

Message #2**Revelation 1:1-3**

If you start reading the Bible with Genesis, which begins the Bible, and you read straight through it, you will eventually come to the book that ends the Bible - Revelation. When you get to this book you will notice that there is nothing like the first three introductory verses anywhere else in the Bible.

The first three verses of the book of Revelation introduce us to the final book of the Bible and this introduction of the book of Revelation is like no other introduction of any other book in the Bible. This is one very unique, God-inspired beginning.

God wants us to know what this book is about; how we actually got this book and the blessing that comes to those who study this book.

From a pure grammatical analysis, **verses 1-2** are one long sentence and **verse 3** is its own sentence.

From these first three verses, there are six revelatory truths God gives us:

REVELATORY TRUTH #1 – God reveals His inspired title to the book. **1:1a**

The last book of the Bible begins with its own title: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” The specific transliteration of the Greek text is “Apocalypse of Jesus Christ” (Apokaluyiç Ihsou Cristou).

There are five important grammatical observations we want to make concerning these opening words:

Observation #1 - There is no article “the” before the noun Revelation in the Greek manuscripts.

Most English translations open the book by reading “**THE**” **Revelation of Jesus Christ** (NASV, NIV, KJV). The technical way to read it would be “A Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In Greek, when you do not have an article “the” preceding the noun (anarthrous construction) the emphasis is on the character and quality of something (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p.149).

This is an extremely significant and important interpretive point because **what this means is that everything in this book of Revelation will reveal things about the character and quality of Jesus Christ. The entire book of Revelation will be a Christ-exalting book and His character and quality will be fully and majestically revealed.**

Revelation gives a full, complete, Divine picture of Christ’s character. Many people have the wrong idea about Jesus Christ. Revelation straightens out those wrong ideas. Jesus Christ is not just a merciful Savior; He is also a ferocious judge.

Observation #2 - The actual noun “Revelation” or “apocalypse” means to reveal or unveil or uncover something that was previously hidden, covered and concealed.

The actual Greek noun “revelation” (apocalypse) occurs only 18 times in the N.T. and it is only used one time by the Apostle John, which is here in Revelation 1:1.

The actual uses of the word are:

- 1) One time by Luke - Luke 2:32
- 2) Thirteen times by Paul - Rom. 2:5; 8:19; 16:25; I Cor. 1:7;14:6, 26; II Cor. 12:1,7; Gal. 1:12; 2:2; Eph.1:17; 3:3; II Thess. 1:7
- 3) Three times by Peter - I Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13
- 4) One time by John - Rev. 1:1

The actual word “apocalypse” comes from two Greek words:

- 1) The preposition apo (apo) which refers to motion that moves away from an object (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 47-48).
- 2) The noun calypto (kaluptw) which means to veil, conceals or cover something (*Ibid.*, p. 229).

By putting these two words together, **the meaning is to move the cover off something so that it is no longer veiled or concealed.**

By just the use of this word we learn that Revelation is not a book of secret codes; it is a book to be clearly seen and understood.

Dr. McGee said it used to perplex him when he would hear some Christian say he could not understand the book of Revelation, when the whole purpose was to see it and understand it (*Revelation*, Vol. 5, p. 887).

Observation #3 - The noun “revelation” is singular and not plural.

Although you often hear people refer to this as “Revelations” plural, the grammatical truth is that it is Revelation singular.

Now the significance of this is that this is one single prophetic book that God wants His churches to know and understand. **God wants His churches to understand this book as a complete single unit in its entirety.** This book is written to the churches - 1:4/22:16.

God expects His people in His churches to know His prophetic plan. He wants prophecy understood as a singular unit. There is the Church Age and Rapture of the Church that will flow into the Great Tribulation that will flow into the 1,000 year Millennium that will flow into the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem.

This book clearly develops God’s plan for the Church, for the Nations, and for Israel, and God wants His people knowing this prophetic truth. It is one prophetic plan comprised of several parts and God expects His Church to know it.

Observation #4 - The source and object of the “revelation” is Jesus Christ.

