

Revelation Introduction

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Hymns: 4 Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine 7 God Will Take Care of You
 8 Great Is Thy Faithfulness 34 When We All Get to Heaven

Scripture: Psalm 2

Big idea: Jesus Revealed

Last time, we completed our study of the greatest sermon on the future preached by Jesus. In that Olivet Discourse, Jesus revealed some – but not all – of the events associated with the future from the perspective of those living two thousand years ago. He predicted the destruction of the temple in A. D. 70 , spoke of the future Antichrist and events surrounding the Great Tribulation as well as His second coming to set up His thousand year reign on earth.

We're living in a crazy world. Thankfully, we can look into scripture to **get a better grip on what in the world** is going on and **how Christians can cope** in these increasingly difficult times. In order to do that, we're going to the book of Revelation and witness for ourselves God's most extensive record of end times events.

Revelation reveals: Martyrs for Christ, the Beast, the False Prophet, the dragon, Satan, and the Bride of Christ.

Settings include: Heaven and earth, a new heaven and a new earth, and a huge and indescribably spectacular walled city called the New Jerusalem.

Satan will have his way through the world leader named Antichrist for seven years to unleash horrific persecution and ultimate death on any who **dare not** submit to his power and demands.

Revelation is filled with judgments: God methodically and relentlessly pours out his wrath on evil men in an ever-more-severe sequence of plagues and calamities. The wicked dead will be resurrected and judged at the Great White Throne. In the end, God will make all things new and perfect. The righteous will live in an environment of beauty and peace of similar or greater magnificence to what it was before the fall of man.

Our scripture for today is: **Revelation 1:1-8**

But before we go there, we really need a little background. The book of Revelation is the sixty-sixth and final book of the Bible. It is the only New Testament book dedicated to prophecy and contains much information regarding the future found nowhere else in the Bible. The book contains twenty-two chapters consisting of 404 verses.

John authored the book of Revelation. But who is this John? The title gives the author as Saint John the Divine. We have no definitive statement in the Bible, but scholars generally agree the apostle John wrote it. One interesting clue to support this belief notes that the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation alone refer to Jesus as the Lamb and as the Word of God. John wrote the book around A.D. 95 during the reign of Roman emperor Domitian.

Perhaps you have heard the word *apocalypse* related to this book or some portion of it. Many associate that word with coming cataclysmic events unlike any ever experienced on the earth. The word actually

comes to us as a transliteration of the Greek word *ä-po-kä'-lü-pses* meaning *unveiling*. Think in terms of removing a veil from a bride or a new model car. The name *Revelation* is our English translation of that word.

So if the word *Revelation* means *unveiling*, who or what is being unveiled? Let's start into our scripture and see.

Revelation 1

[1] The Revelation of Jesus Christ,

This book lifts the veil on Jesus Christ. It starts with Him and ends with Him (22:21). We will see Him here in His glory, majesty, power, righteousness, justice, mercy, and grace. While the Gospels present Jesus in His humanity, Revelation expands on that to show Him in His glory.

which God gave unto him,

God the Father gave this message to His Son – Jesus Christ. This aligns with the statement that only the Father *knows the day or the hour* of these events (Mark 13:32).

to shew unto his servants

Servants refers to Christians. They are both His servants (Romans 6:16) as well as sons (Galatians 4:7).

things which must shortly come to pass;

It's been almost two thousand years since the LORD gave these words to John. Time moves much differently with God (2 Peter 3:8; Psalm 90:4) than with man.

and he sent and signified it

Jesus passed on the message of this book of Revelation through a reliable source.

by his angel

The next person in the message chain.

unto his servant John:

The message went from God the Father, to Jesus Christ, to an angel, and finally to the apostle John.

[2] Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

The phrase *he saw* refers to John. The narrative will quickly switch to first person after this short introduction. The phrases *I saw* and *I looked* appear 35 and 5 times respectively in this book. They let us know that John received a series of visions to gain knowledge of the things he described.

[3] *Blessed is he that **readeth**,
and they that **hear** the words of this prophecy,
and **keep** those things which are written therein:*

Notice that right out of the gate (v. 1:3) this book promises a **blessing** to those who receive and keep the instructions given in this book. And just as Revelation *starts* with a blessing, it *ends* with a solemn **curse** to anyone who adds to (22:18) or subtracts from (22:19) this book. Note too the mention of the word prophecy which is clearly a major focus of the book.

for the time is at hand.

There's that admonition we heard repeatedly in the Olivet Discourse: be ready for when these things will unfold.

[4] *John to the **seven** churches which are in Asia:*

We will examine the specific messages to these churches in chapters two and three. Verse 11 lists their names.

Note this first reference in Revelation to the number *seven*. *Seven* appears twelve times in this chapter alone and 59 times in the book of Revelation – making it a keyword. This word in the Bible often symbolizes *completeness* or *perfection*.

Grace be unto you, and peace,

Note this familiar salutation in scripture. It's actually so familiar that we miss its significance. We'll revisit that thought in a moment.

from him which is, and which was, and which is to come;

This refers to God – specifically God the Father – as is confirmed in the immediate words that follow. The threefold statement succinctly affirms the timeless nature of God. In fact, God is not only eternal, He is not bound by time. We experience time moment by moment. God exists outside the constraints of time or any other aspect of His creation.

and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

There's that *seven* again. This likely refers to the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. Isaiah 11:2 describes Him as having seven attributes:

1. Being Jehovah
2. Wisdom
3. Understanding
4. Counsel
5. Might
6. Knowledge
7. Fear of the LORD

[5] *And from Jesus Christ,*

There's the **third** person of our triune God. We can stop here and add that just as *seven* is an important number in the Bible, *three* is also important in our world. Many have observed that much of creation has its basis in three.

