

# Revelation 1:1-10

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**Bible Text:** Revelation 1:1-10  
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But tonight we begin kind of a, I guess, a new pathway for lack of better terms, on Sunday evenings. Over the course of our future together, I have made this, I guess, hopefully a wise decision that there are certain books of the Bible that cause the most intrigue, the most interest, and also the most discussion, debate, and can I say, division as well. Some of those books of the Bible are the book of Revelation, the book of Genesis, the book of Hebrews, the book of Acts. There are certain books of the Bible that when it comes to discussing the content therein, oftentimes it leaves us with more division than it does more truth. So the purpose of Sunday evenings going through what we now have called Greenwell Springs University, is to take those books of the Bible and just to systematically over the course of time just walk through them verse by verse, chapter by chapter, and just hopefully the word of God will unpeel itself so that we can see what is there. I thought, why not if you're going, from where I come from, go big or go home, right? So why not just go ahead and let's go for the big one, the book of Revelation.

Now, let me tell you what it says: in the end we win. The study is over. Everybody go home and watch the Super Bowl. I'm kidding. What we're going to do tonight, tonight is going to be really more of an introduction. If you came to hear about the seven seals being opened, you're going to have to wait a while. If you came tonight saying, "Who is the antichrist and is he alive today?" that's going to be a little while. If you're coming here tonight saying, "I want to know these two witnesses, who are they really?" that's a little bit down the road. You see, tonight we're just going to look at the first 9 verses of the book of Revelation. It's my goal, it's my purpose tonight to address three main issues. The first one is this: the entire purpose of the book of Revelation. Why is it that God would give us this book that has seemed so mysterious to so many and so confusing to so many as well? We're going to look at who is the person of Jesus as laid out in the book of Revelation because how he is pictured and described in Revelation is very much different than how he is pictured in the Gospels. Then we're going to look at what I call the predicament of John, really more or less the position that John is in, and we're going to see that there is an eerie parallel to his position in his culture, his society and his time, as we find ourselves as believers today.

So without further ado, I'd like for you to join me as we open the book of Revelation. Chapter 1, verses 1 through 10. It says,

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: 2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. 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. 4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; 5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. 8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. 9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

Next week we'll get into verses 10 and following, this picture of Jesus that we have in the first chapter of Revelation, but tonight as we deal with the purpose of Revelation, why out of the 66 books in your Bible, why is this the last one? Why is this the final chapter? And shall I say, why is this very critical to your understanding of the entire message of God's word? You know, they say it's always good or that confession is always good for the soul. Allow me to confess an issue that I have in life, a struggle that I have in life: I'm a voracious reader. In fact, my wife will testify I don't read just one book at a time, I have like a dozen books on my nightstand, dozens of books in my closet, and thousands of books here on this campus and I'm always reading about five or six all at one time. Here is my confession: I like to read the last chapter first. You say, "Why do you do that?" Because I might not get to the end the way that I read so if I read the end, I know the conclusion. I know how it ends. And so it is with the book of Revelation. I believe that it is this book that is the bow on the package of the Bible that God has given us. When we understand what the book of Revelation teaches, all it does is enhance our understanding of the rest of the Bible and in particular as we're going to see through this study, what we know as the Old Testament.

So what is the purpose, what is the reasoning behind God giving us this book of the Bible? The first thing is this: that the book of Revelation is about God communicating to us, not concealing things from us. We do not love, worship and serve a God who wants to keep things hidden from us. In fact, what he wants to do is reveal himself to us. Notice the very first statement, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show his servants." In other words, the last book of the Bible begins, the information, the

stuff that God wants us to know. He is revealing this to us. He's not hiding it from us. He's not concealing it. God wants us to know how everything is going to wrap up. He wants us to know how the end is going to play out. He wants us to know what the finish line looks like.

Now, I want you to notice some of the verbs that are used. Verse 1: he gave; he shows; he sent; he signified. Do you see those verbs of action that are being used? And what you discover is that God desires for us to know this information. He wants us to know this information. He does not want it concealed, he wants it communicated. I think probably the best example within the book of Revelation is chapter 5. Now, we're not going to study it in detail tonight but when you get to chapter 5 of the book of Revelation, the Bible says that there is a strong angel that shows up and that strong angel, he begins to declare a truth. He says, "Who in heaven, who in the earth, or who under the earth is worthy to unseal the book?" We discover in chapter 5 of the book of Revelation there is a book that is sealed with seven seals. When we get to chapter 5, we'll deal with the details therein. But it says that John, whom we read a little bit about tonight, that John begins to weep, he begins to cry; he's upset because the strong angel in his declaration, "There is nobody who is able to open the sealed book." Can you imagine the despair? Here's this man who is caught up in the Spirit, here is this man who has seen all that we have seen particularly in chapters 4 when he sees the heavenly realm and all the rainbows and the colors and the servants and the cherubim of God and now all of a sudden the end of the world, he's not going to know what it is. You know what happens in chapter 5, it says, "The Lamb who was slain, Jesus Christ himself, takes the book and opens it." Why is that important? Because our Savior Jesus Christ, the one who loved us as we'll see in a minute, and who bought us and washed us of our sins in his own blood, he doesn't want it to be concealed. He wants us to know. He wants it to be revealed.