Carefully observe how it reads “The Revelation of **Jesus Christ**.” The actual Greek construction “of Jesus Christ” is genitive case. The exegetical question about this is whether or not it means that the book of Revelation is about Jesus Christ (objective genitive - He receives the action) or that the book of Revelation is from Jesus Christ (subjective genitive - He produces the action).

The fact is both are true. Revelation is an amazing, prophetic book about Jesus Christ, and it reveals amazing prophetic things directly from Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:10). But it also reveals amazing truth about Jesus Christ, as just the names used for Christ prove.

So what we learn from this is that Revelation is not a book about Armageddon, or the Great Tribulation or the Antichrist, although those themes are in the book; **it is a book from Jesus Christ and it is a book about Jesus Christ.**

Observation #5 - The double name word order of Jesus Christ is only found three times in Revelation in this chapter 1 (1:1, 2, 5).

When we track the name “Jesus” through the book of Revelation, we discover that John uses the name 14 times (1:1, 2, 5, 9, 9; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10, 10; 20:4; 22:16, 20, 21).

When we track the name “Christ” through the book of Revelation, we discover that John uses this name eight times (1:1, 2, 5; 11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6; 22:21).

When we track the name “Lord Jesus” through the book of Revelation, we discover that John uses this word combination two times (22:20, 21).

The only place where the combination “Jesus Christ” (Ihsou Cristou) is used is in three verses of chapter 1. Now the question is why? Why does John open the book with this proper noun order and then never use it again? **The answer is because of the eschatological chronology and precise theology of the book of Revelation.**

The noun “Jesus” refers to the fact that Jesus is the Savior (John 1:36) and the noun “Christ” refers to the fact that He is the Jewish Messiah (John 1:41). **The precision of John’s word order means that Jesus is the Savior/Messiah.**

The reason why John uses this word order is because John is informing the Church that the chronology of the program of God is that Jesus Christ first comes as Savior before He comes as Messiah. Jesus Christ first saves and develops Gentiles before He reigns as Messiah of Israel.

This is exactly how the book of Revelation unfolds. The Church is gone by chapter four and as the prophecy develops, the emphasis moves to Israel (Rev. 7:4-8). As the book moves toward its conclusion, the emphasis is not on the noun Jesus, but the noun Christ (11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6). In fact, the 1,000 year reign in Revelation 20 is specifically said to be a reign of Christ (20:4, 6), which clearly establishes that Israel will be honored as the nation of God with Christ reigning as her Messiah for 1,000 years. In this book of Revelation, Jesus Christ is identified with the most sublime majestic names and titles:

1. Jesus - He is Savior.
2. Christ - He is Jewish Messiah and King.
3. The Faithful Witness. 1:5
4. The Firstborn of the Dead. 1:5
5. The Ruler of the Kings of the Earth. 1:5
6. The Alpha and Omega. 1:8; 22:13
7. The Lord God who was and who is and who is to come. 1:8
8. The Almighty. 1:8
9. The Son of Man. 1:13 - God/man who will one day rule over everything (Dan. 7:13-14)
10. The First and the Last. 1:17; 22:13 - First and last of everything.
11. The Living One. 1:18
12. The One who was dead but is forever alive. 1:18
13. The One with the keys of death and hell. 1:18
14. The One who hold church angels in His right hand. 2:1/1:20
15. The One who walks in the midst of the churches. 2:1/1:20
16. The One who has a sharp two-edge sword. 2:12
17. The Son of the God. 2:18
18. The One with eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze. 2:18
19. The One who has control of seven spirits of God and seven stars/angels. 3:1
20. The One who is holy. 3:7
21. The One who is true. 3:7
22. The One who has the key of David. 3:7
23. The One who can open doors no one can shut. 3:7
24. The One who can shut doors no one can open. 3:7
25. The Amen. 3:14
26. The Faithful and True Witness. 3:14
27. The Beginning of the Creation of the God. 3:14
28. The Lion of the tribe of Judah. 5:5
29. The Root of David. 5:5; 22:16
30. The Lamb. 5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 7, 9; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 8:1; 13:8; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14, 14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3
31. The Lord, Holy and True. 6:10
32. The Lord God The Almighty. 15:3
33. The King of the Nations. 15:3
34. The Word of The God. 19:13
35. King of Kings and Lord of Lords. 19:16
36. The Bright and Morning Star. 22:16
37. Lord Jesus. 22:20-21

