

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation 1:1-3

Introduction:

A few weeks ago I received a very strong hint from someone in our congregation that I should consider doing a series of sermons from the book of Revelation. I thought about it at length. I have never preached through Revelation although I did go through it in a Bible Study many years ago. About 10 years ago, I did a series of messages on the seven churches of Revelation from chapters 2-3, but that is as far as I've gone.

However, having thought about it, and having read through the book of Revelation this week, I have decided to take a stab at it. There are a few points I need to make right up front:

1. I do not know just where this journey is going to take us, as I do not have messages laid out for the whole book.
2. If you expect that I am going to describe in detail the meaning and significance of all the strange and interesting creatures and events in this book, you will be disappointed.
3. I am approaching the interpretation of this book from a pre-tribulation, pre-millennial perspective, which I believe best fits the overall Biblical view of end-time events. (I will explain that more as we move forward.)
4. We will not be going through every verse of passage of the book of Revelation. We will be focusing on the principles and truths that can better enable us to live for the Lord today.

This morning I just want to introduce you to this amazing and powerful book which closes out the Word of God. I want to begin with the basics about the book – the author, purpose, etc. Then I want to discuss a few important aspects about the book of Revelation, as well as some dangers in the study of this important prophetic book. Then we will look briefly at the first three verses. This section is referred to in most Bibles as the Prologue to the book.

So, what do we know about the book of Revelation?

Introducing the Book of the Revelation

The Author

The writer of the book identifies himself as John. There is little doubt or question among Bible scholars that this is the Apostle John, known as “the disciple Jesus loved.” The similarities in wording and terms used to the gospel of John and the three epistles written by the Apostle John leave little doubt as to his identity. History also tells us that the Apostle John spent the last years of his life on the island of Patmos as this writer speaks of in 1:9.

The Purpose

The stated purpose in the very first verse is to reveal Jesus Christ, and to show the things which must take place in the future. There is an important focus on faithfulness and assurance of victory for believers.

The Date

Most scholars place the writing of this book very near the end of the first century – sometime around 90-95 AD. John was an elderly man and is known to have been exiled to Patmos during the last years of his life.

Key Words

Two key words are repeated throughout the whole book. They are “lamb” (29 times) and “throne” (47 times). These two ideas of sacrificial atonement and God’s sovereignty dominate the book. Numbers also play a significant role throughout Revelation, particularly the numbers “seven” (55 times), “four” (29 times), and “twelve” (23 times).

The Outline

The Lord gives us a clear, concise outline of what is in this book in 1:19. In his instruction to John he says, this is what you are to write:

- The things that you have seen
- Those things that are
- Those things that are to take place after this

Those three areas constitute the past – what you have seen (ch. 1), the present church age (ch. 2-3), and the future (ch. 4-22). Clearly the majority of the information in this book is looking toward the future and the things that will happen after the present age has come to an end.

Important Considerations Regarding Revelation

The Objectives

1. To exalt Jesus Christ – This book is quite different from the gospels where Jesus is shown as the Savior, in all of his humiliation and suffering. Here He is revealed as the Lamb of God and King of Kings who restores what was lost by the fall and so much more.
2. To reveal the plan and purposes of God. Without the book of Revelation, we would be left hanging. Revelation tells us that there will come a day when every wrong will be righted and every right will be rewarded.
3. To promote righteous living. There is no question we live in an unholy age. The book of Revelation provides a wake-up call for all of us. When faced with temptation, have you ever asked yourself, “Do I want to be doing this when Christ returns?” We are challenged to live in such a way that when He comes we will be found doing the things that earn His praise, rather than his rebuke.
4. To promote evangelism. If the time is indeed short, and Christ’s return is coming soon, then we ought to be diligently doing everything we can to turn people from their sin to find eternal life in Jesus Christ.
5. To comfort believers. When we hear of wars, rumors of wars, and natural disasters, the knowledge of Revelation can give comfort by reminding us that God is still on the throne, He is still in control, and He is carrying out His purposes and plans.

The Dangers

1. The danger of sensationalism. It is easy to become caught up with a fascination for that which is unusual and fanciful. “Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.” (Acts 17:21 ESV) There is a danger of becoming absorbed with looking for sensational new theories and ideas, while forgetting about the importance of how we live our lives here and now.
2. The danger of dogmatism. “Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.” (1 Corinthians 8:1 ESV) We must be careful not to become proud and divisive.

3. The danger of escapism. There have often been those who, in the light of Christ’s promised return, have sought to escape this world in order to wait for his coming. We must love and serve our community instead of running to the hills and hiding out away from others.
4. The danger of pessimism. It is easy to become negative and pessimistic as we look at what is happening in our world. But as believers, we are to be full of joy and hope instead of buried in hopelessness and discouragement.

