilling of all these things listed in this book!

The Greek word Chronos is the word for time on the clock. But John doesn't use that word. Instead he uses the kairos (kaheeros) which means a set or proper time, opportunity or season. This word refers to the season or era, not to the hour on the clock, or day on the calendar.

John is saying that the season of God's judgment and the end of all things is near. The phrase at hand means near, ready." These things are ready to happen—we are constantly living on the edge of eternity! It can happen at any moment!

I read about the little boy who heard for the first time the family clock chime all the way to 12 and exclaimed to his mother, "Mom, it's later than it's ever been." It is indeed later than it's ever been and we are closer to the coming of Jesus than we have ever been! The New Testament writers lived their lives in light of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. They believed that Jesus could return in their lifetime. The Lord told them many things that would happen, but He did not tell them when these things will happen.

The Lord Jesus plainly told His disciples this. Matthew 24:36 says,

Mat 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

We need to hear and heed the words of this prophecy because the time is near! “It means that the end time, the Second Coming of Christ, must always be viewed as imminent. Throughout the Christian age there has been an anticipation of His return. If we view it as something lost in the distant future, beyond our time, there will not be the sense of urgency and the desire to communicate the gospel. But if we live in an understanding that the time is at hand, that the beginning of these events is upon us, that this event hangs over every age that has ever lived, we will have a real sense of urgency about the proclamation of the gospel.” The Lord tells us that the time is near—when the events come they will come quickly.

- 1 Peter 4:7 says, But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.
- James 5:8 says, Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.
- 1 John 2:18 says, Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

Years ago, on Dr. James Dobson's radio program he had a guest by the name of Dr. Richard Swenson, and they discussed how history is coming to a climax. Dr. Swenson spoke about the principal of exponentiality, which means that our civilization is moving faster and faster. Things are coming at us at a rapid speed. Swenson believes that things are coming so fast that we are unable to reverse them. We cannot un-discover things—i.e. the internet, television, robotics etc.

Dr. Swenson gave an illustration about exponentiality—he said that the Pacific Ocean is 64 million square miles and has an average depth of 14,000 ft. If you put all the continents of the world in the Pacific Ocean, you would still have room for another Asia. Furthermore, Swenson explained that if you drained the Pacific Ocean, then began adding water, starting with just one drop, but doubling the amount each time, in just eighty times you would refill the entire Pacific Ocean. On the 70th time it would only be less than 1/10 of 1% full. On the 79th time it would be one-half full. On the 80th time the first time would make it half-full and then then doubled it would be full. That is the principle of exponentiality. That is what is happening in our society. If you had a time line that depicted technological advancement from creation to 1975 it would remain relatively flat—from 1975 to the present day that line would go straight up.

We are living in a day that is quickly coming to a climax—the Lord is coming again! The time is near! Are you ready for the Lord Jesus to come? Are you prepared to meet Him? If He called you from this life would heaven be your home? Have you turned to the Lord Jesus from your sin? Have you repented and trusted in Him alone to save you? Are we reading, hearing, and heeding the things written in His Book? Are we living an obedient life? God has called for us to

get busy living for Jesus and telling others that He saves! If we believe that the end of all things is near—we cannot live in apathy, indifference, and disobedience! Would you surrender to the Lord Jesus this morning? Would you call upon Him? Will you serve Him and live for Him? For the time is at hand.