These are majestic and Divine names that are given to Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation. It is odd that Martin Luther said he shied away from this book because he did not think Jesus Christ was honored enough in the book. But there is no book in the Bible that gives Jesus Christ these majestic names. **This is certainly a book from Christ, but it is also a book about Christ.**

REVELATORY TRUTH #2 – God carefully reveals the process of how we got Revelation.
1:1b

The fact is, we must treasure this book of Revelation all the more when we learn how we actually got this book. God not only wants us to understand that He gave us this book, but He also wants us to understand the actual process of how we got it. This fact alone puts Revelation in a category all by itself.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said concerning this process that we must not ever “look at this book as if it were simply a cheap book to satisfy our curiosity” (*Revelation 1-3*, p. 12). Just the way God reveals how we got this book demands we view it as sacred and that we take it seriously.

There was a specific four-stage process involved in giving this book of Revelation to the churches:

Process Stage #1 - God the Father gave this entire book of Revelation to God the Son, Jesus Christ. **1:1b**

There is a chain of command at the Godhead level. Revelation is God the Father’s program and He was the member of the Godhead who turned this prophetic program over to His Son, Jesus Christ. There are different responsibilities at the Trinitarian Godhead level and God the Father was the One who designed this prophetic program with His Son and He initiated the fact that it would be revealed and shown to the world.

Process Stage #2 - God the Son, Jesus Christ, gave this entire book of Revelation to one of His angels. **1:1c**

Angels play a very important role in carrying out the program of God. There are three observations we may make about this angel:

(Observation #1) - This angel would not allow John to worship him. **Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9**

(Observation #2) - This angel was a servant of God’s people. **Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9**

This angels’ specific job was to serve God’s people and reveal prophetic truth to those who take God’s word seriously. Angels are involved in God’s people understanding God’s word.

(Observation #3) - This angel was Christ’s own Personal angel. **Rev. 22:16**

Greek grammar is very emphatic here - Jesus Christ Himself, sent His own angel.

Process Stage #3 - Jesus Christ's Personal angel gave this entire book of Revelation to John.

1:1d

This angel is key to John getting this book and to us getting this book.

This angel will actually escort John into the future. As the angel does this there will be times when Jesus Himself will speak directly to John (1:11; 17-20; 22:7, 12-13, 16). This angel will actually lead John into the future and let him see things that literally are out of this world. This angel will show John things and explain some things that will enable him to understand (Rev. 22:1, 6).

So John did not get this book of Revelation by some dream or vision; an angel specifically was sent by Jesus Christ to John concerning this final book of the Bible.

Process Stage #4 - The Apostle John wrote the entire book of Revelation for the churches.

1:1e, 11; 22:16, 18

God wanted the book of Revelation put in writing and he selected the Apostle John to write it. It is clear from **verse 2** that John actually saw the things he writes. **John is not the author of the book of Revelation; he is the recorder and writer of the book of Revelation.** God is the author and it is John's responsibility to record every word God wants put into writing.

When God goes gives us this much detail concerning how we got this book of Revelation, we must view it as a sacred document coming from a Sovereign God and we must not ever view this book lightly.

REVELATORY TRUTH #3- God reveals His own purpose for revealing Revelation. **1:1c-e**

God clearly says in **verse 1** that the purpose of Him giving the book of Revelation is **“to show His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place.”**

There are three important observations we may make from this statement:

Observation #1 - It is the intent of God that the book of Revelation be seen, known and understood in its entirety. **1:1c**

The infinitive **“to show”** comes from a verb (deiknumi) that means to actually show something to someone so they actually see it and understand what they are seeing (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 99). This verb is used eight times in Revelation (Rev. 1:1; 4:1; 17:1; 21:9, 10; 22:1, 6, 8), which is more than in any other N.T. book although John does use it seven times in the Gospel of John.

