

Revelation chapter 1:

Verse 1: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ...”

Comment (me):

It starts off with the word ‘Revelation’. It doesn’t say ‘the Mystery’ and it doesn’t say ‘the Riddle’. It starts off with the word ‘the Revelation’. It means that it’s something that should be understood. It’s not a mystery. We should understand this book. When Daniel received his visions and prophecies, he didn’t understand them. He was very confused by them. The angel who was speaking to him said, “Go your way, Daniel. Seal up the book. It will not be well understood until the time of the end.” Then at the time of the end “many will run to and fro and knowledge will be increased” about prophetic things. From our vantage point in history, from the fact that we have the entire collection of the Lord’s Word in one place, we have much more advantage than Daniel had. We can understand prophetic things. We can understand the Book of Revelation. It’s not too hard to be understood. We’re going to do that. We’re going to make the claim that we’re going to go through and we’re going to understand it correctly. We’re going to compare scripture with scripture. We’re going to rightly divide the Word of Truth. And, we’re going to come to correct understanding about the Book of Revelation.

It’s “the Revelation of Jesus Christ.” It’s not the revelation of Buddha, it’s not the revelation of Mohammed, or someone else. It carries the idea that there’s something to be revealed about Jesus. We tend to think of Jesus in terms of the gentle carpenter from Nazareth. We think of Him of course in the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. And, of course, we should. But, there’s more to it than that. We need to remember at the Ascension what the angel said when the disciples saw Jesus ascend into heaven. The angel said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up into heaven? This same Jesus which you’ve seen rise into heaven will come back in like manner as you’ve seen Him go.” He’s going to come again, and when He comes again, He’ll come as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In fact, in latter parts of the Book of Revelation, that’s one of the names that He has. It pictures Him as riding in on a white horse at His Second Coming. And one of His names will be King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Faithful and True. That revelation is still to come. It’s literal. He will be King of Kings because He’ll have a literal kingdom on this earth. We’ll read more about that as we go. Actually, when the Scripture here refers to the Revelation of Jesus Christ, it’s not speaking in such general terms as I just did. It’s speaking more in terms of the visions that John saw and received that are recorded in this book. So...

Verses 1 and 2: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to His bondservants the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bondservant John, who testified to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.”

Comment:

It’s as if John is saying, I am not a genius who made up fables and made up a bunch of visions. I’m reporting to you the things that I saw with my own eyes. And, these are things from God. These are things from Jesus Christ. I saw them. I’m reporting them to you.

Verse 3: “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy...”

Comment:

You know what the word ‘blessed’ means. It means ‘fortunate’, it means ‘happy’, it means ‘the Lord’s blessings are upon you.’ You are a person to be envied because the Lord’s blessings are

upon you. And why? Right here, it's a special blessing simply for reading this particular book, or listening to someone teach this particular book. Or just hearing.

Verse 3 continued: "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it."

Comment:

You know what it means to 'heed' things, to 'pay attention' to things. You remember the shepherds who were guarding their flocks at night. All of a sudden in the middle of the night they saw a chorus of angels, a choir of angels, saying, "Praise God in the highest, peace to men of good will." The angels reported to the shepherds, "The Child, the Messiah, has been born this night in the City of David. This is how you will know Him. You'll find Him lying in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes." That's in cloths they wrapped babies in. When these shepherds reported these things, they went into town, they found Mary and Joseph, they found the baby. The Scripture says that the people who heard the things that the shepherds reported to them were amazed, and it says Mary was amazed, and she treasured and pondered these things in her heart. That's the idea here. The things we're going to read should be treasured and pondered. Even if they're not all understood perfectly, they're to be treasured and pondered just as Mary did the things that she was told by the shepherds.