So when we talk about the purpose of Revelation, understand that God is not interested in concealing, he's interested in communicating. The second thing is this: God wants to confirm the truth, not offer confusion. Now, 1 Corinthians 14, obviously a chapter about one of the spiritual gifts known as tongues, verse 33 says, that God is not the author of confusion. When it comes to this book of the Bible, I don't know if there is another part of the Scripture that has more confusion than this one. I joke all the time, you get two Baptists and you'll get three opinions. You get two people studying the book of Revelation and you'll get 14 different opinions on this book of the Bible. In fact, if you will just go and I don't recommend this but if you want to go home and just Google the concepts of the book of Revelation, you'll be shocked at how many different opinions and ideas. It is so confusing.

So why is it confusing? I believe I have a theory that is accurate. I think after years and years of study, I have discovered why the book of Revelation is so confusing to so many people and how we can see clarity in our lives, not just tonight but throughout our entire study. The book of Revelation isn't confusing because of what is said, even though sometimes it seems really enigmatic, the book of Revelation is confusing because of our own biblical illiteracy. Let me share with you what I mean. The book of Revelation has 22 chapters and yet there are over 200 specific references to the Old Testament. Now, if

there is one thing that we as New Testament Christians can be charged with is we don't study the Old Testament a whole lot, do we? We love to be in the Gospels. We love to be in the epistles of Paul. We love the New Testament. But what we discover in the book of Revelation, over 200 references to passages tucked deep into Daniel and Zephaniah and Micah and even Deuteronomy. So when you do not have an adequate knowledge of the Old Testament, then you're not going to have an accurate knowledge of the book of Revelation. And the confusion comes when we make Revelation say something that the Old Testament was never saying. You see, the book of Revelation is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and, yes, some of the new testament as well. When you separate Revelation from the Old Testament of which it is referring back to, then it's much like Jeopardy, you're giving the answer to a question that's in the wrong category. Why is there so much confusion on Revelation? Because there is so much ignorance and illiteracy in what we know as the Old Testament.

Now, let me share with you kind of the side benefit of studying the book of Revelation: if you hang in there and you stay through through this study, are you going to learn about the book of Revelation? Absolutely. Are you going to be able to do a dialogue about the two witnesses and all the plagues? Of course. But you know also what you're going to get? You're going to get the Cliffs Notes version of the Old Testament during this study because we cannot but help ourselves to go back into the Old Testament and see what God was prophesying and what he was showing us that is now being revealed in the book of Revelation. So I believe that's why there is confusion.

Now, here in verse 2, it says, "Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw." I believe the Lord lays out a pattern for us, not just in studying the book of Revelation, but in just life in general, of how we cannot have confusion on the things of God but have clarity. I do not think it is by accident, I do not think it is by chance that these items are listed in this order. The word of God, the spirit of prophecy and then all that he saw. One of the biggest struggles that people have is when they place what they've seen or what they claim they've seen over the word of God. Any time we put our facts below our feelings, we get ourselves in a mess, do we not? So what it says here at the very beginning of Revelation, the very first thing is that this is how we know this is true: the word of God.

Now, I want you to turn a few pages to the left tonight to the book of 2 Peter 1, speaking of those Old Testament individuals that the Lord used literally hundreds and thousands of years before this was written. In verse 20 and 21 of 2 Peter 1 it says, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." What does that mean? That means you cannot take the teachings of Revelation and isolate them from the passages that they are tangent to in what we know as the Old Testament. In other words, the message of the Old Testament and the message of Revelation, they will come together and they will support one another. It's of no private interpretation.

In fact, Psalm 138:2 takes it even a step further. It says that the word of God is elevated above the name of God. You know, in Amos 7, one of those minor prophets that we'll study on a Sunday morning in days to come, there are all these illustrations that the Lord is wanting to use so that the Israelites will understand what he's trying to teach them. Finally he says, "Do you know what, Amos? Go get a plumb line. Go get what we know as a heavy object on the bottom of a string and hang it from the ceiling of the room therein." Why? Because oftentimes the construction of windows and doors and even facings and such, they may look true to the naked eye but only the God-given properties of gravity can prove to us whether they are true or not. The word of God is our absolute final authority, not just on Scripture, but particularly when it comes to the book of Revelation.

