

Introduction To The Revelation

Text : **Revelation 1**

INTRODUCTION :

- A. The book of the Revelation is the most misunderstood book in the bible.**
 - 1. Few are willing to put forth the time and effort required to come to understand it.
 - 2. It is put at the end of the bible for a reason.
 - a. One needs to be familiar with all the scriptures before studying it.
 - b. One especially needs to understand the prophets before tackling the Revelation.
- B. People misunderstand the Revelation because their teachers didn't understand it.**
 - 1. People study for new knowledge through the lens of their current knowledge.
 - 2. Current knowledge of the Revelation is often the result of sensationalistic teachers.
 - 3. The Revelation is the easiest book for false teachers to capitalize on.
- C. The purpose of this lesson is just to introduce the book.**
 - 1. I plan to teach a few lessons from chapters 2 and 3.
 - 2. In order to understand those lessons we will need some context from chapter 1.

I. Some general considerations about the book.

- A. It is the only book of in the New Testament which was written as prophecy.**
 - 1. John clearly identifies his book as prophecy.
 - a. **Rev. 1:3-** Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.
 - b. **Rev. 22:6-7** And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.
7 And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."
 - 2. Being classed as "prophecy" establishes some clear parameters for the book.
 - a. At the time of its writing, the book referred to specific future events.
 - b. If a prophecy is from God, all of the prophesied events in it must come to pass.
 - 3. Prophecies are still of value even after they are fulfilled.
 - a. We still study the book of Isaiah even though it his prophecies were fulfilled.
 - b. We are able to identify Jesus as the Messiah by the fulfillment of prophecy.

B. It is the only book in the New Testament that the date of it's writing effects one understanding of the book.

1. Some believe the book to have been written prior to 70 a.d. and apply much of the book to the destruction of Jerusalem.
2. Most believe it to have been written in the last 10 years of the first century.

C. This book is the only New Testament book written in apocryphal language.

1. A cryptic language characterized by symbols used to create word pictures.
 - a. In apocryphal language, good is soft and gentle.
 - b. Evil is a devastating monster such as a dragon.
 - c. There is always a stark contrast between the two.
2. Dr. Seuss is the most well known author who uses apocryphal language.
 - a. "Horton Hatches The Egg" ... An Elephant hatching a bird's egg. (*Responsibility*)
 - b. "Yertle the Turtle" ... Turtle ruled the pond until his fall. (*Adolf Hitler*)

Note : *One understands the message of The Revelation in the same way that he understand the message of a Dr. Seuss book. (The elephant is not literal.)*

3. Persecution made the use of apocryphal language necessary.
 - a. It could be used as a code. (*Nero, then Domitian were persecuting the church.*)
 - b. The Jews understood what was meant, but the Roman oppressors did not.
 - c. Daniel used it during his captivity.
4. There is a large body of uninspired writings which use apocryphal language.
 - a. Several in the Apocrypha.
 - b. The Assumption of Moses, The Ascension of Isaiah, The Sibylline Oracles 3,4 &5
5. Principle : God would never make a Revelation which could not be understood.
 - a. The Jewish Christians understood the meaning of the visions.
 - b. There was a need to use a code language ... Rome would kill more Christians if if they understood a prophecy to predict their defeat.

D. God gave the Revelation to encourage Christians during a difficult time.

1. Before John, Peter also spoke of the persecution :
 - a. **Read ... I Pet. 1: 3-9**
 - b. **Read ... I Pet. 4: 12-17**
2. The Rev. To John reassured the 7 churches of Asian that Christ will ultimately win.

II. The Revelation To John for the churches is a message from God Himself.

A. Notice Vs. 1

Rev. 1: 1- The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

1. God the Father gave the message to God the Son, Jesus.
2. God the Son sent the message via an angel, i.e., a messenger.
 - a. Only two angels are named in scripture, Michael and Gabriel.
 - b. Michael seems to be a warrior, but Gabriel is the messenger. (*Mary & Elizabeth*)
3. The angel delivered the message from God the Son to His Apostle. (*Ambassador*)

B. Notice Vs. 2

Rev. 1: 2- (John,) who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

1. John repeated the message that he had received from God's messenger.
2. John repeated **all** of it, not just the gist of it or an interpretation of it.

