

The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Part 1)

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[0 : 0 0] chapter 1, and we're going to read through the first eight verses, but we're just going to be looking at the first three verses this morning. So Revelation chapter 1, allow me to read from chapter 1, 1 through 8. 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, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

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. 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, 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, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. So reads the word. Let us pray for understanding. Father, we thank you for this revelation. We thank you for the opportunity, Father, that we have here at Little Log to study this book, that even in the weather, when we cannot gather, we're able to still gather by technology. We thank you for that opportunity. Lord, we thank you for those who make it possible. Now, grant us, Lord, wisdom. Grant us insight. Grant us clarity of thought,

Lord, as we begin to look at this book, which reveals Jesus and reveals the spiritual war behind the church. So grant us your grace today, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

So I came across a little story I thought was appropriate for the beginning of this book. It's about a bagpiper. So here's how it goes. As a bagpiper, I play many gigs. Recently, I was asked by a funeral director to play at a graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper's cemetery in the Nova Scotia, Scotia back country.

[3 : 3 1] As I was not familiar with the backwoods, I got lost. And being a typical man, I didn't stop for directions. I finally arrived an hour late and saw the funeral guy had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight. There were only the diggers and crew left and they were eating lunch. I felt badly and apologized to the men for being late. I went to the side of the grave and looked down and the vault lid was already in place. I didn't know what else to do, so I started to play. The workers put down their lunches and began to gather around. I played my heart out and soul for this man who had no family and friends. I played like I've never played before for this homeless man. And as I played Amazing Grace, the workers began to weep. They wept and I wept and we all wept together. When I finished, I packed up my bagpipes and started for my car. Though my head was hung low, my heart was full. As I opened the door to my car, I heard one of the workers say, I never seen anything like that before. And I've been putting in septic tanks for 20 years. Apparently, I'm still lost. It's a man thing.

Well, lost, that may be how we feel as we go into the book of Revelation. As you read this book, there are lots of images and things that seem a bit foreign to us. Vivid pictures, images that are strange to us. We have a lamb with seven horns and seven eyes. A scroll with seven seals that as they are broken reveal the four horsemen of the apocalypse, among other things. The trumpet judgments, the bowls of plagues. We have a dragon with seven heads. A beast of the sea with seven heads.

Lots of strange things in this book. All kinds of angels. We begin in chapter four with four living creatures that are full of eyes and have six wings, not your typical angelic being. Angels that execute judgment. We have earthquakes, stars falling from the sky, mountains being removed, all kinds of strange things happening in this book. So lost may be how you feel as you read the book of Revelation.

So we're going to look at this book, take our time and walk through it. And we'll be heavily dependent upon the Old Testament because a lot of these strange visions come from the Old Testament prophecies.

So we're looking simply at the first three verses this morning, Revelation 1, 1 to 3, that give an introduction to this amazing book. Today, we're simply going to ask the question, where, why was it written? So as we begin, I want to ask as well, where are we going?

[6 : 55] Where is history headed? The typical view today is that history is simply cycles that are repeated in endless, meaningless events. But scripture reveals history as a purposeful, planned, goal-oriented future that has meaning. The book of Revelation shows us Jesus as King of kings, who will bring justice, who will bring an end to evil, and will reward his followers. So Revelation is a book of unfolding drama of God working in history. It's a great battle between the saints of God and the dragon and his followers. This is not about something far, far off in the future. This is something that was relevant in the first century and is relevant today. So as we take our first look at the book, first question we want to answer is, why was Revelation written? Why was this book recorded? What are the intentions of

Jesus in revealing this to his church? Well, in the first three verses, we find two reasons, two purposes. One is Revelation. Verse 1, it's called a revelation. And then verse 3, it's also an exhortation to the church. It's a practical application of what's happening and will happen. So first of all, why is Revelation written? The first purpose is Revelation. The name of the book is Revelation. It's revealing something. What do we mean by that? What do we mean it's a symbolic portrayal of spiritual warfare. We're going to see a lot of images, a lot of symbols in this book. It's an apocalyptic revelation. Symbolic portrayal of spiritual warfare. That's its first purpose. So I want to ask three questions. I'm going to ask, what is Revelation? How is it understood? And finally, who is the witness of this Revelation? So first of all, what is Revelation? Well, the word Revelation literally in the Greek is apocalypse. Apocalypse means to uncover, to unveil, to show behind the scene. It's a visual picture. It's different from what we're used to. This is actually literature that is a bit foreign to us in the 20th century. I guess we're in the 21st century now, aren't we? I'm a little behind the times. It's apocalyptic. It's filled with symbols. It is a revelation from Jesus Christ. So the book is called The Revelation of Jesus Christ, from Jesus Christ. So how is it to be understood? How do we read this? We don't take it literally. It's not meant in a literal manner. We are to understand and look for the symbols and understand these revelations. So the second question we want to ask is how is it understood? How do we interpret this?

