

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 1-13-13 PM NOTES
"REVELATION: GET READY!"
REVELATION 1:1-8
#1 in Series, "Verse-by-Verse Through Revelation"

"I am convinced that there are some things in the book of the Revelation that will not be known until they are unfolded. Some prophecies await fulfillment for understanding. The bottom line is this: Jesus is coming, and I am certain of that and very, very glad. I have resigned from the program committee and have moved over to the welcoming committee. Even so, come Lord Jesus!"

—Adrian Rogers

Genesis 3:15 (NKJV) "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

Revelation 20:10 (NKJV) "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

I. An Introduction to Revelation (vv. 1-3)

A. The Person of the Book of Revelation (v. 1a)

Revelation (*Apokulupsis*)—To uncover, unveil, or reveal

Revelation 1:17a (NKJV) "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

B. The Purpose of the Book of Revelation (vv. 1b-2)

Revelation 12:7 (NKJV) "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought."

Revelation 12:9 (NKJV) "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

C. The Promise of the Book of Revelation (v. 3)

II. Greeting From the Triune God (vv. 4-6)

A. A Greeting From God the Father (v. 4a)

B. A Greeting From God the Spirit (v. 4b)

Isaiah 11:2 (NKJV) "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

C. A Greeting From God the Son (vv. 5-6)

1. His Reliability (v. 5a)

John 14:6 (NKJV) "I am the way, **the truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

John 1:14 (NKJV) "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and **truth**."

2. His Resurrection (v. 5b)

3. His Rule (v. 5c)

Revelation 19:16 (NKJV) “And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

4. His Redemption (v. 5d)

Romans 5:8 (NKJV) “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoners free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.*

(Charles Wesley, 1739)

5. His Reign (v. 6)

Colossians 1:13 (NKJV) “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

III. A Preview of His Coming (vv. 7-8)

A. The Promise of His Coming (v. 7a)

Matthew 11:2-3 (NKJV) “² And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples ³ and said to Him, ‘Are You **the Coming One**, or do we look for another?’”

B. The Glory of His Coming (v. 7b)

Exodus 19:16a (NKJV) “Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain...”

Exodus 20:21 (NASB) “So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.”

C. The Scope of His Coming (v. 7c)

Matthew 24:30 (NKJV) “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

Zechariah 12:9-10 (NKJV) “⁹ It shall be in that day *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰ ‘And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.’”

D. The Splendor of the One Coming (v. 8)

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“REVELATION: GET READY!”
REVELATION 1:1-8
#1 in Series, “Verse by Verse through Revelation”

The book of Revelation has puzzled and confused the minds of some of history’s best Bible scholars. The reformers, Luther and Calvin wrote many commentaries, but neither of them wrote a commentary on Revelation. If you study the history of what Bible scholars through the years have taught about Revelation, you will see that godly, highly intelligent Bible scholars do not always agree on how this book should be interpreted. There is certainly agreement on the bottom line – Jesus Christ will literally and bodily return to the earth, but in the details there is much disagreement.

As we dive into the book of Revelation, I am reminded of the young seminary student who asked a wise old professor what he knew about the second coming of Christ. The old professor answered him, “Not as much as I used to”. I can relate to that answer. I have never been more convinced of the basics of the approach I take to Revelation, but I find myself not being so dogmatic about some of the details of the book. While the book of Revelation was written to encourage the church, it can easily become a source of “fanaticism and foolishness to the careless or carnal reader” [Adrian Rogers, *Unveiling the End Times in Our Time*, Page ix]. I believe every Bible teacher and student should approach Revelation with humility. I like what Adrian Rogers said in the Preface of his book on Revelation, *The Unveiling of the End Times*: “I am convinced that there are some things in the book of the Revelation that will not be known until they are unfolded. Some prophecies await fulfillment for understanding. The bottom line is this: Jesus is coming, and I am certain of that and very, very glad. I have resigned from the program committee and have moved over to the welcoming committee. Even so, come Lord Jesus!” [Page x]. This much I know about the book of Revelation and this much I will be very dogmatic and unyielding toward: I know that WE WIN!