You see, one of the struggles that I have with the study of Revelation is that so many people interpret the headlines in light of revelation and not Revelation in light of the headlines. In other words, they see something happen in the political world, they see something happen in the geological world and they say, "Aha, that must be that!" But then you go back to when it was mentioned in the Old Testament and you discover there's no way it could be that because it actually had nothing to do with the headline that they were referencing. What is our final authority? The absolute final authority is the word of God and interpreting it with other passages. You see, over the course of this study when we look at a lot of these incidences and issues that come up, we're going to say, "Well, what did Joel say? What did Micah say? What did Isaiah say?" Not, "What did the headlines of the New York Times say? What did the prophets of old say?"

Then it says here, "the testimony of Jesus." Now, if you can fast-forward to chapter 19 of Revelation real quick, Revelation 19:10, the very last sentence of that verse right before we get to that famous second coming passage beginning in verse 11, it says, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Now, this is important in Revelation 1. It says, there is the word of God, then it says very clearly there is the testimony of Jesus. What is the testimony of Jesus? It says there in Revelation 19:10, "it is the spirit of prophecy."

Many of you may have heard these facts and these numbers and this data before but allow me to repeat them. If you just took the 48 specific incidences in the life of Jesus from the Old Testament prophesied hundreds of years before his birth that involve his birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection, there are 48 of them. The statistical possibility or probability of them coming true in one man's life exactly as was prophesied and in the order of which it was prophesied is  $1 \times 10/157$ . That's a 1 with 157 zeroes behind it. You say, "Why is that number so significant?" Y'all know what an atom is, right? That basic structure of all things that are of matter? You know atoms are made of protons and electrons and even smaller items? Did you know there is not that many electrons in the known universe? The statistical probability of Jesus being who the prophet said he would be is beyond mathematical computation. Why is that important? Because there are 48 specific ones about the life of Jesus, right? Did you know that when we come to the book of Revelation, many of them are duplicated, there are over 300 prophecies about the second coming versus 48 on the first coming. So why is this listed here in Revelation?

Why is this so important? It's almost as if God is saying, "It was a mathematical impossibility that Jesus' first coming would be exactly as I said so why would you doubt his second coming?" In other words, the word of God is our standard. It will be our litmus test. It will be our plumb line. But the fact that the prophecies of Jesus' first coming came true as was spoken, we can rest assured that they will come true the second time as well.

Then finally, "all the things that he saw." We're going to see that the Lord uses whom we know as the Apostle John, a human being, a saved sinner like you and I, in a magnificent way. But I want you to understand something, like you and I, John is not perfect. I know oftentimes we see the apostles as almost the ideology of perfection. There is going to be a place in the book of Revelation where an angel shows up and John is so mesmerized he bows down to worship the angel and the angel says, "Get up. Don't worship me. You've got the wrong person." Why is that important? Because 1 John 1:1, speaking of Jesus, it says, "whom we saw, we heard, and we touched with our hands." That which our senses can understand, that which our sensibilities can understand must always come into subjection with the truth of the prophetic word and also the truth of God's word in totality. And what that shares with me tonight is this: that God does not want us to be confused. He does not want us to somehow have things hidden from us. He wants clarity in our lives about all issues, in particular the book of Revelation.

And finally I think the purpose of Revelation is to give comfort, not chaos. And if you've been to a "bookstore" lately that has books on the end times, do you know what you see? Chaos. One opinion that contradicts another opinion. One idea that scares you to death. Another one that makes you want to go and buy a million meals ready-to-eat and hide in a bunker. I mean, there is all kinds of chaos out there. I want you to notice what verse 3 says, "Blessed." Now, I believe that 2 Timothy 3:16 is correct, "all Scripture is inspired by God." The book of John and the book of Revelation are no more inspired than the book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. It may not be near as exciting but nonetheless just as inspired. Did you know that in Revelation 1:3, it's the only place in your Bible that says you will receive a blessing for reading the contents therein? This is the first place. So the Lord has made it very clear you will receive a blessing for understanding and learning and he says if you read it, if you hear it, and you will keep the things that are therein.

I put a reference on your outline to 1 Thessalonians 4:18. We'll deal with this passage more in detail as we go along in our study. It's one of the famous, what we call, rapture passages. 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15. We'll study this a little bit more as we get on in Revelation. But this is that passage where it says, "Do not be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep in Christ Jesus." And it goes on to describe that one day the trumpet is going to sound and those who are dead in Christ, those who are alive in Christ, will meet the Lord together in the air. I mean, it's a great passage about resurrection. It's a great passage about the power of God. What I love, though, is verse 18, it says, "Wherefore comfort each other with these words." If you're studying the book of Revelation and it's causing you to want to go and build a bunker and hide out, you're missing it. We are to receive comfort that no matter what befalls, no matter what happens

or what we see unveiled in this life, that he is going to see us through it, he is going to comfort us through it.

