

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Revelation 1:1-3

Today we begin a new series on the last book of the Bible. The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ reveals mysteries and miseries in the light of Christ's majesty. It begins and ends with wonderful blessings for the wise, but reveals how God deals with the wicked boastings of men. It is a book about earthly plagues and eternal pleasures. It reveals disasters and terrible earthquakes, the like of which the world has never seen. It's a book about hellish beasts and believers in heaven, messengers and massacres, faithful deeds, final destinies, Christ and Antichrist. Those who take the mark of the beast are displayed in sharp contrast to those who bear the marks of true believers. This letter was addressed to seven churches, and portrays the seven most devastating years in all of human existence. Here are tribulations and testimonies, witnesses and warfare, mysterious symbols and plain statements. Just as Jesus used the Scriptures to reveal Satan's temptations in the Gospels, Jesus will now use the Scriptures to reveal Satan's final destiny in the Revelation. And while He deals with the Devil, we will learn of signs in the heavens and sinners in hiding, rebellion against God and the wrath of God upon those rebels. And as we see this old earth fade away, we will learn of a new heaven and a new earth. This Revelation of Christ calls every Christian to respond with obedience to Him. Behold! Be wise and be blessed.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by his angel unto His servant John: who bore record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." (Revelation 1:1-3)

Behold: Open Your Eyes to the Christ of the Revelation

His name and titles

"Jesus" is a human name with heavenly significance. "Jesus" is the equivalent of the name "Joshua" meaning "Jehovah is salvation." "Christ" is a heavenly title with immense earthly significance. "Christ" means "the Anointed One," referring to God the Father's anointing of the One who is to be Ruler over humanity.

This is the second Person of the Godhead – the Son of God. He is known by various titles in the Book of the Revelation. As we progress through this series, we shall see Him revealed as the Almighty, the Alpha and Omega and the Amen. Christ is unveiled as the Beginning and the End, the Beginning of the Creation of God, and the Faithful and True Witness. Jesus Christ will be shown to be God, the Holy One, the King of kings, the King of the nations, the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Living One, and Lord of lords. We will have the privilege of seeing the One who is and who was, and who is to come, whose eyes are as a flame of fire and who holds the key of David. He has the seven Spirits of God, the seven stars, walks among the seven golden lampstands and holds the double-edged sword. Jesus Christ is magnified as the One who opens doors that no one can shut, and who

searches minds and hearts. He is the Root of David, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, the shining Morning Star, the Son of God and the Son of Man. This is the True One, the very Word of God. Will you obey the One who overcame all things for you?

His connection to the Father

“... which God gave unto Him...” God the Father not only anointed God the Son, but He gave Him something according to verse 1. The Father gave His Son this revelation. He gave Him this blueprint for the culmination of all things. John had recorded (in John chapters 4-6) that Jesus had emphasized that He came to do the will of His Father who had sent Him. In Psalm 110, David recorded God the Father’s words to His Son: **“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool”** (Psalm 110:1). In the book of Revelation, we will see the final conquering culmination – where God’s enemies bow before Him, and the Son of God will reign over them.

Be Wise: Understand the Nature of the Revelation

By referring to the “character” of the revelation, we refer to its essential nature.

The Unveiled Christ

The word “Revelation” comes from the word “apocalypse,” and these words are used interchangeably. The word “apocalypse” is a transliteration of a Greek word meaning “to unveil;” [*apo*] means “away from” and [*kalupto*] meaning “to hide or veil.”

It’s important to note the way that the word “apocalypse” is now understood and used in English. Now the word “apocalypse” is generally thought of as meaning “disaster.” So the word “apocalyptic” is associated with devastation; many video games and novels emphasize “post-apocalyptic” events after a supposed nuclear disaster, etc. But the word originally meant “to unveil” and this is the way it is used in the title of this Book: The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

This rare Greek word appears earlier in the New Testament in verses such as Luke 2:32 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7. In Luke 2:32, Simeon predicted that Jesus would be a light for revelation to the Gentiles. 2 Thessalonians 1:7 makes this appeal: **“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels...”** By the way, Romans 8:19 also describes the revelation or **“manifestation of the sons of God!”**

Christ showed this revelation to His servants

“...to show unto His servants ...” The Father gave this revelation to Jesus Christ who gave it to his angel, who gave it to the Apostle John. As one author notes, the introductory verses show the divine authority behind this book: “God then is the source of all contained in the book, while three intermediaries—one divine, one angelic, and one human—collaborate in the communication of the material.”ⁱ The divine Son of God, the angel and John the Apostle give us the Father’s revelation as eyewitnesses. John wrote this eyewitness account of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

But don't miss the practical point: this Scripture is for servants; this Revelation of Christ is for those who will respond to Christ. Prophecies, even Biblical prophecies, can become a source of fascination for people. After all, who wouldn't want to be "in on" the mystery? Everyone wants to find out more about the future. But this revelation is for those who will respond to Jesus Christ as His servants. So along the way, we will take note of the exhortations, encouragements and commands even as we study the visions in this prophetic calendar. We do so because this Revelation calls us to respond humbly.