C. Notice Vs. 3- Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

1. God's intent is for the book to be a blessing :
 - a. To those who read it. (*The inference is public reading because there are hearers.*)
 - b. To those who hear what is read.
2. The book contains actionable instructions.
 - a. It is meant to encourage, **but also** to spur on to action.
 - b. To "**heed**" involves action, to follow instructions.

III. The Revelation was given with a sense of urgency.

A. Vs. 3b- "for the time is near."

1. (*eggizo*) The word translated "**near**" literally means to be "at your elbow."
2. This word is also often translated "**at hand**." (Cf.— **Matt. 26: 45**)
Mark 14: 42- Get up, let us be going; the one who betrays Me is **at hand** !

B. John was told not keep the message to himself because the events were near.

1. **Rev. 22: 10-** And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near."
2. Remember, Daniel was told to seal up his prophecy. (**Dan. 12**)
In 600 yrs. they were fulfilled.

C. The Lord's "coming" in judgment on the churches was clearly to be in the life time of the recipients.

1. **Rev. 2: 16-** Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.
2. **Rev. 3: 11-** I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

D. The coming to judgment on the evil oppressor was to "come quickly."

1. **Rev. 22: 12-** Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.
2. **Rev. 22: 20-** He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus
3. When the angel told the disciples to go quickly he did not meant 2000 years.
Matt. 28: 7- "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you." (quickly = same word)
4. The judgments about which the seven churches were warned have already occurred.
Not one of those congregations still exists today.

IV. The angel gave John the outline of the book in chapter one.**A. See Vs.-19**

1. **Rev. 1: 19-** Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.
2. What has John seen ? (*Been shown ?*)
 - a. Things as they now are.
 - b. The things which will happen next. (*Just as Jesus warned disciple of His death.*)

B. Chapter one introduces the book and sets the stage.

1. It presents Jesus as the risen savior.
2. He is shown to be powerful and ruling. (*In charge*) (*Persecution causes doubt.*)

C. Chapters two and three show the current status of the 7 church of Asia.

1. They are listed by name. (*Thus, the primary application must be to them.*)
2. Some say, the list is given in the order the Roman postal carrier would visit them.

D. The rest of the book explains how future events will affect those churches of Asia.**IV. Chapter one presents Jesus walking among the churches.****A. Read ... Rev. 1: 12-20**

1. Jesus is portrayed walking among the lampstands.
 - a. The lampstands are churches.
 - b. Thus, Jesus is walking among the churches.
 - c. Walking among them means that He is with them. (cf - **Matt. 28:20** ... *I am with you ..*)
2. In the next two chapters Jesus gives personal admonitions to each congregation.
 - a. He is aware of their circumstances. (*both positive and negative*)
 - b. His knowledge indicates both care and involvement.
3. The stars in His hand are people.
 - a. Being in His hand symbolizes being under His protection.
 - b. Compare ... **John 10: 24-30** (vs. **28** ... *No .. snatch them out of my hand*)

B. These verses also explain that this is a book of symbols.

1. Lampstands are congregations. (*They are not lights, but they hold up the light.*)
2. The stars are messengers associated with each congregation.
3. The Christ is among them holy, powerful and in charge. (*relationship to church*)

CONCLUSION :**A. Knowing this prepares us to learn from His admonition to the churches.****B. Just as the eternal God walked among the congregations then, He does today.**

1. He is prepared to judge His church.
2. He's also prepared to defend it.
3. We depend upon Him.

C. If Jesus was writing to this congregation, what would He say about us ? (**you)**

Lesson Text :**Revelation 1**

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated *it* by His angel to His bond-servant John, **2** who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, *even* to all that he saw. **3** Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

4 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, **5** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— **6** and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. **7** BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” **9** I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. **10** I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet, **11** saying, “Write in a book what you see, and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; **13** and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. **14** His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. **15** His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. **16** In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, **18** and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. **19** “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. **20** “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.