Creation consists of :

1. Time
2. Space
3. Matter

As stated in verse 4, time consists of:

1. Past
2. Present
3. Future

Space consists of:

1. Length
2. Width
3. Height

Matter exists in the forms:

1. Solid
2. Liquid
3. Gas

In harmony with this focus on three, His description here lists three major roles that Jesus fulfills.

who is

1. *the **faithful witness,***
2. *and the **first begotten of the dead,***
3. *and the **prince of the kings of the earth.***

How fitting it is that **the** following very familiar benediction outlines **three** glorious gifts that Jesus Christ gives to all that receive them:

Unto him that

1. ***loved us, and***
2. ***washed us from our sins in his own blood,***
3. *[6] And hath **made us kings and priests** unto God and his Father;*

to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

We're already getting a good picture of who Jesus Christ is, but this unveiling is just beginning. There's much, much more to come. We see in verses 4 and 5 the trinity clearly displayed. But what about that phrase *Grace be unto you, and peace*? Now that we established the identity of the Source of this message, the meaning jumps off of the page. This wish of *grace and peace* comes not from the apostle John but from the triune God Himself! Think of it. God wishes us *grace and peace*.

Let's return to learn more about Jesus Christ as John gives a glimpse of a few key events in this prophecy:

[7] **Behold**, *he cometh with clouds;*

Jesus will come to the earth to put down evil and establish His kingdom.

and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him:

He will come in glory and great power.

and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

Those who stand in opposition to Him will face swift and sure judgment.

[8] *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

This brings us back full circle to remind us that the message here comes from God the Father. You may recall God is the source of this message (v. 4). The phrase *I am Alpha and Omega* appears four times in the Bible and only in the book of Revelation. It appears twice in this chapter (here in verse eight and also in verse eleven). It also appears at the end of the book (21:6; 22:13). Its reference to the beginning and ending of the Greek alphabet indicates the timeless nature of God. A similar reference to God appears in Daniel chapter 7 verses 9, 13, and 22 where Daniel calls Him *the Ancient of Days*.

This ends the introduction to Revelation. The emphasis here is that Jesus Christ is God. He has all of the attributes of God. So often we tend to think of Jesus clothed in His human form. After all, this same John describes Him saying:

John 1

[14] *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, ...*

We may think of Him as the baby boy born in Bethlehem. Or perhaps we remember Him as a lad learning the trade of carpentry and the scripture from Joseph his adopted father. We cannot forget the

time at age twelve he stayed back in Jerusalem after Passover and astonished the religious leaders with His knowledge and wisdom. We might recall the choosing of His disciples, His baptism by John the Baptist, and His three years of ministry. Of course, He also performed many miracles along the way – including:

1. Turning water into wine.
2. Feeding multitudes.
3. Stilling the waves and the storms.
4. Casting out demons.
5. Healing the blind, the lame, and the sick.
6. Raising the dead.

He confronted and exposed the religious leaders of His day and finally went to the cross to pay the ransom for the sins of the world.

But He did all of these wonderful works as a man with flesh and blood. But as this book of Revelation reveals, Jesus Christ is far more than a man:

Philippians 2

[6] Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

[7] But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

[8] And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

There we see His humanity expressed in all its fullness. But then there's that other part.

[9] Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

[10] That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

[11] And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This book of Revelation does not leave Jesus in His earthly tabernacle. Instead, it presents the side of His character and nature that causes us mere mortals difficulty in understanding. I was asked whether it bothered me that I could not understand the thinking and attributes of God. I replied, what would bother me, would be if my God were so small that I **could** understand Him.

Here are some other select scriptures that affirm that Jesus Christ is far greater than physical. Recall that our triune God manifests Himself as Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we learn that Jesus existed with God, was God from the beginning, and that He created all things. One of things we know about God is He is Spirit (John 4:24) – which fits with His eternal attributes. That means each member of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is Spirit. When Jesus rose from the dead, He came with something called a *spiritual body*. While a spiritual body appears to men to have physical properties (Luke 24:36-40) it clearly operates beyond the bounds of

the physical (Luke 24:51; John 20:26; Acts 1:9-11). We're told that the bodies that Christians will receive at the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:51-53) will be like His body (I Corinthians 15:42-44; Philippians 3:21; I John 3:2). This body is something more than just spirit.

Even with a spiritual body, we cannot possibly ever rise to God's level of greatness and glory. But just because that is the case, we need not think that God cannot and will not reach down to our level and meet us where we are. He has gone to great lengths to make that exact thing possible. Despite all of our limitations, we cannot forget that we are made in His image, will be the bride of Christ, and will enjoy an intimate relationship with Him in glory forever.

We'll stop there for today and proceed next time with John's description of his first vision. But let's wrap up with one final thought to take with us.

Application

As we study this book, we can get caught up in the images of wrath, splendor, and glory that fill the narrative. Yet just as we found today, the Almighty God starts off by wishing the readers His grace and peace. There is a **tenderness** of our Heavenly Father that often gets lost in the description of His glory. Remember how God walked in the cool of the day seeking Adam in the Garden of Eden? This is the same God who gave His only Son to redeem fallen man. When God makes all things new, certainly there will be a good dose of what Adam and Eve experienced when God placed them in the garden and walked with them. Our eternal existence will be one of grace and peace.

Benediction

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:21).