Well, in verse 1, first he says, the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants, the things that must soon take place, he has made it known by sending his angel to his servant, John. He made it known. Those words there, that phrase, made it known, literally means to signify. It's not to signify, to give signs, to indicate by signs, symbols and pictures. So in other words, from the get-go, he's saying this is a revelation, an apocalypse of things that will soon take place, and he is signifying it. He's making it known by symbols and signs and pictures what must soon take place. So it's to portray invisible realities, things behind the scenes. Things are not as they seem. So the whole book of Revelation is going to give us kind of a behind the scenes, what's going on in the invisible world as we look forward. So let me give you an example of that.

In chapter 12 of Revelation, he's going to talk about Christ's birth and how things were happening behind the scenes. So Revelation 12 says, a great sign, a signifying thing, a sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon, excuse me, under her feet, and on her head, a crown of 12 stars. Who's this woman, right? Clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, crown of 12 stars. Well, 12 sounds familiar, 12 tribes of Israel. She was pregnant and crying out in birth pains and in the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven. Behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and 10 horns. And on his heads were seven diadems, seven crowns. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth so that when she bore her child, he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child. Well, who's this child? One who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne. So who is this? Well, it's speaking about the birth of Christ. The woman is Israel. The woman has 12 stars on her head, the 12 tribes. She's pregnant and crying out, giving birth. She gives birth to a male child, one who is to rule. So she gives birth to the Messiah. So here's behind the scenes. It's showing this picture behind the scenes of the dragon trying to kill the Messiah who was born.

So it's portraying invisible realities. What's going on behind the scenes as we look at these images and visions. So who's the writer? We see also. So we have the revelation, which is an apocalypse, how it's understood, its signs. And then who is this writer? Who's the witness?

[14 : 01] Well, it tells us the end of verse one, he made it known by sending his angel to his servant, John. John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. So John is bearing witness here. He's spoken again of in verse four, John to the seven, churches again in verse nine, I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation in the kingdom.

So we're talking about John. Most believe this to be the apostle John, who was about 90 years old at this point, exiled on the island of Patmos. And here's where he receives these visions of the near future, near to John's future. So he's, he's bearing witness to what? To the word of God. It says in verse two there, he bore witness to the word of God, to the testimony of Jesus, even to all that he saw, to all he saw.

So it's visions to all he saw. This word saw, Paul, John is going to say, I saw 36 times. I saw this. I saw this. I saw this. I saw this. I saw this. He is a witness. He's bearing testimony to what he saw. So we see here, he says in verse two, what he saw again in verse 12, he says, I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And on turning, I saw seven golden lampstands. So he's saying what he saw again, verse 19, chapter one, verse 19, Jesus appears to him and says, right. Therefore the things that you have seen, those that are, those that are to take place after this, as for this mystery, the seven stars that you saw, that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, the seven lampstands are the seven churches. So a lot of these symbols are going to be revealed, excuse me, in this book so that we'll understand what they mean. But he saw, he saw. So we're going to see this 36 times. John is going to say, I saw, I saw,

I saw. So he's a witness, witness testifying to what he has seen and heard. So sometimes he's going to say, I saw, sometimes he's going to say, I heard, but he's a witness. A witness tells what he sees and hears. So John, John, we believe that to be the apostle John, who was a very young man when he followed Christ. And now as an old man on the aisle of Patmos. So the book of Revelation cites and echoes more from the Old Testament than any other book.

This is a book full of the Old Testament, particularly Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah. I'm trying to think what else. There's a lot from those three books. We're going to see from Joel as well. Let me give you an example of the citing, a book of Revelation citing from Daniel. Now here's not a, it's not a quote, but it's borrowing the language from Daniel chapter two. It echoes two of the words in verse one of Revelation and one of the phrases here in Daniel two. So Daniel two 27, Daniel answered the king and said, no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show the king the mystery that the king has asked.

[18 : 05] But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and he has made it known to King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the later days. Now there he's talking about the king had a vision. Daniel's going to interpret the vision, all these mysteries. So he already uses the word there in the first verse there, God in heaven who reveals mysteries. So reveal revelation. He has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what will be. So in revelation, we have the things that must soon take place or what will be.

