

Studying the book of Revelation (1)

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Introduction: Reading: Revelation 1:1-3

The book of Revelation is like a door through which we enter the secrets of God. In the past, God revealed Himself to the mankind in four different ways. Sometimes, He spoke in His own voice and sometimes, He spoke through His angels. Many times, He spoke through the prophets and in the end, He spoke through His Son (Hebrews 1/1).

While speaking through the prophets, He chose to speak in Dreams, Vision, Prophecy or Revelation. Although all these methods are different, yet they seem to appear the same. It is important to understand that when John was receiving this revelation, he was totally unaware of what was happening around him. Even, he did not know about his physical & mental condition, for the Holy Spirit had fully engulfed & captured him into HIS Control.

Remember! When Apostle Paul was taken up to receive his revelation (2-Cor12/2), he also claimed that he did not know, if he was there in the body or without—only God knew. I am sure John must have experienced the same divine condition.

Seven (7) Facts about Apostle John:

1. John is the writer of the book of Revelation, but he never bothered to introduce himself—perhaps because that all the churches of that time knew him.
2. In this book, he was asked 12 times to “write what was you see/have seen”. He is the same John, who wrote the Gospel of John and three letters/epistles of John.
3. He was the youngest of all the disciples and had a special place in the sight of Lord Jesus Christ.
4. The Gospel of John mentions him “close & special disciple” of Jesus Christ at 5 places (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7 and 21:20).

5. John was one of those lucky one/special disciples, who witnessed / saw Jesus' Glory in transfiguration at the mountain (Matthew 17:1-8) and resurrection of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:22-43) with his own eyes.
6. Jesus also gave him the honour to look-after His mother after His death on the cross.
7. John wrote the book of Revelation in A.D 95/96. He was 85 years old, prisoned on the island of Patmos.

Purpose of the book of Revelation:

The book of revelation has threefold purpose.

1. The letters to the Seven (7) Churches (chapters 2-3) reveal that many of the congregations throughout Asia had seriously strayed from the original NT standard of truth, faith and practice as taught by Jesus and by those, He personally authorised to establish His Church and put His Word in writing.
2. In view of opposition & persecution resulting from Emperor Domitian's self-promotion as a "god", revelation was given to the churches to strengthen their faith, spiritual determination and loyalty to Jesus Christ. The book is also aimed at inspiring Christians to be overcomers and remain faithful to Christ, even to the point of death.
3. Finally, it was written to provide Christians of all generations with God's perspective on (a) their fierce conflict with the forces of Satan and (b) their intense opposition from the world by revealing the future outcome of history. It particularly highlights the events during what are apparently the last seven years before Christ's coming to the earth. Through these events, God will vindicate His faithful people, by pouring out His wrath and unleashing His severe end-time judgments on Satan's kingdom. This time of unparalleled devastation on earth will reach its highest point and end with the 2nd coming of Christ—to destroy the forces of evil and establish His own reign of peace.

Special Features of the book of Revelation:

1. Revelation is the only New Testament book classified as prophetic and apocalyptic.
2. As an apocalyptic book, its message is presented in symbols that represent realities about future times and events, while preserving a certain enigma (mystery/puzzle/problem).
3. Numbers are used extensively, including 2; 3; 3½; 4; 5; 6; 7; 10; 12; 24; 42; 144; 666; 1000; 1260; 7000; 12000; 144,000; 100,000,000 and 200,000,000. The most common or recurring number used is seven, which occurs 54 times.
4. Visions are major feature, with scenes often shifting in location from earth to heaven and back to earth.
5. Angels are most often associated with the vision and the heavenly decrees and announcements.
6. It is a polemic book, which means expressing passionate and strongly worded arguments for specific people or things. This approach serves to (a) expose the demonic character of any earthly ruler's claim to be "god" and (b) reveal Jesus Christ as the exalted Lord and the "ruler of kings on earth" (1:5), -- "the king of kings and Lord of Lords" (19:16).
7. It is a dramatic book that makes the truth of its message as clear and forceful as possible.
8. There are more titles for Jesus in this book than in any other book of the Bible. Revelation is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament.