"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." How could he say 'the time is near' ? It's been 1900 years. The book was written in the mid 90's A.D. John was on an island, the isle of Patmos, for the witness he had borne to Christ. We all know that. He was probably the last surviving apostle at this time. He was the only one that died of natural causes. How could he say 'the time is near'? The best answer I can give to that is the one that Peter gave. He said that in the last days scoffers will come and they'll say, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep all things continue just as they have from the beginning of creation." Peter replies to that by saying, "This they're willingly ignorant of, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow concerning His promises, but is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish." And I think Peter's words there apply to this here, 'for the time is near.'

Question from the class (Jeanne):

Wouldn't it also be the fact that for the people living at that time, because they don't have all eternity, they only have their 60 or 70 years, or however long they have to live, for them the time is near. For us now the time is near because it could still be 500 years or whatever, but we're not going to be here 500 more years.

Comment:

The older you get, the threescore years and ten get shorter and shorter don't they? (Laughter).

Jeanne:

Yes.

Comment:

I think time passes faster when you get older too. I think that must be a law of physics someplace. (Laughter).

Jeanne:

I've noticed that.

Verse 4: “John, to the seven churches that are in Asia.”

Comment:

I'll mention more about why there were seven selected here in a little bit.

Verse 4 continued: “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...”

Comment:

I'll say more about why seven spirits here in a little bit.

Verse 5: “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”

Comment:

He is the unique faithful witness. Now, we've got a lot of other witnesses. Muhammad claimed to be a witness for God. A billion people follow Mohammedanism. Joseph Smith claimed to be a witness for God. But Jesus is the One who said, “I am the good shepherd and I love my sheep. I do not leave my sheep. I am the door...” He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.” He is the faithful and true witness. And He reports that about Himself. And He says He's the firstborn from the dead. You know, Jana (a member of our class) thinks she's an only child. Jana's not an only child. Jana has a lot of brothers and sisters. And Jesus is her oldest brother. He's the firstborn from the dead. And we know that the Scripture says that our blessed hope awaits us yet in the future, that the Lord is going to come back, and when He does the dead in Christ shall rise first and that those who are alive and remain will meet them in the air, and so we will ever be with the Lord. Jesus was the firstborn from the dead, but there are many more yet to come. He is ‘the ruler of the kings of the earth.’ At His revelation, that's what He'll be.

Verses 5 (continued) and 6: ”To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood – and He has made us to be a kingdom,”

Comment:

This is a real kingdom, not just a spiritual kingdom – one yet to come. We will rule and reign with Him by the power of His Spirit.

Verse 6 (continued): “priests to His God and Father –”

Comment:

The Scripture says that we're currently priests and it says that the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge. And that's what we're called upon to do. We're called upon to be sanctified in the truth and we're called upon to preserve knowledge – the Lord's knowledge.

Verse 6 (continued) and verse 7: “to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold He is coming with the clouds,”

Comment:

I want to stop right there and I want to read a scripture out of Daniel that applies to this. Daniel chapter 7, verses 13 and 14. There's much, much in the Old Testament. You know how I pull a lot of things out of the Old Testament, not nearly all the things that there are, that apply to the Book of Revelation, that apply to times yet future. Daniel 7:13 – Daniel had had a series of visions here, and he says,

Daniel 7:13, 14: “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

Comment:

The empires and kingdoms, the civilizations of the earth – their glory passes away. But this is a kingdom the increase of which will know no end. And Christ Jesus will be the King of Kings ruling over this kingdom, and we with Him.

Jana:

“David, there is a footnote in the Amplified for that verse that says, ‘The individual child of God is challenged as never before in world history to let go of the trivial and the transient and to yield himself unreservedly to Him Who is coming back to fulfill the longing of every true believer forever and ever.’ “

Comment:

Boy, if you’re like me you’re very aware of how transitory things are in this life. We’re all heirs of the flesh. You know, “Teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.” That’s a good comment, Jana.

Jana:

“It’s not mine.”

Comment:

We’ll give you credit for it this time. Watch it next time, but we’ll give you credit for it this time. (laughter)

Verse 7: “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him.”

