

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Part One

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Revelation Chapter One

Revelation 1: The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. ⁸

The Book of Revelation is God's Word to Us!

The Book of Revelation is a book that is either misunderstood and avoided, or it becomes a book where Christians become overly preoccupied or imbalanced in their study of it. Oceans of ink has been spilled in attempts to interpret the book rightly, and there have been a variety of interpretations, particularly with regard to issues such as the Millennium (Is the Millennium referred to in Revelation 20 literal or symbolic?), the time of Christ's return, as well as many other issues.

Some wise teachers in the past have avoided preaching or writing on *Revelation* altogether, and many Christians today avoid reading it because it is very confusing to them. In the next few studies, I want to attempt by God's grace to write on what is clear from this book and to remind us as Christians that there is a blessing that goes along with the reading of the book (Rev. 1:3). The next few studies will be from chapter 1 of Revelation, a very foundational and important chapter for interpreting the remainder of the book.

I do not presume to have all the answers for this challenging, as well as important book, but I do know that it is part of the God-breathed, infallible, and inerrant revelation of God to man. The Book of Revelation is part of what God has given us for the people of God to be fully equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). He has given it to us in Holy Scripture to rebuke, encourage, correct, and strengthen us. He has revealed Jesus Christ in this book so that we might have everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3-10). Therefore, for all these reasons, it is important for us to try and understand this book as Christians.

"The Main Thing"

The title of the book, 'The Book of Revelation', comes from the first sentence which describes the book as 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ'. As we begin this study, I think it supremely important to understand that the book, in addition to everything else we learn in it, is foremost 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ'.

In other words, the Book of Revelation is to be understood as the unveiling, or revealing of Jesus Christ. Not merely Jesus' revelation (the revelation belonging to Jesus), but the book should primarily be understood as the revelation of, or about Jesus (God's revelation about Jesus -- to us!). The knowledge and understanding of this important focus may keep us away from unhealthy preoccupations with how history will unfold in the future, as well as fictional speculation on when the return of Christ will be. [see note below].

study, let us consider two important reminders about the Book of Revelation.

What in the World is an Apocalyptic?

Part of the frustration for us today in reading the Book of Revelation is not fully understanding *what kind of book it is*, or its genre. The Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation in the last part of the 1st century in a genre that would have been extremely familiar to the people. *Genre* is a type of written material or literature (like a letter, history, narrative, poem, etc.). The genre of the Book of Revelation is called **apocalyptic**. The Book of Revelation is mostly an apocalyptic piece of literature as a genre, but it has other genres such as prophecy and letter as well. The apocalyptic aspect of the book is what is the big stumbling block for most and the reason why many Christians are apprehensive about attempting to read it.

Simply put, apocalyptic literature in the Apostle John's day was written to encourage believers that God was on the throne. However, apocalyptic was written in highly symbolic language. In Jewish apocalyptic writings, the Jews of the 3rd to the 1st century B. C., were encouraged through persecution and warfare in this world that there was another world that God had promised that would eventually come. The purpose of apocalyptic literature was to develop and encourage perseverance under trials, sobriety and continued faith through sufferings, martyrdom and times of unfaithfulness and faithlessness, and to be reminded that God sits upon the throne of the universe, ruling history for his good purposes as well as for the good of his people!

This is ultimately the same purpose for which John wrote. He addressed the Book of Revelation to the seven churches in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The primary reason for his writing a letter and prophecy in an apocalyptic genre (or type of literature) was to encourage the saints that Jesus the Messiah and His Kingdom had come. The Lamb sits victoriously upon the throne because he completed all the work on behalf of his people and therefore they should not fear, but be encouraged that Jesus reigns and will come again to restore all creation in order to bring about a new world without sin and misery where holiness and righteousness are all that is to be found.

The Apostle John wrote 'the Revelation of Jesus Christ' to encourage, to assist the saints by the Spirit's work to persevere in their faith no matter how corrupt or difficult this present evil age becomes, no matter how much they are tempted to give up and give in to sin, they were to be sober, watchful, standing firm in the victory of Jesus Christ as they fix their eyes and the focus of their lives upon the Redeemer ever present to help in times of trouble and through many trials!

The seven churches were seven real churches in the historical setting of the 1st century, but as I shall attempt to develop in the upcoming studies, these churches had representative problems as well as spiritual virtues that would be addressed by the living and active Word of God in the present. So, even though the churches were real historical churches, the problems, the challenges, the temptations, the spiritual virtues, were similar to all congregations of the visible church throughout history all the way up to this very day! The Word of God, the Living Christ still speaks to his churches for those who have ears to hear what the Spirits says.

Blessings from God!

Another truth that is important to grasp as we seek to study the Book of Revelation is from chapter one, verse 3. It says:

"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near."

The Book of Revelation reveals Jesus' victory over and over again, so that God's people will be reminded that His victory is our victory!

Soli Deo Gloria!

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Next study: The Resurrected and Living King