

Jesus' Revelation  
July 19, 2015  
Allen Power

Revelation 1:1–8 (ESV)

Charles Stanley began a sermon on Revelation by asking the congregation: “*How many of you use the book of Revelation in your devotional time?*” He got a big laugh and no hands were raised. Question: **Why do most believers avoid the book of Revelation? Why should we not avoid reading and studying it?**

- First let’s get the name right: It’s REVELATION (singular) not Revelations (plural.) We all make that mistake! I’ll probably make it during this study.

Chuck Swindoll writes about this book:

*“No other book of the Bible has provoked greater fascination or led to more controversy than Revelation. Its profound mysteries, elusive symbolism, powerful predictions, and colorful language are unparalleled in the rest of Scripture. Attempts to interpret its details have spanned the extremes from the sublime to the ridiculous.”*<sup>i</sup>

Swindoll continues:

*“...we read John’s description of what he saw and heard, we’re bombarded with language, symbolism, and imagery in a style like nothing we read elsewhere. Initial confusion is normal. Failure to catch the big picture in the midst of the details is common. In fact, misunderstanding can become a chronic condition! That’s okay! Revelation doesn’t package wisdom for living into memorable verses like Proverbs or construct a logical argument like Romans. Rather, Revelation paints pictures and presents dramas that snare not only our minds but also our hearts and imaginations.”*<sup>ii</sup>

- It’s natural to struggle to understand Revelation, don’t be intimidated by it.
- There are some good reasons we must not ignore or avoid this book.
- First, the reason Jesus told John to write the book is important. Two “bookend” verses give us God’s purpose to the Apostle John for this book.

Revelation 1:19 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. (In other words: past; present; and future)

Revelation 22:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” (It’s not just what is revealed; it’s what you do with it!)

- Verse three: **What’s another reason not to avoid this book?**

Revelation 1:3 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

- The entire Bible is important. Revelation is the only book that specifically promises we’ll be blessed if we “read” and “heed” what it tells us.

- There are a total of seven blessings or “beatitudes” in this book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; and 22:14). You should look ‘em up!
- An important reason to study Revelation is: Jesus wins! *“In the end, good will triumph over evil, wickedness will be judged, and the righteous will receive their rewards.”*<sup>iii</sup> Don’t you want to know how all this works out?
- This morning we’ll begin with the first eight verses of chapter one.
- We’ll see: what it says; what it means; and what it means to us.
- We’ll also very quickly see this book of Revelation is all about Jesus.

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

- Let’s begin with that word “revelation.” It’s the Greek word apokalupsis.
- This is where we get our English word apocalypse. **What do you think of when you hear the word apocalypse?** It actually means, the revealing or unveiling of something that was hidden. Jesus is revealing to us some very important things about Him, about us, and about the future.
- **Verse one: How did this book come about? Who’s the real author? Who is the subject? For whose benefit was this book written? What does verse one say God wants us to learn from it?**
- Jump to verse nine: **Where was John when he received instructions to write this book? Why does verse nine say he was there?**
- Look at verse ten. John was sitting in church worshipping when he got a big surprise. **What do verses ten and eleven say happened?**
- **To whom was this book...this letter...to be sent?** More on that later.
- Verse three: **What causes us to be blessed by this book? Why should we “hear” and “heed” this book? What is the “time” that is near?**
- Verse one says the events in this book “must soon take place,” verse three says the “time is near.” **How has this been controversial? Any idea about the real meaning here? Why has God delayed?**
- Wiersbe: *“The phrases “at hand” (v. 3) and “shortly come to pass” (v. 1) do not mean that these prophecies were to be fulfilled right away in John’s day. Rather, they indicate how swiftly time will transpire when they are fulfilled. Today, long-suffering God is waiting to give sinners a chance to repent. But when the time comes for these judgments to fall, there will be no delay.”*<sup>iv</sup>

Quoting Swindoll again:

*“It’s as if Christ now stands at the very door of our world, ready to enter at any moment. Our response should not be to expect the return of Christ at a particular time, but to be ready for His return no matter when it occurs.”*<sup>v</sup>

- **How should that motivate us as believers in Christ?**
- One of the purposes of this book for believers is to remind us that the “time is near” and to motivate us to win others to Christ before it’s too late.
- John shifts from his introduction to the beginning of his letter (v.4-8):

## Greeting to the Seven Churches

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 kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and 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 tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. 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.”