Learn this: the devil hates two books of the Bible more than he hates all of the other books. First, he hates the book of Genesis and second, he hates the book of Revelation. Let me tell you why he hates these two books so much. In Genesis, Satan’s doom is **prophesied** in the very first prophesy in **Genesis 3:15 (NKJV)** “And I will put enmity between you [Satan, the serpent] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed [Jesus Christ]; He [Jesus Christ] shall bruise your head [a fatal blow], and you shall bruise His heel [the cross].” In Revelation, Satan’s doom is **realized**. We read in **Revelation 20:10 (NKJV)** “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” So Satan tries to convince the world that Genesis is a myth and Revelation is a mystery that cannot be understood. In spite of the difficulties, I am convinced that the book of Revelation should be studied instead of being shunned; it should be read and not run from. If you will stick with this study, I will guarantee you that if Jesus Christ is your Savior and Lord, you will be encouraged and comforted in the midst of all the crazy, senseless, and evil things going on all around us.

I. An Introduction to Revelation (V1-3)

I am amused by how many people make the title of this book plural – “Revelations”. It is actually singular – “Revelation”. Why make such a big deal out of that?

A. The Person of the Book of Revelation (V1)

Notice that this book is not the revelation of end time events (though it certainly tells us a lot about those). It is not the revelation of the Antichrist (though it has a substantial amount of material about him). It is the revelation of Jesus Christ! The Greek word translated “revelation” is “apokalupsis”. We get the word “apocalyptic” from that Greek word. The Greek word is a compound word: the first part of the word means “away from” and the last part means “to cover or to hide”. Putting those together, the word means to uncover or unveil or reveal. For instance when some sculpture by a famous artist is being put on public display, a crowd gathers and there is a large sheet-like covering over the sculpture until the right time. As

the crowd waits with great anticipation, the covering is pulled off revealing the sculpture that everyone came to see. We call that “the unveiling”. That is the word apokalupsis. It is the unveiling of Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation is not “the hiding” or “the mystery”; it is the **unveiling** of Jesus Christ. If you don’t come away from this study loving Jesus more than when we started the book, then I have failed in my preaching through this book. If you don’t come away from this study longing for His return, then you have missed the most important thing about this book. As He is unveiled, we should come to know Him more deeply and love Him more passionately. What I am sharing here in this introductory message is very important. Some folks love prophesy and all their charts more than they love Jesus. Some are more occupied with His coming than they are occupied with Him! When we begin to understand the book of Revelation, we will not find ourselves looking for something to happen; we will be looking for someone to come! The person of the book of Revelation is Jesus. Revelation reveals Him glorified as He now is and will be at His Second Coming. At Jesus’ first coming we saw His humanity that veiled His deity. When He is unveiled in His glorified body, we see One so glorious that the same John who leaned on Jesus’ chest before the cross and resurrection now giving quite a different response. **Revelation 1:17a (NKJV)** “And when I saw Him [the glorified Christ], I fell at His feet as dead.”

B. The Purpose of the Book of Revelation (V1b-2)

The primary purpose of the book of Revelation is to unveil the glorified Lord Jesus, but it is also to show Jesus’ disciples (“slaves”) the things that must shortly take place. The word “shortly” in verse one has a marginal reading of “quickly” or “swiftly”. He is saying that when the events prophesied in the book of Revelation start, they will proceed quickly or swiftly, with rapidity of action. The emphasis here is the imminence of Christ’s return. It could happen anytime and when it starts, it will proceed quickly. So the purpose of the book of Revelation is to show the slaves (disciples) of Jesus Christ what is going to quickly, swiftly take place at His coming which may happen at any time.

This communication from the Father and the Son through an angel uses signs or symbols (verse one, “and signified it”). Think of the word “signified” as “sign-I-fied”. A significant portion of Revelation uses signs or symbols. Is the book of Revelation symbolic (signs) or is it literal? The answer is yes. Revelation is filled with symbols or signs that symbolize or signify literal things, people, places and events. About half of the symbols are explained in the book itself. Many of the symbols have their roots in the Old Testament. There are nearly 300 references in Revelation to the Old Testament. Some of the symbols in Revelation are not explained anywhere and we simply have to say that we are not sure what they symbolize. Let me give you an example of a symbol that is explained in the book of Revelation itself. **Revelation 12:7 (NKJV)** “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought”. Was there a literal battle with a literal dragon? No, this is symbolism. We don’t have to read very far however to find out what the dragon symbolizes. **Revelation 12:9 (NKJV)** “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Are the devil and his angels literal? Yes, they most certainly are! Here is the key: when we find symbols in this book, we find out what they symbolize and believe it literally. Why did the Lord choose to give John symbols to write down for us? I don’t know all the reasons, but one reason is that symbols not only impart information, they communicate values and evoke emotion. Warren Weirsbe gives a good example. John could have written that a dictator will be raised up from the revived Roman Empire to rule the world. Instead he speaks of a beast that rises up. That communicates much more than “dictator”. We must be very careful in interpreting the symbols in light of current events and seek to interpret them in the framework of Scripture and when we cannot find it in Scripture, we just accept that at this point in time we cannot interpret what literal reality the symbol points to. Be leery of anyone that has every symbol in Revelation figured out and teaches dogmatically what is symbolized using current events rather than Scripture.

