

The Revelation of Jesus Christ (*Part 1*)

Revelation 1:1-3

Thought for the Day. In studying the book of Revelation, our first concern should be to learn more about the Lord Jesus Christ and our personal relationship with Him rather than about what's going to happen in the future.

The opening three chapters of Revelation are incredibly personal and immediately practical. They force us to examine our own lives and the life and ministries of our church family under the penetrating scrutiny of the Lord's gaze. Therefore, our study should be intensely practical rather than vaguely theoretical!

I. The Prologue (1:1-3)

A. The Basics

1. The Importance

- a. The book of Revelation is the climax, capstone, and consummation of God's revelation to the human race. It wraps up and brings to a coherent and satisfying conclusion all of the themes that are introduced in Genesis.
- b. If it were not for the book of Revelation, we would not know many of the details concerning the future of planet earth and its inhabitants.
- c. There are many strange and mysterious things in the book of Revelation, but, as the title of the book suggests, it is intended to reveal not conceal, to clarify, not mystify.

2. The Author and Date

- a. Written by the Apostle John (1:4, 9; 22:8-9) near the end of the first century, around 90-95 A.D. John was the last of the twelve Apostles.
- b. John was a recognized leader in the churches of Asia Minor, the seven churches to which the book is addressed. (1:4, 11, 20; chaps. 2-3)
- c. Together with his brother James, John was a prosperous fisherman; sons of Zebedee; one of Jesus' first disciples. (Matthew 4:21)
- d. Peter, James and John were Jesus' "Inner Circle." (Mk. 5:37; Matt. 17:1-2; Matt. 26:36ff)
- e. Jesus gave James and John the nickname, "Sons of Thunder." (Mark 3:17; Luke 9:51-55)
- f. Jesus and the Holy Spirit transformed the "Son of Thunder" into the "Disciple of Love." As we spend time in the presence of Jesus, the Holy Spirit transforms us and make us more like Him. (1 Corinthians 15:48-49; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Colossians 3:10)
- g. Church tradition says that John settled in Ephesus where he was later arrested under the Roman Emperor, Domitian, who demanded that he be worshiped as "Lord and God."
- h. John refused and was banished to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea where he received the vision of the true "Lord and God" recorded in the

book of Revelation. (1:9)

- i. God used the Apostle John to give us three types of inspired literature:

<u>Gospel of John</u>	<u>The Epistles</u>	<u>Revelation</u>
Believe (20:31)	Be Sure (1 Jhn 5:13)	Be Ready (22:20)
Life Received	Life Revealed	Life Rewarded
Salvation	Sanctification	Sovereignty
Christ: The Prophet	Christ: The Priest	Christ: The King

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Victorious*, p. 18)

3. The Message

- a. "Revelation was written to reveal the final outcome of human history to God's people to encourage them and exhort them to faithfulness because even though evil seems to prevail, God is in control of all the events of human history and Christ will return someday in power and great glory to punish the wicked and establish His kingdom." (*Mark Hitchcock, 101 Answers to Questions About the Book of Revelation, pp. 52-53*)
- b. "Here is the big idea of the book of Revelation: Jesus Christ is the Victor; Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and we as His followers will reign with Him forever in the New Heaven and the New Earth." (*Ken Baugh, quoted in Be Victorious, Wiersbe, p. 12*)
- c. The major message of Revelation is "the glorious victory of Jesus Christ over all His enemies" and "In Jesus Christ, we are overcomers! ...Jesus Christ is the Conqueror, and all believers share in His great victory." (*Wiersbe, ibid, p. 13*)
- d. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ to be the Savior of our souls and the Lord of our lives, we join Him in His victory over sin, self, Satan and death.
- e. The challenge for us today is to live out that victory in our daily lives by living a holy, righteous, and Christlike life!
- f. For believers who are dealing with severe persecution, Revelation is a powerful reminder that God is in control and He will vanquish all of His enemies and vindicate all of His followers. This knowledge can give great encouragement to those who are suffering at the hands of God's enemies.
- g. "As we study the book of Revelation, we must always remember that it is not primarily a book telling us how to set dates or develop a chronological table of events, but rather an unveiling of the Person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord in all of His glory. It's a book that ought to give us hope and joy! It should draw us closer to our Savior, inspiring us to love Him more and to anticipate that glorious day when He shall return in power and great glory." (*David Hocking, The Coming World Leader, p. 23*)

B. The Title of the Book (1:1)

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ...

1. "Revelation" translated from *apokalupsis* (apocalypse). Key ideas: to unveil, reveal, uncover, make manifest.

2. "In this book, the Holy Spirit pulls back the curtain and gives us the privilege of seeing the glorified Christ in heaven and the fulfillment of His sovereign purposes in the world... God reveals His plans and purposes to His church."
(Wiersbe, ibid, p. 17)
3. The book of Revelation is primarily meant to reveal and unveil the Lord Jesus Christ. Our primary motivation in studying the book should not be to find out what's going to happen in the future but to know and love the Lord better!
4. "John's prophecy is primarily the revelation of Jesus Christ, not the revelation of future events."
(Wiersbe, ibid, p. 18)
 - Rev. 1-3 – Christ is the exalted Priest-King ministering to the churches.
 - Rev. 4-5 – Christ is the glorified Lamb of God, reigning in heaven.
 - Rev. 6-18 – Christ is the righteous Judge pouring out His wrath on all the earth.
 - Rev. 19-20 – Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords returning to earth to conquer all His enemies and rule upon the earth.
 - Rev. 21-22 – Christ rules over the New Heaven and New Earth, dwelling together with His redeemed people forever.
5. "If you do not see Jesus in this book, you must be blind! He is the focus of it all, the centerpiece of its pages, the reason for its message, and the glory of its words."
(Hocking, ibid, p. 19)

Suggested Applications¹:

First and foremost, are you committed to pursuing the Three Spiritual Priorities of a devoted follower (disciple) of Jesus Christ note in the footnote below? If not, none of this matters or will make sense to you!

Grow: Like the Apostle John, as we spend time in the presence of Jesus, the Holy Spirit transforms us and makes us more like Him. (Mark 3:17; Luke 9:51-55; 1 John 3:18; 4:7-21) How? We must spend time in the Lord's presence through regular intake of the Word of God, the Bible, and prayer.

Know: (vs. 1) Our primary motivation in studying the book of Revelation (and, for that matter, the entire Bible) should be to know Jesus Christ better and to love Him more. (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20) Whenever we read the Bible, we should always ask, "What does this reveal to me about Jesus Christ?" He is the central message of the Bible.

¹ The three **spiritual priorities** of a follower of Jesus Christ: 1) To **know** and love the Lord by pursuing intimate fellowship with Him; 2) To **grow** and become like the Lord by cultivating Christlike character and conduct; and 3) To go and **show** the Lord to others through faithful and fruitful service.