- Verse four: The seven churches were in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey.)
- There are many theories for why these particular churches were chosen. (1) some have asserted that these were the churches that John had a special ministering relationship with; (2) others have asserted that they form a postal route in the Roman Province of Asia;<sup>vi</sup>
- Why seven? **What Biblical significance does the number seven have?**
- The number seven had great significance to the Jews, especially in inter-biblical apocalyptic literature. It was the number of perfection from its use of the days in Genesis 1. Therefore, it was probably used in both a literal sense—John did write to several churches which formed a Roman postal route in Asia Minor and symbolically as a way of referring to all churches of all days.<sup>vii</sup> (The messages to the churches definitely apply today)
- We’ll see lots of “sevens” in this book. Stars; lamps; angels; golden bowls.
- Verse four: John gives a typical greeting of “grace and peace.” **Who (in verses four and five) sends that “grace and peace”? This is not just a greeting. What do those two words describe?** (God’s grace = our peace)
- **How does John describe Jesus in verse five? What’s the significance?**<sup>viii</sup>
- John was so overwhelmed, in verses five through eight he stops to sing a “doxology” (note the word AMEN.) **What was John praising God for in those verses? What does verse seven say will happen? Who will mourn? How did John feel about it? How should we feel about it?**
- **What does Jesus say about Himself in verse eight? What does it mean? Why should it be comforting for you and me?**
- You and I are about to embark on an interesting, perplexing, and exciting study of this last book of the Bible.

Walter Elwell tells us:

*“The purpose of Revelation is ultimately to explain to the church how God is dealing with the world. Specifically, it is to encourage the believers in a time of intense persecution; to prepare them for what is coming, both in terms of evil and the power of God to see them through it; to comfort them with the hope of heaven; to provide guidance for their daily lives; to teach them how Christian theology relates to their most pressing needs; to assure them of God’s victory over Satan, the Antichrist, and evil; and to give them a vision of God and his reality.”<sup>x</sup>*

- Put simply, through this book God will reveal to us how he intends to deal with Satan and sin and restore perfection in a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1). As the saying goes: “I’ve read the back of the book and WE WIN!”

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Thinking about the purpose of this book (as we’ve just discussed) **how do you think we might be blessed by studying Revelation?**
- I want to share with you my own goals for this study.
- When you study Revelation and “end times” in the Bible, you bump into a lot of “ists.” Historicists; Futurists; Idealists; Preterists; pre, post, and a-millennialists. We’ll touch on some of that. But my goal is to be a REALIST.
- There is no way we can drill into the finer points of all the symbolism and prophecy in this book in a few Sunday School lessons. There are others much more qualified than I am on these finer points.
- So here are my goals as we study Revelation:
  - I want you to be excited and not intimidated by reading and studying Revelation. To finish this study feeling you have a good grasp of the BIG PICTURE of it. Perhaps that excitement will lead to further study!
  - I’m praying we’ll walk away with a good “working knowledge” of Revelation and how it applies to us personally.
  - It could be easy to get “into the weeds” of prophecy; symbolism; and all those “ists.” I don’t want to get side-tracked from the main focus: I’m praying we’ll be encouraged; challenged; and changed.
  - Encouraged that God is in sovereign control of the present; and the future just as He has been the past. We need not fear the future!
  - Challenged to live our lives TODAY knowing that time is short.
  - Changed to become more pleasing to Christ and more like Christ.

---

<sup>i</sup> Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15) by Charles R. Swindoll

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid*

<sup>iii</sup> *ibid*

<sup>iv</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (p. 795). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>v</sup> Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15) by Charles R. Swindoll

<sup>vi</sup> Utley, R. J. (2001). *Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation* (Vol. Volume 12, p. 19). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

<sup>vii</sup> Utley, R. J. (2001). *Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation* (Vol. Volume 12, p. 19). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

<sup>viii</sup> Note: Psalm 89:27, 37

<sup>ix</sup> Elwell, W. A. (1995). *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Vol. 3, Re 1:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.