INTERPRETATION & DISCUSSION.

This is a book closely tied to the Old Testament. Of the 404 verses in Revelation, 278 refer to the Old Testament in some way. Of these 278 verses, there are over 800 implicit or indirect references and

mentions/hints and suggestions to Old Testament events. So, a working knowledge of the entire Bible is necessary to fully understand all that is taking place in this book.

The book of Revelation and the book of Genesis stand like the great bookends of God's creation. Many things that have commencement in Genesis, have their conclusion in Revelation. Things like Sin, Satan, Creation, The Curse, Heaven, Earth, Redemption, etc, come full circle by the time you reach Revelation.

In the first three verses, we are given a solid introduction to the content & purpose of this book. Let's dig into these words for a few more minutes and try to glean /gather /collect a greater understanding. These three little verses reveal some of the essential principles that govern the contents of the book of Revelation.

1. THE PERSON OF THE REVELATION (v1).

(a) This book is a book about Jesus! Some Bibles might have a different title like *"The Revelation of Saint John the Divine"*. However, the real title of this book is given in verse 1. It is called the *"the revelation of Jesus Christ"*. That is what this book is.

(b) Jesus Christ is the theme of the Bible. It is a book about Him. Everything in the Bible points to Jesus in one way or another. You can find Him in every chapter and in every event. But, in the book of Revelation, more so than any other book of the Bible. It is a "revelation" or an "unveiling" of **the Person, the Purpose, the Plans, the Power and the Promotion of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

(c) When Jesus was here the first time, He was veiled. He was not recognised by most people as God, even though He was God in the flesh (Phil 2:5-8). The Bible tells us in 1-Cor 2:8 that if they had known Who **Jesus** was, they would not have crucified Him.

When the world looked at Jesus all they saw was his poverty, His humanity. They saw a carpenter from Nazareth. Some saw Him as a man with strange & dangerous teaching. The last view, the world had of Jesus was that of a convicted criminal, dying in sorrow, shame and suffering on a Roman cross

The book of Revelation tells us that the world has not seen the last of the Lord Jesus! He is coming again. When He comes the second time He is not destined for a cross, but for a crown. He is not coming as a suffering Lamb, but as a Sovereign Lord. He is not coming in shame and poverty, but in splendor and power. There is coming a day when Jesus Christ will come and be revealed to the whole world. They will see Him as He truly is. This is the clear teaching of the Scriptures, [1 Cor. 1:7](#) (The word “coming” is “*apokalupsis*”.); [2 Thess. 1:7](#) (The word “revealed” is “*apokalupsis*”.) ; [1 Pet. 1:7](#). (The word “appearing” is “*apokalupsis*”.) Do you get the picture? Jesus is coming and the world will see Him as He really is, [Rev. 1:7](#).

We will see God’s promise to Jesus in Phil 2:9-11, fulfilled in this book. Jesus came to this world to give His life for humanity. He came to reveal God and redeem God’s elect. He did give His life for us and God has promised to exalt Him because of that. We will see that accomplished in this book.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE REVELATION (v1b)

A. The purpose of this book is clearly stated in [verse 1](#), “*to show unto His servants things which must shortly take place.*” This book is given to the people of God so that they might be able to comprehend God’s master plan for the future. [Verse 3](#) reminds us that this book is a book of “*prophecy*”. Now, there are two types of prophecy. One meaning of the word is to “*forth tell*”. That is what I am doing right now. I am taking the Word of God and I am “*forth telling*” that Word. There is a sense in which preaching is prophecy. The other use of the word carries the idea of “*fore telling*”. That is, of revealing truths and events before they occur. Both of these types of prophecy occur in the book of Revelation. [Revelation 1-3](#) are “*forth telling*” chapters. Chapters 4-22 are “*fore telling*” chapters.