He says, in fact, you will be blessed and I love this last statement, "for the time is at hand." Now, I know, I know that 1 Peter 5:1-3 says that there are scoffers that are out there. People say, "Well, he hasn't come yet. What makes you think he's going to eventually come?" "For the time is at hand." You know, there is a passage in 2 Peter 3, it's a famous passage. You may not know it's there in 2 Peter 3, but you know it. It says "a day with the Lord is as 1,000 years and 1,000 years is as if a day." You know, that passage has nothing to do with the book of Genesis which is where most people interpret it. It's about the book of Revelation. It's in the context of Jesus' second coming. So why is that significant? It says the time is at hand. Oftentimes we say, "Well, it's been 2,000 years, how could it be at hand?" You understand that in God's time it's just been a long weekend? That's all it's been. The time is just as much at hand today as it was in the first century when God showed this message and this vision to a man who we know as the Apostle John.

So the purposes of Revelation are for communication, confirmation, and comfort. But then we get to verse 5, the person of Jesus. Now, those of you who have made the, I guess somewhat wise decision of picking up a book that is offered by me. I say somewhat wise, I always joke that if it's not good for reading it makes great kindling in your fireplace. If it is a book that I have had the privilege of signing, you may notice that every book that I sign, I sign Revelation 1:5 underneath my name. This is a verse I absolutely love. Why? Because I believe it encapsulates who Jesus is and what he has done for us in one single verse. It calls him the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, the prince of the kings of the earth who loved us and he washed us from our sin in his own blood. You see, what we're going to see in the book of Revelation, there is the antichrist, there are the two witnesses, there are the seven heads and the leaders that we'll talk about, there's even the Apostle John and the strong angel, there are four angels that hold back the river Euphrates, but there is one primary character and that person is Jesus Christ.

Notice what it says in the very first verse, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." So his identity as revealed in the book of Revelation: he's the faithful witness. We know what a witness is, right? We've all seen court TV or some type of courtroom drama, correct? A witness is someone who is called upon, who supposedly, at least in the court cases, can verify what they have seen, what they experienced. They are there to testify to those who were not there what actually occurred. In John 1:18 and listen to what Jesus says, he says, "No one has seen the Father but me, but the Son in whom he has sent." If we want a witness for the things of God, Jesus Christ is the one to go to. Why? He's the faithful witness.

So John 1:18, later on John 3:15, the story with him and Nicodemus, Jesus says basically something to this effect, he says, "If you want to know that my witness is true, I am one who will ascend but I am the only one who has ever descended to be in your presence." In other words, Jesus was and is God in flesh. Why is that so important? Because he's the faithful witness. He's the one who has shown us the things of God. They saw him. They

heard him. They could touch him. Who is it that is showing John this vision in Revelation? It's Jesus Christ, the very first statement, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." Who is it that opens up the seven seals found in chapter 6? It's Jesus Christ who opens up the seals. Who is it that comes out of the heaven in chapter 19? Jesus Christ. Who sits on the throne in chapter 20? Jesus Christ. Who speaks a new heaven and a new earth in chapter 21? Jesus Christ. Who is the light of that city because there is no need for a sun anymore? Jesus Christ. Do you get the point? He is the focal point. He is the faithful witness.

But then I love that next statement: he is the first begotten of the dead. The reason I love that statement is if you've got a first, that means you've got a second, correct? You know, one of the lessons that was so hard for me to learn when I was a young person, in English class was when you would do an outline because one of the hard lessons for me is if you were going to do an outline and you put a number 1 in a statement, you had to have a number 2 because without a 2 there was no reason to have a 1. When it says here that Jesus Christ is the first begotten of the dead, what that means is that because the tomb is empty, we can experience what Revelation 20 talks about about the resurrection. He is the firstborn of the dead, that means that you and I are the second, the third, the fourth, etc. He is the one who paved the way for what we know as eternal, everlasting life as described throughout the entire Bible. He's the first begotten of the dead.

You know, 1 Corinthians 15:1-3, in fact, it's one of the Awana verses that our young people learn on a regular basis here. It says in those verses that when Jesus Christ rose, listen to this, "according to the Scriptures," that he was seen by over 500 individuals. He was the first begotten of the dead. That's why 1 Thessalonians 4 that I alluded to earlier, it says, "Do not be ignorant, brethren, if there are those that have fallen asleep, don't panic. Because the tomb is empty, so will one day yours be as well." He's the faithful witness, he's the first begotten of the dead.

But it's this next statement that has a whole lot of eschatology which means the study of the end times wrapped in it: it calls him the prince of the kings of the earth. Now, later when we get to the end of the book of Revelation, we're going to discover that in chapter 19, that it is the kings of the earth, that statement is used to describe those who oppose Jesus Christ at his second coming at that famous battle of Armageddon. We're then going to see in chapter 21 that when the new heaven and the new earth and the new Jerusalem is established, it says that the kings of the earth come and worship him. We'll delineate between what those definitions and descriptions mean later on in the book of Revelation, but I think what is so important is he is called the prince of the kings of the earth. You know, when Jesus comes back in chapter 19, it says that his garment is girded up on his legs and it says there is a description of him written on his thigh, that he is King of kings and he is Lord of lords.