Since John's job is to write this for the churches, God wants us to clearly see and understand the book of Revelation in its entirety - chapter 1 to chapter 22. **This is not to be a sealed book but a clearly seen book.**

Observation #2 - It is the intent of God that the book of Revelation be seen and understood by His "bond-servants." **1:1d**

Some have taken this to mean that the term "bond-servants" (douloç) refers to a special group of believers like the prophets. This is based on the fact that the word "bond servant" is used in Revelation in that context - Rev. 10:7; 11:18.

However, in view of the fact that it is written to the seven churches and is to be understood by those churches, we believe that Revelation is written for the New Testament believer.

It is clearly not God's intent that everyone in the world understand the book of Revelation, but it is His intent that every true believer and true servant of God understand it. The actual word "bond-servant" is one that refers to one who is subject to someone and bound to them.

This book of Revelation will actually move God's people to want to be more subject to Jesus Christ, recognizing what He will do.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee said that when he saw some believer say that they cannot understand the book of Revelation or that they didn't want to understand it, he used to wonder how committed to Jesus Christ they really were because this is a book that is supposed to be seen and understood by His people.

Observation #3 - It is the intent of God that God's people understand these things will happen "soon." **1:1e**

The Greek word "**soon**" (**tacei**) is a word from which we get our English word tachometer. This word may be understood as that which will happen soon, quickly or speedily.

There are two elements involved to this word:

- 1) The word has to do with time - will happen in a short time.
- 2) The word has to do with speed - will happen in a fast velocity.

Both time and speed are emphasized in Revelation.

- 1) Revelation 2:16 - "repent or I'll come quickly."
- 2) Revelation 3:11 - "I am coming quickly."
- 3) Revelation 11:14 - "the third woe is coming quickly."
- 4) Revelation 22:6 - "things which must soon take place."
- 5) Revelation 22:7 - "behold I'm coming quickly."
- 6) Revelation 22:12 - "I am coming quickly."
- 7) Revelation 22:20 - "Yes I am coming quickly."

Now the question concerning this is twofold:

- 1) Did John mean the events would happen quickly in the sense of when they begin, it will be in a high velocity, rapid fire sequence? In other words, once the events start, it will be over in a brief amount of time.

- 2) Did John mean the events would happen in a short time from when they were revealed?
In other words, were the prophetic events of Revelation imminent, soon to happen?
We know that prophetic time is different in God's time frame than ours (II Pet. 3:8).

Both things are true. We do know that God does want His church to view His return as being imminent. Furthermore, the development of the Church Age described in Revelation 2-3 was well underway and is rapidly moving toward its conclusion.

REVELATORY TRUTH #4 – God reveals the prophetic nature of Revelation. **1:1f**

The actual word “communicated” (shmainw) in the NASV, “make known” in the NIV and “signified” in the AV is very important.

The word literally means to give a “sign” in order to show something or indicate something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 405). This is important because this informs us that many things in this book will be in signs. **Revelation is a very unusual book in that much of the truth will be communicated to us through signs and symbols.**

But having said this, we will also see that the signs and symbols have literal interpretations. Figurative language is designed to reveal literal futuristic facts and reality. Very often the signs and symbols will be explained in the context (i.e. Rev. 1:12, 16, 20). Seven stars are seven angels and seven golden lampstands are seven churches.

Just because there are signs and symbols does not mean we can make up wild interpretations. We must derive our interpretations from the word of God.

REVELATORY TRUTH #5 – God reveals the precise reliability of the writing of Revelation. **1:2**

Revelation is a very precise book of the Bible and it is very reliable. Three reliability facts:

Reliability Fact #1 - Everything John witnesses and writes is the word of God. **1:2a**

John is not writing some apocalyptic fairytale. This is the inspired word of God, every word of it. John said I am testifying that every bit of this is the word of God.