How do we become the servants of Christ? Jesus began to explain to His disciples what it meant for Him to be the Christ in Matthew 16:21-28. They were shocked because they had a wrong conception of the Messiah's ministry. And they had missed what it meant for them to be ministers of the Messiah. Jesus said, **"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it"** (Matthew 16:24-25). So the Apocalypse calls us to take action as servants of the Savior.

We are called to live for the Savior who died for us. He pioneered the way by paying for our wickedness upon His cross. He gave up His life, dying for us the cruel death that we deserved. But the Father gave Him His life again. The Father has highly exalted Him, giving Him a name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9). If you serve the Savior, dying to yourself as you seek His will first and foremost, He will give you a life beyond your wildest imagination and reward you for all eternity.

Content: The things which must soon come to pass

"... which must shortly come to pass." These "things" – these events, unsealed and revealed – will occur, just as God has said. But this raises a question. This writing, inspired by God, is nearly 2000 years old. What then is meant by the phrase, "which must shortly come to pass?" Most commentators point to the difference between God's perspective and man's perspective as applied to the passing of time. The Apostle Peter highlighted this difference when he responded to critics who asked: **"Where is the promise of His coming?"** Even in Peter's day – in the first century A.D. – scornful people were already asking that question. Across the centuries, that insistent question has grown in intensity. But even shortly after Christ's Ascension, Peter reminded the critics **"that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."** The last phrase in verse 3 emphasizes the need to read this revelation and be ready.

Be Blessed: Embrace the Blessing of the Revelation

"Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

Today, we often think of the word "benediction" as a conclusion, such as the ending of a church service. But the word actually means "to bestow a blessing." In that sense, Revelation 1:3 is a benediction. And this is not the only time this occurs in Revelation. Perhaps we could devote an

entire message to the benedictions of the Book of Revelation in 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14! But it's important to note that verse 3 is a conditional blessing: blessed is he who reads; blessed are those who listen and obey. This reminds us of the Beatitude blessings that Jesus taught in Matthew 5.

A conditional blessing

Reading it (aloud)

Blessed is the one who reads this Book. The plural "they" (those that hear the words) may indicate that this letter was being read aloud. Bear in mind that at the time written documents were very rare. "As a rule, one copy per Christian assembly was the best that could be hoped for. Public reading was the only means that rank-and-file Christians had for becoming familiar with the contents of these books."ⁱⁱ As a result, people had carefully cultivated their memories. Many adults in this room can remember the days before electronic phones with speed dial. Many of us could quote 15 or 20 phone numbers from memory. Just imagine how you would concentrate if your only experience with the Bible was hearing it read in the congregation. But even as we sit in comfortable pews listening to this, there are believers all over the world hanging on every word, for they do not own a Bible. In some places it is illegal and in other places unavailable. When we consider the privilege of owning more than one Bible, we should remember the words of Luke 12:48, "to whom much is given, of him shall much be required."

Listening to it intently in order to put it into practice

Remember: this supreme Revelation of Christ is given to Christians to respond as servants. As we listen to it being preached, we must find ways to retain it and keep it in our hearts. We will attempt to preach and teach it accurately. But all of us must earnestly seek the blessing of embracing it and putting it into practice.

To prepare for what is at hand

The early church believed in the imminent return of Christ; they believed that His return was near at hand. The Scriptures plainly teach this. For instance, Romans 13:12 teaches that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." The phrase "at hand" could mean that these events – especially in the 7 year tribulation – would occur quickly, one disaster cascading down upon another. In any case, these Scriptures are for servants who will serve the Lord in preparation for the day that they will stand before Him.

Let's get ready: This Revelation of Christ calls Christians to respond as Christ's servants. Behold! Be wise. Be blessed.

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ⁱ Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 39, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012), 52.

ⁱⁱ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992), 60.