So in chapter 19, if he's the King of kings, why in chapter 1 is he described as the prince of the kings? You know, you and I are somewhat hindered in understanding this because we live in a Republic. By the way, the pundits are wrong, you know you don't live in a democracy, right? You live in a Republic is what you live in. But those who live in a



monarchy grasp this. Those in places like England and Morocco and other places that have true Kings and Queens and a monarchy, they get this. Why? Because every one of those established governments, they have for the sake of illustration, they have a king, there is always a prince, right? What's the role of the prince? As soon as the king for whatever reason, typically by death, is no longer the king, he is automatically made subject to being the king without question, correct? There is no debate. Listen, there is no vote. There is no caucus. There is no primary. There is no debate. If you're the prince, you become the king.

Interesting, Jesus who is called the King of kings at the end of Revelation, at this moment here he is called the prince of the kings of the earth. Well, if he's the prince, who is the king? Who is in charge? Who is he waiting to pass so that he can rightfully take the throne? You know, in 2 Corinthians 4:4, it says that Satan is the god of this world. When we get to Revelation 11:15, that seventh trump is going to sound and it says, "Now the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Savior Jesus Christ." I've got news for you, church, right now as I stand before you, Jesus Christ is not reigning on the throne of earth right now. He may be reigning in your hearts, he may be reigning in heaven, he's not reigning on the earth but guess what? One day he will. He's the prince of the kings of the earth. In other words, when the antichrist falls, in other words when his coalition crumbles before mankind, there's not a caucus, there is not a primary, there is not even an election. Why? Because Jesus is called the prince of the kings of the earth and as soon as he is put by the wayside, he being the antichrist, without question, the King of kings and the Lord of lords will take his rightful throne. Which, by the way in Psalm 110:1, is the most quoted Old Testament Scripture in your New Testament when King David makes the statement that the Messiah will sit on his throne forever. He's the prince of the kings of the earth.

What about his intentions? It says he "loved us and he washed us from our sins in his own blood." I know we quote it all the time and I'm sure at the Super Bowl tonight someone is going to have a sign up that says John 3:16, but it's amazing how many people don't know what John 3:16 says. It says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." What was his intention for coming, church? What was his intention for taking the beating of the cross? What was his intention of staying in the grave three days? His intention was he loves us. He desires for our sin to be transferred to him so that his salvation can be granted to us.

You see, we're talking about what are the intentions of Jesus toward us. His number 1 intention is: he loves us. I love that next statement, though, it says that he washes us. 1 Corinthians 6, it says that we've been washed. But I want you to turn a few pages to your left to Titus 3:5. In Titus 3:5 it talks about being washed by Jesus Christ. Titus, one of what we know as the pastoral epistles along with 1 and 2 Timothy. I know that oftentimes when we come to this section of Scripture known as the pastoral epistles we think that they're just practical advice, every day advice about how to live life as a believer, how to function as a church, but in these three books of the Bible, the word "doctrine" is used 52 times. Notice what Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done,

but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." He says he washed us by regeneration. Here in Revelation 1:5 it says he loved us, he washed us.

You know, interesting that word "regeneration," to be regenerate, to be born again, it's only used two times in your entire Bible: Titus 3:5 describing the salvation of a soul; and listen to this, the book of Matthew 19:28 when it says that one day that through his words Jesus Christ will regenerate the creation. Isn't that what happens in Revelation 21? All that we know now is engulfed in a ball of fire as prophesied by 2 Peter 3. Then the new heaven, the new earth and new Jerusalem is formed and fashioned by his words alone. It is called regeneration. Our salvation is called regeneration because that's what happened to you the day you got saved. Your old self was eradicated, the Spirit of God was infused into you and you became born again. You became a new creation and a new creature.

I find it interesting that the only times the Bible talks about regeneration is with salvation and end time events, particularly known to the book of Revelation. He loved us, he washed us, he saved us, I love this statement, with his own blood. I want you to turn to the book of Acts 20 for just a moment, the book of Acts 20. There is a statement that I think is very critical to our understanding, not only of the intentions of Jesus Christ but the validity and the truth behind our salvation. The Lord is giving instructions to the early church about how to basically pastor a church; how to be a church; how to lead within a church. It says, "Take heed therefore," this is verse 28 of Acts 20, it says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock of the church over which the Holy Ghost has made you an overseer to feed the church of God," listen, "which he has purchased with his own blood." Did you know that what we know as the church and I'm not talking about buildings here, I'm talking about the organism of people who are believers in Jesus Christ, the church is the only thing that Jesus spilled his blood for. And he didn't just spill blood, it says he spilled his own blood. It's much like Colossians 1 when it describes Jesus going to his cross. You know, his cross was different than other people's cross, right? We know what a cross is. We know the shape of it. We know the function of it. But his cross was different because his cross provided forgiveness. His cross provided salvation. His blood is different than just blood as well. Why? Because only his blood can wash away our sins.