Going on in Daniel two, your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these. To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this. And he who reveals, there's our word again, mysteries made known to you what is to be. Again, phrase we have in Revelation one. But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king and that you may know the thoughts of your mind. And there's another word from Revelation one, that you may know the thoughts, that you may signify the thoughts of your mind. So made it known. So in Revelation one, we have, he made it known or signified by signs. So this kind of revelation, what we have in Revelation, the book of Revelation is like what we have in the book of Daniel, as well as the book of Ezekiel.

They are visions. This kind of revelation, only God can make known. The book of Revelation is, is a similar kind of revelation. So we have this word reveal we have from Revelation one, is used three times in Daniel two, made known or to signify something is used there. And then there's a phrase, what must be in used two times that is used in, in Revelation one, what must soon take place, what shall be, what must be. So there it is what will be in Daniel, there it is what will be in the future.

But here we're told what must soon take place, what shall be soon, what shall be quickly, what is near.

So first of all, we see that the purpose of Revelation is to reveal in symbols, a portrayal of an ongoing spiritual war. It's a revelation, a symbolic portrayal of spiritual warfare. So we're going to see this battle between the dragon, the beast, the saints of God, and the earth dwellers. We're going to be seeing this picture, symbolic portrayal of spiritual warfare. It doesn't mean it, it's something, it's showing us what goes on behind the scenes. So the question is, why do we need to know this? If the first purpose is to reveal, give a symbolic portrayal, why do we need to know that? Well, that leads us to the second purpose of the book of Revelation. And that is exhortation, to encourage us, to warn us, to comfort us, to fortify us. So in verse 3, we see the reason that this revelation is given to us. It's to exhort us, to encourage us. It's to call us to conquer, to overcome in the cosmic battle. We're going to see this word conquer or overcome over and over and over again in this book, to him who conquers, to him who overcomes. So it's an exhortation. It's not simply about to satisfy our curiosity about strange things in the future. It's about a relevant message right now. What do we do with that?

[22 : 23] It's preparing us for this battle. So once again, three questions here in verse 3. What is this exhortation? Well, first of all, he talks about blessed, blessed. So what is blessed? Secondly, who is blessed? And then why is this significant? So first of all, what is blessed? Verse 3, verse 1. Blessed is the one. So what is blessed? The Hebrew sense of the word blessed means to go straight, literally, to go straight. A blessed person goes straight. In Greek, the word blessed simply means happy, lucky, doesn't really tell us anything. But in Hebrew, it's a very graphic language, very down-to-earth language. Blessed means to go straight, to walk in the road, to be on the right road. So blessed on the right road. So blessed on the right road, going straight on the narrow road is such a person. So this book, in other words, this book of Revelation is not written to satisfy curiosity of the future. It's written for practical application in life. This is blessed going this way.

So who is blessed here? So verse 3. So we know what blessed means. Blessed means going straight on the right road. Blessed is who? The one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy. And blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written for the time is near. So who is blessed? Well, he names three three different people or three descriptions. One, the one who reads. The one who's reading this book aloud is blessed in that he's reading it aloud to people. Remember, in the first century, not everybody read. So the pastor or the deacon or the elder of that church would read the letter to the church as they are gathered. So the one who's reading is blessed. The ones who hear the reading are blessed. So it is publicly read in church.

And then he says, in verse 3, not just the one who reads and the one who hears, but the one who keeps what is written in it. In other words, one who applies what is written in it. One who attends carefully, who observes what is written in it. So it's not just reading and hearing that is a blessed, that is blessed, but the one who's really on the right road is the one who keeps, who applies, who observes what is written here. It tends to carefully. So Revelation is a book written to be applied. It's a book written to be attended to, to be observed in overcoming the battle that is before us.

So who is blessed? Now, why is this significant? He adds a little phrase at the end of verse 3. Why is this significant? Blessed are those who keep what is written. Why? For the time is near.

This is why it's significant. The time is near. The time is imminent. The time is not 20 centuries into the future. The time is now. This is written in the first century. So to the first century church, this book of Revelation was relevant. It's significant. The time is near. It's at hand. It's imminent.

[26 : 03] And the word for time, that's interesting. It's not our normal word for time. It's not chronos, as in chronological time. It's the word kairos, which means seasonal time, a fixed season of time. Chronos is sequential. It goes on and on and on and on and on. Kairos is something that happens from time to time. It's a time when God is acting. Kairos. It's a fixed season. It's temporary, perhaps.

So the time of these revelations in this book are kairos. They are seasonal times.