Comment:

Zechariah reports about those who pierced Him. Zechariah gave his prophecies in around 500 B.C., and I’ll just read quickly what Zechariah said about those who pierced Him when they see Him at His Second Coming.

Zechariah 12: “They will look upon Me Whom they have pierced and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

Comment:

That’s in Zechariah chapter 12, written 500 years before the birth of Christ. Prophetically speaking about what the Jewish people do at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They will mourn. And more than the Jewish people mourn. The Scripture tells us when Jesus comes back, His foot will touch at the Mount of Olives. So He’s coming back physically to Jerusalem. But more than just the Jews mourn. It says,

Verse 7 (continued): “all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.”

Comment:

They'll mourn for a different reason than the Jewish people do. Do you remember how the Scripture says, and we'll probably talk about it in a couple of weeks, the Scripture says (paraphrasing) that the kings, and commanders, and generals of the earth, they cried out to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us. Hide us from the face of He who is coming because His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" They mourn because they fear the judgment that's about to fall upon them.

Verse 7 (continued): "So it is to be. Amen."

Verse 8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God."

Comment:

Of course you know alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It's like saying, "I'm the A to Z, the beginning and the end."

Verse 8 (continued): He "who is and who was and who is to come."

Comment:

The always existent One, the Almighty. He's the Lord Almighty. You remember when Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat and the disciples were with him on the lake, and a great storm came up. The waves were about to swamp the boat. They woke Jesus up and said, "Master, don't you care that we're about to drown here?" And Jesus got up and calmly, the Scripture says, spoke to the winds and the waves, and He said, "Peace. Be still." Literally what He did was just "Shhh!" to the winds and the waves. And the Scripture says, "Immediately it was perfectly calm." And the disciples were stricken with fear. Jesus said, "Why did you doubt, you men of little faith?" The disciples, stricken with fear, said to each other, "What manner of man is this that even the winds and the waves obey Him?" He is the Lord Almighty. So that brings the question up. If He's the Lord Almighty, and He says, "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find. Anything you ask for I'll give it to you that your joy may be fulfilled." If He's the Lord Almighty and He makes those promises, let me ask you, what are the worldly concerns and circumstances of life that cause us to fear? We have nothing to fear. The Lord is able and the Lord answers prayer. There's nothing that brings you better joy than answered prayer from the Lord.

Jerry:

"I've often wondered about that verse, David. Was He just testing them to see how far they'd go before they panicked, or was He waiting for them to come to Him?"

Comment:

Well, that's a good question. I think one thing He was doing was showing His absolute mastery over all things - the fact that He was almighty. And He didn't show that to everybody. He just showed that to His disciples because He knew that they had a mission to perform. I sometimes wonder to myself, you know, if I actually saw something like that, or if I saw an angel at the foot of my bed one night or something, and had a conversation - would that be something that would strengthen my faith? I think it strengthened theirs. They remembered it. They reported it. But I don't think it would strengthen my faith. I think I've gotten enough from the Word that that strengthens me. You know, I kind of have the idea, and I don't know, but I have the idea that if an angel appeared to me, that I would say, "Well that's nice, I appreciate that, but it's not something

...

(Much laughter)

Jerry:

"Are you sure it wouldn't be like somebody hitting you right between the eyes and saying, "Are you sure...?"

Comment:

Now if he said, "David, you better get your act together or else..."
(Laughter)

Becky:

"David, in case that happens will you tell us about it after the fact?"
(Laughter)

Comment:

I don't think I'll have to do that. I don't expect that to happen.

Dale:

"You'll start out by saying, "Oh, by the way..."

Comment:

By the way, you know that Dale guy? I'm after him...
(Laughter)

Becky:

"You know, can I just say one more thing, David?"

Comment:

Sure.

Becky:

"This is not the same thing, but you know there are times when we all do absolutely know that God has spoken or God's hand has been there or we feel God's presence or whatever. And just that 'Oh thank you, thank you, Lord for that.' And it's just that kind of cognizance that it is the Lord and that everything He says is true and that His hand is on everything..."