It says he loved us, he washed us, and then it says in verse 6: he has made us kings and priests unto God his Father. You know, I have alluded on your outline to the book of Revelation 20. In a couple of weeks, I'm going to have the blackboard up behind me and we're going to lay out all kinds of information and data and graphs and such. Fascinating that all of the interpretations of the book of Revelation, you know, you hear terms like pre and post and all these different terminologies, that all of them are based on these seven verses in Revelation 20, how we view these verses. It's a passage that many people have referred to as the millennium, a Latin word for 1,000 years. Why? Because there in those seven verses six times Jesus refers to the phrase "1,000 years." Personally speaking, if he says it six times in seven verses, I think he means it, folks. But in that passage, it says that Jesus Christ comes, the chapter earlier and what we know as the battle of Armageddon, in chapter 20 Satan is bound for the thousand years, Jesus establishes his throne in a place

that we know as Jerusalem where he sits as the King of kings and the Lord of lords and he establishes his kingdom throughout all of the earth. Interesting that we who come behind him at Armageddon, we are called his kings and his priests. In other words, illustrations or parables such as the parable of the talents give us insight that one day when Jesus reigns on this earth, we will reign with him. We will serve with him. We will be the conduit of his leadership literally to the world at large.

Now, I want you to think about the intentions here. You've got a, you know that Romans 5:8 says that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us? So here we are sinful humanity that has this perpetual problem for always doing something other than what God wants us to do and it says he loves us; he washes our sins in his own blood; and he wants us to make us kings and priests. If that doesn't give us comfort from the book of Revelation, I don't know what can, folks. From the very first chapter in the first few verses, it says that these are his intentions toward you. He loves you. He is willing to wash you and one day make you a king and a priest.

So what's the inevitable here? It says in verse 7, "Behold, he comes with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." What's the inevitable? No matter what anybody may say and/or teach or discuss with you, I've got news for you: Jesus Christ is coming back. There is no doubt about it. There is no question. You say, "Well, what do you mean? Why can't we question it?" Don't you remember that whole spirit of prophecy? If he fulfilled all 48 about his first coming, don't you think he's going to fulfill all 300 regarding his second coming? If the word of God was true about his first coming, then the word of God is going to be true about his second coming yet as we've seen, 1 Peter 5 says that there will be scoffers. There will be people that say, "I don't know why you spend so much time talking about this." In fact, I have friends of mine who believe that it is a waste of time to study the book of Revelation because we can't know what it says anyway. Last time I checked, he says, "I want to reveal this to you."

So what is the inevitable? Jesus Christ is going to return and when he does, on his being revealed, it says that "every eye shall see him." Now, I'm going to give you a phrase that I've learned to adopt over the last year. I first heard this from the mouth of my dear friend and hopefully yours, Dr. Gene Williams when he was with us last year. I love this statement. It's probably one of the most profound statements about the book of Revelation and times that I've ever heard. It goes a little something like this: nothing has to happen before Jesus comes back for us. A whole lot of stuff has to happen before Jesus comes back with us. Some of the things that will happen before he comes back with us may happen before he comes back for us. That is a profound statement. What that means is one day when Jesus does come back physically in the clouds like Revelation 19 says with the armies of heaven behind him, it says here in verse 8 that every, verse 7, every eye shall see him.

Now, last time I checked, do you know what the word "every" means? Every. Do you know where humanity is, at least in their fighting of Jesus? The battle of Armageddon. Did you know that giant battlefield that if you were to take the dimensions thereof and

you were to give every single person one square foot of space, you say, "Well, that's not much space," well, if you're lined up in a military formation, that's all you need, right? That one simple valley can put over 2 billion people on its grounds. By the way, as we study the book of Revelation, you're going to discover that things occur where a third of the population is killed, a fourth of the population is killed. And even today with 7+ billion people on planet earth, it is absolutely completely fathomable that when he returns that all the world's population has assembled in one singular geographical location, the valley of Jezreel.

What does it say? Every eye will see him. And then there is this remorse. Those that pierced him and all kindreds of the earth they shall wail because of him. You know, Colossians 1:15 and 16, it says, "All things in heaven, all things on earth, all things under earth, all that which is spiritual, all that which is physical, everything was created by the hand of Jesus and for his sake and for his glory." Let me share with you what's going to happen one day at the battle of Armageddon. There is going to be possibly billions of people that realized they lived their entire life based on the lie of the enemy. They're going to realize that they spent the resources, they spent their time, they spent everything they are trying to fight the one who created them. And it says that when he appears, every eye will see him and they will wail. You say, "Why will they wail?" Because it's at that very moment they realize they made a dreadful, dreadful mistake.