So it's written to apply now, not the distant future. This has first century relevance, second century relevance, 20th century relevance, 21st century relevance. All that is written in this book is not in the distant future. It is for understanding and applying now. It's soon.

So we have that phrase there in verse one, revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants, the things that what must soon take place. And then again, at the end of verse three, for the time is near. Okay. Then go to the very end of the book of Revelation, chapter 22, and we have these same phrases. Chapter 22, verse seven. Behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. It's applied. It's 21, seven, 21, 10. He said to me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is near, near. Verse 12, behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me to repay everyone for what he has done soon, soon, soon, soon. Again, verse 20. He who testifies to these things says, surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come Lord Jesus. So this is relevant. This is soon language. That was the last chapter of this book saying all these things are going to happen soon.

So it applies to us. It's near. I think what it means is it's already inaugurated. It's not totally fulfilled, but it's already begun to happen. A lot of the things we're going to see in this amazing book have already begun to happen. It's seasonal. So it happens and we have another season, you know, so it's summer's near and here comes the things. And then we have a time of winter. I don't know how to describe that, but, but it's, it's coming and it's happening already. It's not in the far distant future. This was applicable to the first century believers, chapter one through chapter 22.

[29 : 26] So how do we apply all this? The theme in Revelation is keep the word. As he says there in 1.3, blessed is the one who keeps what is written in this book, keeps the word, who conquers in the spiritual battle. We're going to see this word conquer over and over again. So let me give you some examples through this book of Revelation. We see this word to keep it, to keep what is written over and over and over again. In other words, there's application of these visions. They're not just curiosity, settling our curiosity in these visions, but they are a, they are an application. They are something to keep. They're something to apply. So Revelation 2.26, to one of the churches, he says, to the one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him, I will give authority over the nations. Chapter three, verse three, remember then what you have received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come as a thief and you will not know what hour I will come against you. Chapter three, verse 10, because you have kept my word about patient endurance,

I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth. Chapter 12, verse 17. Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring. In other words, with the church on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. So there's warfare for those who are keeping and holding to the testimony of Jesus. Chapter 14, verse 12. Here is the call for endurance of the saints. Those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. Chapter 16, verse 15. Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that they may not go about naked and be even exposed. And then the end of the book, chapter 22, 6. Behold, I am coming, 22, 7. Behold, I'm coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book, who applies, observes, attends carefully to the words of the prophecy of this book. So this book of Revelation is not only a revelation, a symbolic portrayal of things going on, but it's an exhortation. It is to be applied. It is a call to conquer, to overcome, to keep the word of God in the battle that we are going on. And what Revelation is going to show us is the pictures behind the scenes.

It's going to show us what we don't see. So we read in the Gospels that Jesus was born, right? We see this wonderful little picture. But Revelation is showing us, Revelation 12 shows us that behind the scenes, the dragon's there seeking to kill this child. And remember, the story of Jesus goes that the parents had to flee to Egypt for a few years because of the dragon working through King Herod to try to kill the baby. So it's going to give us a lot of behind the scenes pictures of what's going on, what we don't typically see.

So Revelation is God's promise to each of the seven churches. To the one who conquers, there is a future reward. To the one who overcomes, there is a future reward.

So practically, let me ask you, are you ready to see what this battle involves? Are you ready to see what it means to conquer?

[33 : 56] It's a call to conquer. It's a call to overcome. It's a call to keep the word. It's a call to walk consistently with the testimony of Jesus. This book of Revelation is about future things, but it's not simply to satisfy our curiosity about the odd things that may happen in the far distant future. It's about the warfare that's going on today. It is written to Christ's beloved church.

So once again, listen to the words of the beginning of John's book here. 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 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom priest to his God and father to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Amen. This is a book written to Christ's beloved church. May you be blessed by the reading of the word. And let us pray as we conclude our time together. Thank you, Father, for granting us, Lord, this ability to still connect to each other even in this weather.

Father, we thank you, Lord, for your servants who make that happen. We thank you, Lord, for this great book that we're about to launch and walk through that shows us behind the scenes what spiritual warfare is and what a great king we have. Though we don't see Christ physically reigning here on earth as we see all the chaos and the rebellion and those kind of things going on in this crazy world. But Father, this book will show us that Jesus is on his throne, that Jesus is blessing his church, that his church works behind the scenes and in faithful ways to fulfill, Lord, your call for us. So bless us in this study together and this walk together. Bless everyone, Father, we pray, that is here listening to this. And may you be praised, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Amen. Blessings.