Reliability Fact #2 - Everything John witnesses and writes is the testimony of Jesus Christ. **1:2b**

Everything in this book of Revelation is confirmed by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ Himself validates everything John writes. Jesus Christ is a witness to everything being written here.

Reliability Fact #3 - Everything John witnesses and writes he personally saw. **1:2c**

John says, “I actually saw” the things I am writing.

The verb “saw” is aorist tense, which refers to pointed action in past time. This has raised a question as to whether or not John saw all of this before he wrote it or whether he wrote it as he was seeing it.

It seems that John wrote as he went in a progressive way. This explains why there were multiple instances where John is told not to write and to write - 10:4; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5.

We take this as constative aorist which means the action of the Revelation is viewed in its entirety.

John wrote Revelation as he went along, but by the time he sends it to the churches, it is one entire book.

John actually saw the things he records in Revelation.

REVELATORY TRUTH #6 – God promises a special blessing in regard to this prophetic book of Revelation. **1:3**

We want to observe from **verse 3** that Revelation is classified as a book of prophecy. The word “prophecy” (profhteia) is a word that literally means to foretell of something or to say before what will happen before it happens. **This book is designed to foretell God’s future and final program.**

The actual word “revelation” (apokaluyis) shows up one time in **verse 1**. But this word “prophecy” shows up seven times and four of those times are in the final chapter of Revelation- **1:3; 11:6; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19**. **This will be a book that will reveal God’s future.**

Verse 3 gives an amazing incentive for studying the book, which sets this apart from any other book in the Bible. God promises a special “blessing” on those who take Revelation seriously. That word “blessed” (makarios) is a word that refers to a deep, inner joy and happiness that may only be given by God.

Gerhard Kittel, in his study of Greek words and their theological meanings, observes that this word speaks of a deep joy that occurs when one is on the verge of receiving deliverance or salvation in the program of God (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, pp. 367-368).

G. Abbott Smith adds that this word refers to one who is blessed and in a happy state because God has made a pronouncement or declaration of blessing on someone (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 275).

There are three specific blessings that God says He will give concerning this book:

Blessing #1 - God will bless one who continually reads Revelation. **1:3a**

The one who reads is singular. This specifically would refer to the one who publicly reads and expounds Revelation to the church. In fact the actual word “reads” refers to one who reads and understands it so he may expound it. One reason why God would give a special blessing for this is because most avoid the book in the church and don’t read it or teach it. **Obviously, it is the expectation of God that the book of Revelation be publicly read in the church.**

Blessing #2 - God will bless those who continually hear Revelation. **1:3b**

The ones who hear are plural. This refers to those who come to hear the book of Revelation read and taught. Notice carefully what is to be read and taught that which is “written.” The people who continually come to hear Revelation taught are promised a special blessing from God. **Obviously, it is the expectation of God that the book of Revelation will be heard and taught to the people at church.**

Blessing #3 - God will bless those who continually heed Revelation. **1:3c**

The ones who heed are plural. The word “heed” refers to carefully watching, guarding, keeping and preserving (*Ibid.*, p. 445). God promises a blessing to those who learn the book and guard it and defend it and obey it.

One reason why this book needs to be taken seriously is because “the time is near.” Now is the time to get very serious about this book of Revelation, not only for blessing, but the time is near.

One thing is very certain as Meyer said, it doesn’t matter how difficult this book may appear to be, with words like this we dare not pass over it (*Revelation*, Vol. 11, p. iii).

In the book of Revelation there are seven promised blessings:

- 1) Blessed are those believers who read, hear and heed the words of the prophecy. **1:3**
- 2) Blessed are those believers who die in the Lord in the Tribulation. 14:13
- 3) Blessed are those believers who are righteous when the Lord returns, who have specifically distanced themselves from things demonic. 16:15
- 4) Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. 19:9
- 5) Blessed are those believers who have part in the first resurrection. 20:6
- 6) Blessed are those believers who obey the things found in this book. 22:7
- 7) Blessed are those believers who have been washed. 22:14

Revelation is a book of wonderful blessing and as we journey through it, may God bless us all.