The person of the book of Revelation is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The purpose of the book of Revelation is for John to show the Lord’s servants (slaves) the Word of God and the signs that John saw of things surrounding the Lord’s coming that are going to quickly take place once they start.

C. The Promise of the Book of Revelation (V3)

We are blessed when we read any book of the Bible, but this book has a special blessing attached to those who read, hear, and obey it. The word “blessed” is the same word used in the beatitudes. It is the idea of “congratulations to”. He is saying that those who read, listen to, and heed the book of Revelation are blessed because they will have peace and insight in the midst of turmoil. I can promise you that if you will read this book, listen to it read and explained, and apply what it says to your life, you will not run around with “headline hysteria”. You will experience the calmness of the peace of God inside while everything is going crazy on the outside. You will have the truth reinforced that our God is sovereign and He has a plan that He will accomplish. Everything is on schedule and because we belong to Him, we are on the winning side, no matter what we may go through in the short term. At the end of verse three, we are reminded that the events in this book are immanent. He uses the word “near”. That does not mean that John was saying that they were close in time; he was saying that they could start at any time. As we will see, that is why those who are the Lord’s are to always be ready.

II. Greeting from the Triune God (V4-6)

Verse 4 begins with a greeting to the seven churches. We will say much more about the number seven in Revelation as we go along. The number seven has significance in the Bible and we find it used 54 times in the book of Revelation. Seven is the number of fullness, perfection, and completion. In chapters two and three we find Jesus dictating a letter to each of these seven churches (we will examine what He said to them in depth). While these were literal churches, they are representative of all churches throughout history. In reality what we have is a greeting to all churches from God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and God the Son.

A. A Greeting from God the Father (V4a)

Grace and peace summarize all the spiritual blessings that are ours. God the Father is described here as the God who is above time and always is. This is the literal meaning of the name “Jehovah”. Jehovah is sometimes translated “I Am”. That sounds present tense in English, but in Hebrew this name for God contains all the tenses. In reality, this description of the Father in verse 4 is a great translation of Jehovah, the great I Am. He is the God who transcends all time; He is the God who is, the God who was, and the God who is to come. He is the eternal one who is not bound by time because He created time! As we prepare to hear of the turmoil on earth we need to be reminded that our Heavenly Father has eternal existence and He has sovereign control over the course and events of history.

B. A Greeting from God the Spirit (V4b)

Why “the seven Spirits”? It is speaking of the one Holy Spirit in His seven fold perfection. Remember that the number seven points to perfection and completion. I think it has reference back to Isa 11:2 where we see the seven fold description of the Holy Spirit in His perfection. **Isaiah 11:2 (NKJV)** “The Spirit of **the Lord [1]** shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of **wisdom [2]** and **understanding [3]**, The Spirit of **counsel [4]** and **might [5]**, The Spirit of **knowledge [6]** and of the **fear of the Lord [7]**.” He is the one Holy Spirit who is perfect and complete. The fact that He is before the throne emphasizes the fact that He proceeds forth from the throne, sent by the Father.

C. A Greeting from God the Son (V5-6)

The Son is listed last for emphasis. Notice His qualities that are described here.

1. His Reliability (V5a)

The emphasis is that He is reliable and worthy to be believed. He always speaks truth; He is truth (John 14:6). He is filled with truth (John 1:14).

2. His Resurrection (V5b)

He is called “the firstborn from the dead”. “Firstborn” refers to position and rank. Of all those who have been raised from the dead, He ranks first. Also, there is a sense that He is the firstborn from the dead in time. Others were raised from the dead before Him, but they died again. Jesus was the first to be resurrected with a glorified body. With His resurrection, Jesus rendered death impotent!