So, as we study the book of Revelation, let’s stick to what is important. The theme of the book is essentially, “Jesus is going to win!” And the focus of the book is to draw our eyes toward Jesus Christ as the one who is worthy of our worship and adoration. Let’s worship Him!

The Prologue to Revelation

Well, let us look quickly into the first three verses of this letter. *Read vv. 1-3.* There are a couple of important things to note in this prologue. The first is the revelation, the second is the promised blessing. Let’s start with the revelation.

The Revelation

“The revelation of Jesus Christ...” The word used here is the Greek is *αποκαλυψις* (apokalupsis), the word from which we get apocalypse. It is interesting that when you look up the word “apocalypse” in the Miriam-Webster dictionary, this is what you find – “*a great disaster: a sudden and very bad event that causes much fear, loss, or destruction.*”

That is the meaning we attach to the word apocalypse. However in Greek it refers to an unveiling or revealing. My Greek dictionary gives the following definitions:

1. laying bare, making naked
2. a disclosure of truth, instruction
 - a. concerning things before unknown
 - b. used of events by which things or states or persons hitherto withdrawn from view are made visible to all

So this epistle or book is all about the revealing of Jesus Christ, when all the world will see him and the truth about him will be shown.

There is a what we might call a chain of communication by which this revelation comes to us. First, God's message proceeds from the Father to the Son. Second, the communication proceeds from the Son through an angel. Third, the communication comes from the angel, as the Lord's messenger, to John. Finally, the communication of the book is from John to the body of Christ.

John stresses the events that the Lord wants to show us must "soon take place." In this context, the word "soon" means imminent. The term imminent points to an event that could occur any day. Of course, many raise the question: If these events were supposed to happen soon and they haven't occurred in almost 2000 years, what in the world is going on? When speaking about the end of the world in 2 Peter 3, Peter reminds us that "...with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:8-9 ESV) If God is to be considered "slow," it is as a result of His patience and mercy.

When John received this message, we read that he bore witness. In other words, he testified, proclaimed the message he was given. He bore witness to three things: the word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ, and all that he saw. He faithfully and carefully passed on to us all that was revealed to him by the angel of God.

An interesting note – John had been doing this all his life. He faithfully testified to the truth of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. In fact, this was what had gotten him banished to the island of Patmos in the first place – note 1:9

The Blessing

Well we need to wrap this up. We'll conclude by looking at the blessing that is promised in v. 3 – *read it*.

A special blessing is promised to: the one who reads it aloud, those who hear and obey it. Notice that the one who reads is singular, while those who hear is plural. This is a reflection of the way in which the Word was taken in at that time. They did not have the privilege of own-

ing and reading their own copy of the Word of God like we have today. A qualified teacher would read and expound the Word while the people listened. Today we can be blessed by the reading and heeding to the message of this book.

However, I will say a couple of things regarding the reading of the book of Revelation. First, over the coming weeks or months, we will be reading the entire book aloud as we go through it. Second I encourage you to sit down some time and read through it in one sitting. It takes about an hour to read it, depending on your reading speed.

A couple of closing thoughts:

"...those who hear, and who keep..." These two terms form one concept, not two. The person who "hears" in the biblical sense of the word "heeds." Hearing **MUST** be combined with obedience.

"...for the time is near." The word "near" means imminent, at hand. The urgency of this message cannot be overlooked. If the things described in this book may begin to happen at any time, we need to be alert, and we need to warn others.

Conclusion

It is said that Satan once called his demons and said he wanted to send one of them to earth to aid women and men in the ruination of their souls. He asked which one would want to go. One creature came forward and said, "I will go." Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?" He said, "I will tell the children of men that there is no heaven." Satan said, "They will not believe you, for there is a bit of heaven in every human heart. In the end, everyone knows that right and good must have the victory. You may not go."

Then another came forward, darker and fouler than the first. Satan said, "If I send you, what will you tell the children of men?" He said, "I will tell them that there is no hell." Satan looked at him and said, "Oh, no; they will not believe you, for in every human heart there's a thing called conscience, an inner voice which testifies to the truth that not only will good be triumphant, but that evil will be defeated. You may not go."

Then one last creature came forward, this one from the darkest place of all. Satan said to him, "And if I send you, what will you say to women and men to aid them in the destruction of their souls?" He said, "I will tell them that there is no hurry." Satan said, "Go at once!"

Let us not lose the sense of urgency that is contained in this book.