B. This revelation of Jesus is given to “*His servants*”. The word servant is the word *dou/loj* (*doulos* {doo'-los}) This word refers to “*one who gives himself up to another's will; a slave*”. It brings to mind the law of the bondservant in [Exodus 21:1-6](#). If a man became indebted to another, he was to work off that debt through seven years of servitude to the debtor. At the end of the seven years, the debt was considered paid, and the servant could go free. If, however, he wished to remain with his master and spend his life serving him, then a hole would be bored through his ear, and he would become a bond slave. The hole in his ear would mark him as one who served the master by choice, out of love.

C. We are told that another purpose of this book is to reveal “*things which must shortly come to pass*”. Many people read this and think of shortness of time. If that is the case, then we have a problem. It has been 2,000 since these things were written and most of them have yet to be fulfilled. This phrase simply means that when these events begin to take place, they will happen in a short period of time. So, the events of the Revelation were made clear 2,000 years ago, but once the events begin to unfold; one will follow the other in rapid succession. The word “*shortly*” translates two Greek words. They are: “*en*” (*en*) which means “*in*” and “*tachos*” (*tachos*) which means “*quickness; swiftness*”. We get our word “*taxi*” from this word. You need to get somewhere in a hurry, so you flag down a taxi, you hop in a take-off. That is the way the end time events will take place. Once they begin, they will “*take off like a speeding taxi.*”

D. Verse one says that He “*sent and signified it by His angel*”. The word “*angel*” simply refers to a “*messenger*”. Jesus sent this word to John by a heavenly messenger service; much like the virgin birth was announced to Mary. But the word “*signified*” is very important to understanding this book. It literally means “*to give sign*”. In other words, the Lord is letting us know that He will be speaking in symbolic language and word pictures in the Revelation. Why would the Lord use signs and symbols? There are a few reasons:

1. *These symbols are a spiritual code.* The church in that day was under intense persecution. The language used would have been clear to the redeemed, but a riddle to the lost who might desire to use the message of the book to attack the saints.
2. *Languages change, symbols do not.* John was trying to write about events, images and people far into the distant future. He did not possess the vocabulary to adequately describe what he was seeing. He used the language of his day to describe events in our day and beyond. That is why the Lord sent this message in signs and symbols. As the language has changed the symbols have retained their power and they still speak.

3. THE PROMISE OF THE REVELATION (V3)

A. This is the only book in the Bible that comes with a built-in promise to those who read, hear and heed the message. God promises a special blessing to those who spend time in this blessed book.

B. There are three present tense words used to describe who can expect to receive this blessing. Those who read, hear and keep.

1. He that read — This refers to the one who would read these words in the public gatherings. In those days, copies of the Scriptures were rare. Usually there was one copy per congregation and one person would stand and read so that all could hear the words. The one who reads the book is promised a blessing.
2. They that hear — This refers to the congregation that is hearing the words as they are read. There is a special blessing attached to hearing this book read.
3. They that keep — This speaks to those who will take this message to heart. Those who hear it, believe it and live it, can expect the Lord to bless them for their efforts in this book.

C. We can expect the Lord to feed us and teach us as we move through this great book. But we can also expect the Lord to bless us because we are taking Him at His word and we are reading, hearing and keeping the words of this prophecy.

Conclusion

Now, we are told why this book is so important in the last phrase of [verse 3](#). It says, “*for the time is near/at hand*”. The word “*time*” in this verse does not refer to time on a clock; it means “*due time; a season; an era of time*”. God is telling us that we are nearing the end of things and this book will give us help& hope as we see the end approaching.

If the time was near 2,000 years ago, why haven't these things come to pass? First, God's clock does not operate like our clock. [2 Pet. 3:8](#), tells us “*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*” God does things in His Own time and on His Own schedule. Second, God is giving lost sinners time to be saved in this age of grace, [2 Pet. 3:9](#), “*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering towards- us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*”

May God bless us with today's message.....Amen.