3. His Rule (V5c)

Jesus Christ is absolutely sovereign over the affairs of this world. This is brought into perspective in **Revelation 19:16 (NKJV)** “And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” There is no created being who is over Jesus – all are under Him and His authority.

4. His Redemption (V5d) “Loves” not “loved”

He loves us! He loved us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8), and now He loves us with a family love. The phrase “washed us” is translated “loosed us” in some translations. Both are true because they are clearly taught elsewhere. The “washed” and the “loosed” are in a tense (aorist) that indicates “once for all”. “Loosed” pictures sin as a chain; “washed” pictures sin as a stain. Either way, we are loosed and cleansed by His blood, His poured out life. That causes me to want to break out in singing with Charles Wesley

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoners free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.*

(Charles Wesley 1739)

5. His Reign (V6)

“Kings” is better “a kingdom”. It is living under the sphere of God’s rule. **Colossians 1:13 (NKJV)** “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love”. As citizens of His kingdom, we have the King’s guidance and the King’s protection – the rights of citizenship! Not only do we become citizens of His kingdom, we also become His priests. The emphasis is that as His priests, we have direct access to the Father and our special calling of coming before Him with not only our needs but the needs of others in their pain and lostness.

III. A Preview of His Coming (V7-8)

In these verses, we get a snapshot of what we’ll see in fullness as we go through the book of Revelation.

A. The Promise of His Coming (V7a)

The word “Behold” is used 25 times in Revelation. It is a word that calls attention to something or someone. It is the sense of “Look here” or “Listen up”. The phrase “He is coming” is in the present tense. He is in the process of coming. Details of His coming are already set in motion. This emphasizes the immanence of His coming. He is on the way! It is estimated that one in every twenty five verses in the New Testament refer to something related to His second coming. “The coming One” is actually a title of the Messiah in Matthew 11:2-3 and John 3:31.

B. The Glory of His Coming (V7b)

Clouds symbolize God’s presence and glory. When God gave the law to Moses at Mount Sinai, we read in **Exodus 19:16a (NKJV)** “Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain...” We read in **Exodus 20:21 (NASB)** “So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God *was*.” When the tabernacle and later the temple were dedicated, they were filled with a cloud which revealed the glory of God. When Jesus returns, it will be with clouds – He will be encompassed with the glory of God.

C. The Scope of His Coming (V7c)

This verse is saying what is also said in **Matthew 24:30 (NKJV)** “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Who will see Him? It will be all the tribes of the earth. How do we explain this? We don’t! This will be a supernatural, literal, visible, universal fact. Perhaps it will be a manifestation of His glory that if He told us more, we could not comprehend it.

It is likely that “those who pierced Him” is referring to the Jews alive when He comes who will see Him and turn to Him in salvation. This is detailed in Romans 11:26 and in **Zechariah 12:9-10 (NKJV)** “⁹ It shall be in that day *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰ “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then

they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

D. The Splendor of the One Coming (V8)

This introduction of the Revelation of Jesus Christ ends with four names of our Lord:

1. Alpha and Omega – This is the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This is communicating His omniscience. The alphabet is an ingenious way of storing accumulated knowledge and wisdom. Jesus is saying that He is the whole alphabet, the sum of all knowledge.
2. The Beginning and the End – This speaks of His omnipresence. He was there at the beginning and will be there at the end. He is the bookends of all eternity. He brought everything into existence (John 1:3) and He will bring everything to a conclusion (Romans 11:36).
3. The One Who Is and Who Was and Who Is to Come – This speaks of His eternity. He had no beginning and He will have no end.
4. The Almighty – This speaks of His Omnipotence. Everything He has promised, He will fulfill because He is all powerful.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Jerry Vines tells the story of a children’s home in the hills of Kentucky for special needs children. The Christian group *Newsong* wrote a song about them and their Bible teacher entitled *Fingertips and Noses*. The title came from the teacher’s account of how she taught them about the immanence of Jesus’ return and how they could not keep the windows clean because the children were constantly pressing their fingers and noses to the window peering into the skies for Christ’s second coming. Would to God that we took the promise of His coming so literal. What is the condition of the window panes of your heart?