Comment:

David's Boeing story.

Verse 9:

"I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance ..."

Comment:

There's a tribulation to be had. There can be persecution, there can be trouble. We've got it pretty easy here, but I'm not sure it'll always be that way. There is a kingdom to be had – a kingdom to look forward to. And there's a perseverance in the faith.

Verse 9 (continued):

"... which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day ..."

Comment:

And of course this is Sunday. The Sabbath day is Saturday. The Lord's day is Sunday. That's how we got our weekend – Saturday and Sunday. Maybe we should celebrate one for the Moslems or something. Maybe we should set aside Monday too – have three days off every week.

Verses 10 and 11:

"I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, 'Write in a book ...' "

Comment:
Literally, a scroll.

Verses 10 and 11 (continued):

"... write in a scroll 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."

Comment:
Why seven churches? There are a lot more churches than this in Asia Minor. I think I'll say something about that when I get to the end of this first chapter here.

Verses 12 and 13:

"Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 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."

Comment:
Sometimes people will ask the question, you know, what kind of body will we have when we're resurrected? What is our glorified body to be like? Well, it's going to be like His body, and we're about to see what that looks like and what that's like. We'll be like Him, for we'll see Him as He is."

Verse 14:

"His head and His hair were white like wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire."

Comment:
This is not like the gentle carpenter of Nazareth.

Verse 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."

Comment:
Like a rushing waterfall.

Verse 16:

"In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword..."

Comment:
You remember when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to be presented before the Lord at the temple when Jesus was just little more than a baby. One of the people, that they'd never seen before in their lives, named Simeon, came up to them and said about this baby, "This child is appointed for the rise and fall of many in Israel." And he said to Mary, "Your own soul will be pierced as with a sword also, to the intent that the thoughts and intents of the heart of many shall be revealed." The Word of the Lord is like a sharp two-edged sword. It slices the hearts of individual people open, and reveals them for what they are. It's a little bit like a lamp, a lamp that

is in a room. It shines. This is the Word of the Lord. The lamp in the room shines, and it's going to shine. But the people on whom it shines, it reveals what they are. Do they love the light and want to come to the light, or do they love darkness rather than light and want to get away from the light? It's like a light and it's like a sword that slices individuals and divides men from each other. The Lord said, "Do you think I came to bring peace? I came to bring a sword." He said, "I'll set people apart from their own family - three in the family against two and two against three. My Word is like a sword that divides men." That's why the symbolism is used here.

Jerry:

"It's nice to know I'll have hair again."

Comment:

Ha. Ha. It'll be white like wool. (Laughter).

Verse 16 (continued) and verse 17:

His face was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.

Comment:

John had been with Jesus all the years of Jesus' ministry here. And yet when he saw Jesus here, he was so terrified, he swooned. The physical effects of what he saw made him swoon, as if he were dead. He almost passed out.

Verse 17 (continued), and verses 18 and 19:

"And He placed His right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of hell. Therefore write the things which you have seen [already], and the things which [you're seeing now], and the things which will take place after these things.'

Comment:

Write the things I'm going to show you, John, because My people down through the ages need to know about these things. It needs not to be a mystery that's not understood. It needs to be understood. The Book of Revelation is the crowning capstone of Scripture. Scripture without the Book of Revelation would not be complete. "We live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." So we need to understand this book as well as the books that are simpler to understand.

Verse 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..."

Comment:

Throughout Scripture, stars, for whatever reason, are used symbolically to represent angels. Even Jesus Christ Himself called Himself the Bright Morning Star – a name that Lucifer borrowed. Lucifer calls himself Star of the Morning. The Scripture calls him Star of the Morning, Bringer of Light, Lucifer, the false witness. "...the seven stars which you saw in My right hand are the angels of the seven churches." Let me hold off on my comment for just a second.

Verse 20 (continued):

"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches [themselves]."