You know, a story that runs tangent to this, you know, in the history of our country, there are certain days and times that just are infamous: December 7, 1941, we all know what that speaks of, Pearl Harbor. Another date I think many of us at least in our contemporary world know of is what we know of as 9/11, that fateful day where the terrorists took to the air and took out buildings and lives. I remember that day, I called a dear friend of mine at the time. I was actually scheduled to preach that night. I was doing a revival in a church and here I was literally going to be preaching hours after the worst terroristic attack of the history of our country. Here we were, planes were grounded, people couldn't move and we were literally wondering, were we not, are we about to enter World War III. That's what we were wondering. I called a friend of mine at the time. I'll never forget the conversation that I had with him. I said, "Friend, what do you think about what has happened?" Now we all know that every single person that hijacked those planes were of the Muslim faith, right? We know that every single one of them, no matter what the pundits of our world say, every one of them was Islamic, okay? There were no Buddhists that did this. There were no Christians that did this. They were Muslims that did this. I'll never forget when I said, "Friend, what do you think about this?" And here is the response of my dear friend at the time, he said, "I bet they believe in Jesus now." You see, I was so consumed with, "I've got to preach. Buildings have fallen. Lives have been lost." You see, the moment those men who hijacked those planes, the moment their life was lost on earth, they didn't inherit 72 virgins, they didn't inherit all that the Koran promises. Do you know what they realized? They spent their whole life fighting the one who created them; fighting the one who established them; and fighting the one who loved them and was willing to save them. In one millisecond, I guarantee you, the wailing began because they realized they had chosen poorly. Here it says that when Jesus shows up, every eye will see him and they will wail because of him.

As we draw a close to tonight's study, we've looked at the purpose of Revelation; we've looked at the person of Jesus. I want to look at the predicament of John or the position that John is in. Why? Because as we go through the book of Revelation, we're going to see that John is more than just an apostle. He's more than just the one who is called the beloved. He is more than just the one who at the end of the Gospel of John was said to him, "What is it to you if one of these is still alive when he sees me coming in my kingdom?" It's more than that. In fact, what we're going to see throughout the book of Revelation that John can be utilized as a picture of the church.

Now, I'm going to leave you hanging on that thought as we continue our study, but I want you to notice his placement. It says that he's on the island of Patmos. Believe it or not this may sound very academic to you but when you date the book of Revelation determines how you interpret the book of Revelation. There are only two possibilities that you have: either what we know as the book of Revelation was given to John on the island of Patmos during the 60s, not the 1960s, the first century 60s, or it was given to him in the 90s. Now, let me share with you what the difference would have been. If it was given to him during the 60s, then a man by the name of Nero ruled Rome and a general by the name of Titus was the one who ransacked Jerusalem and began what we know as the diaspora of the Jewish people, literally scattered all around the world until, of course, 1948 because they've come back home, folks. But they were scattered in 70 A.D. If you say that it was done in roughly about 96 A.D., then the message of Revelation was given to John on the island of Patmos during the reign of a man by the name of Domitian. Why is this important? Well, Nero was a ravaged soul. He was a despicable human being. In fact, it is noted that one of the things that he loved to do was take his enemies, primarily Christians, and he would literally tar them, light them on fire and use them for torches at his parties. He was a ruthless, ruthless man. Domitian, on the other hand, was a coward. He was a coward. He didn't like conflict. He didn't like battle. He liked to just take whatever problems he had and just marginalize them to the side.

Let me ask you a question: which ruler does it sound like would put him on the island of Patmos? Nero or Domitian? Domitian. Nero would have tarred him and torched him. Domitian just got rid of him. You say, "Why is that so important?" You realize that the book of Revelation talks about a temple in Jerusalem. You realize the book of Revelation talks about all this end time climactic destruction of things. If you date the book of Revelation before 70 A.D., then you could, in some respects, say that everything therein has already taken place. This isn't future events, this is actually past events. And technically if you're going to use theological terms, you could be classified as what we call a preterist, meaning the famous events of the book of Revelation are not a part of the future, they are a part of the past.

Why is that so important? I think the evidence of being on the island of Patmos is not by accident. That's not something that Nero would have done, that's something that Domitian would have done which means that the temple was already leveled. The Jewish people were already scattered. So in the book of Revelation when he talks about the Jewish people coming together, the 12 tribes again, he wasn't describing something that

was happening at this time, he was describing something that's going to happen at some point in the future. When he was describing that temple being built once again, he wasn't describing a building he could look at with his own eyes, he was describing what we would often refer to as the third temple that would be built one day in the future. You see, the predicament of John is how you discuss his placement means everything to how you interpret it. Either the book of Revelation as far as all of its end time events was fulfilled 2,000 years ago or it is yet to be fulfilled. I choose the latter.

The second one is his perspective. Notice it says that he is "a companion in tribulation in the kingdom and the patience of Jesus Christ. He was on the Isle of Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." He was a persecuted soul. He was literally marginalized and displaced to this island because he would not forsake the word of God and he would not forsake the truth of Jesus Christ. Does this sound eerily familiar to our world today? The more one speaks of Jesus and the more one stands on the word of God, we discover the more that today we are becoming marginalized and in some cases martyred.

You know, I think it's interesting that when you begin to study the book of Revelation and we'll lay this all out on a board here in a few weeks, that the tribulational time period, that part from chapter 6 to chapter 19, is seven years in length, 84 months. For a lack of better terms, the first half, though the antichrist is reigning, it's a bad time but it's rosy compared to the second half. The second half is literally a hell on earth. The first half, not so bad compared to the second half. You say, "Why is that significant?" Forty-two months of hellacious activity and persecution. Did you know that the man most famous in the Bible for being persecuted, Job, has 42 chapters? Isn't that interesting? We're going to look at that in a few weeks and say is it possible that God kind of laid out for us to show us what this is going to look like?

But what's so important about that is he is a persecuted soul, his priorities were the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, and he's a privileged individual. It says he was caught up in the Spirit on the Lord's day. Now, I don't want to get the cart above the proverbial horse but what does that mean? Does that mean he was in church and he had this experience where he fell out or stuck to a wall or was caught up to the ceiling? What does that mean that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's, what does that mean? I want you to go to chapter 4 of the book of Revelation, verses 1 and 2, and I think the word of God makes it very clear. It says, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately," what does it say? "I was in the spirit." You see, back in chapter 1 when it says he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, it wasn't some type of "experience." It wasn't some type of event of his own flesh and blood. Let me tell you what happened: it means that he was caught up to the heavenlies and he was given a view of things that no man ever before or ever since has been given.

He was privileged. Now, you know with privilege comes responsibility, right? You know, when we come to chapter 10, the Lord is going to give John a message that he is

told never to communicate. You see, there is one little bit of concealment in the book of Revelation, chapter 10 says something that was given to John that was not to be given to us. So with that privilege came responsibility. So here's this man, he is persecuted, his priorities are right, he's privileged in the fact that he would get caught up in the heavens and get to see all that is laid out before in what we know as the book of Revelation. But I want to end tonight on what I call the prophecy. If John, the individual, is a picture or a parallel of the church, that means that in chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, we are taken up before the tribulation begins. It means that we are caught up before the seals are opened. It means that while all that "hell on earth" is taking place, we are in the heavens with he who was, who is, and who is to come.

But let me share with you the other side of that coin: what did John experience right before being caught up? He was persecuted, he was marginalized, and he was exiled because he stayed faithful to the truth of God's word and the person of Jesus Christ. If we believe that John is a picture of the church being caught up and removed from that event known as the tribulation, we cannot deny the fact then that before that event occurs there will be, according to verse 9 and 10, there will be tribulation. Not the great one. There will be patience. By the way, you know you're not supposed to pray for patience, right, because the only way to get it is through tribulation. And he was persecuted.

The book of Daniel talks about the end days. In fact, we're going to be in the book of Daniel a lot as we study the book of Revelation. But one of the things that we see in the book of Daniel toward the end is it talks about knowledge increasing. Is that not taking place today? It talks about the speed of things increasing. Is that not happening today? It also speaks of sin and rebellion increasing. I don't know how close we are to the events of Revelation beginning to actually unfold but we're getting closer every single day. And the picture of John or the prophecy of John is that those who will stand true to the word of God, those who will not deny the name and the person of Jesus Christ, though we may be spared from the "great tribulation," we shall only see an increase in struggles, marginalization, and possibly martyrdom. In other words, as we get closer to the events of Revelation being unveiled, those of us who decide it's worth it to stay strong and true are only going to face more opposition.

Do you know what the encouraging word to me was? John didn't give in, John didn't give up, and John didn't give out. Can you imagine being on the island of Patmos? All by himself without food, without nourishment, without company, thinking, "God has forgotten about me." Have you ever had any of those moments in life? Maybe you feel that way at work sometimes. Maybe you feel that way at home sometimes. But just when he thought that God didn't care what happens, he gets caught up in the air; he gets taken to the throne room. Folks, this is the final message of the first study: hang in there. Stay true. God has not forgotten about his church. Why? We're the only thing he shed his blood for. He hasn't forgotten about us. Though we go through the struggles that are pictured here, he has not forgotten, he has not abandoned us, and there is coming a day where we're going to hear the trump sound and he's going to say, "Come up hither."