

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPT 8TH-9TH, 2018 // REVELATION 1:1-20

CREDIBLE WITNESS (REV 1:1-3)

THE TITLE PAGE OF REVELATION

Think of v1-2 as a title page of Revelation. This is The Revelation of Jesus Christ written by John to the followers of Jesus Christ.

- This revelation exclusively belongs to Jesus but is delivered to John so he can write down "whatever he saw...because the time is near."

SOON?

This book was written 1,950 years ago, so "...because the time is near" has to be taken from heaven's perspective. With God, a thousand years is like a day (2Pet. 3:8) so "soon" to God looks different than it does to us.

- **Revelation isn't to pinpoint exactly when Jesus returns, but to be sure we're ready.**

JOHN IS TO TESTIFY ON BEHALF OF THIS REVELATION

Think of John as a witness in a courtroom. His primary role is to simply observe and take note of what is coming. What he is writing will "bless those that read it" if they "keep what is written in it."

- The recipient of Revelation (us) is to do three things: read it, hear it, and take the message to heart.

FOCAL POINT (REV 1:4-8)

GRACE AND PEACE

John starts out with a very formal greeting similar to the works of Paul. Revelation begins and ends with the idea of grace, but the actual word is only used in v4.

- The source of this grace is the **Trinity**: "the One Who was, and is, and is to come," "Jesus the faithful witness," and "the seven spirits around the throne."

WAIT, THAT ISN'T IN THE CORRECT ORDER

It is easy to miss, but the common order of God's title "Who was, is, and is to come" is switched two times in chapter 1 to "Who is, was, and is to come."

- This is to show that **God is not confined to time and space**. Something important to remember when studying Revelation.

SEVEN SPIRITS AROUND THE THRONE?

We get our first symbol that we have to do a little work to decipher. This term only shows up in Revelation, but Isaiah 11:1-3 gives us clarity.

- The "seven spirits" most likely represent the **7 characteristics of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, reverence, and fear.**

ESTABLISHING WHO THE KING IS

John was an exile from the globally dominant Roman Empire. To establish Christ's superiority over all things, John reminds us that Jesus is the "**firstborn from the dead**," meaning **the only one to conquer death**. Jesus is also "**the ruler of the kings of the earth**," showing that **He is sovereign over all things** including Rome.

MORE THAN JUST IN CONTROL

Not only are we reminded that Jesus is in control, but John tells us that He "loves us and has set us free from our sins by His blood and made us kingdom priests."

- **At the core of Revelation is God's love for His people. Jesus died for our salvation and He has adopted us as heirs to His kingdom.**

THE THESIS OF REVELATION

v7 encompasses the narrative of Revelation and is also its first prophecy. It echoes Dan. 7:13 and Zech. 12:10 and gives a glimpse of the stark contrast between Jesus' 2nd coming as compared to His 1st.

"SO IT IS TO BE. AMEN."

When the "Alpha and Omega...the One Who is, Who was, and Who is to come" returns, the people who didn't follow Him will mourn. **Revelation gives no indication that His return will prompt repentance, only sorrow when people realize they were wrong.**

EXILED (REV 1:9-11)

"...YOUR BROTHER AND PARTNER IN AFFLICTION."

John wanted his readers to know that he was not above them in any way. The early Christians shared in suffering and needed great endurance in order to be faithful.

- This is the first mention in Revelation of **persecution**. John tells us he is on Patmos, a result of persecution from the Roman government.

PERSECUTION AND A GOOD GOD?

It can be very difficult to see the plan of God, especially in times of "affliction." God is in control, and in His wisdom, He allowed Domitian to persecute and exile John to Patmos.

- **Without these events, we wouldn't have this book in front of us. Though hard, we must trust that God knows what He's doing!**

"WRITE ON A SCROLL WHAT YOU SEE..."

The voice commanded John to write 7 letters to 7 churches located in Asia Minor (western Turkey): Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

- These are all churches that had been ministered to by Paul either directly or indirectly.

SEEING GOD (REV 1:12-16)

TURNING TO SEE WHO IS SPEAKING

As John turned around to see Who was speaking to him, he saw seven golden lamp stands. In the OT this would've been the candelabrum of the tabernacle (menorah) but in the NT it represented seven churches.

- **Just as the candles bring light, the local church is to also shine in the darkness** (Matt. 5:14).

"ONE WAS LIKE THE SON OF MAN"

Jesus, even in His glorified state, has the essential form of humans.

- **Golden sash and long robe** - Resembles OT High Priest. Our salvation comes only through Jesus. **Hair "white as wool, white as snow"** - Symbolic for respect, wisdom, and omniscience (knows everything). **Eyes like "Fiery Flame"** - God is a God of grace, but persecution of His people gives Him righteous anger against evil. **Feet "like fine bronze"** - This gives the imagery of an established king that has the world as His footstool (Is. 66:1). It also shows God's omnipotence (having unlimited power). **Voice "like cascading waters"** - A voice that must be obeyed and cannot be ignored. **In His hand He held 7 Stars** - In v20 these are explained to be the "angels of the seven churches." Some believe this means guardian angels of the churches, others believe it is pastors. The main point is God's sovereignty. **A sword came from His mouth** - This is obviously symbolic. The sword is His word and ability to judge mankind. **"...shining like the sun at full strength"** - Lastly, John says that His face was as bright as looking at the sun at noon. This is another reminder that John isn't just looking at a man, but God Almighty!

HOLDING STARS (REV 1:17-20)

LIKE A DEAD MAN

John responded to the sight of God similarly to Moses in Ex. 3, by falling at God's feet in fear. This isn't an unhealthy fear, but a reverence and understanding of how powerful God is.

- **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," (Prov. 1:7) and we really seem to lack it in our day.**

"DON'T BE AFRAID. I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST."

The same powerful hand that holds the seven stars reaches over to John to comfort and bless him. It is interesting, if we honor God we have no reason to be afraid of Him.

- Jesus reminds John, and us, that He has overcome death and holds "the keys of death and Hades."

BECAUSE HE LIVES, WE CAN TOO

The main point of John recording this revelation is to tell people that Christ is the Living One, and through Him we can have eternal life as well.

- **Through Christ we can overcome our sinful nature, rid ourselves of shame and guilt, and find joy in this life and for eternity!**

READY TO START THE JOURNEY

Now that Jesus has comforted John, he is ready to begin Revelation. Jesus clarifies what the stars and lamp stands represent. The stars are "angels" of the seven churches, and the lamp stands are the churches.

- Ch. 1-3 is intended to **warn churches to deal with their internal problems or they'll fall to external pressures.**

THE ALMIGHTY GOD / REVERSING THE SPOTLIGHT

- Chapter 1 gives us a glimpse of Who we are receiving this revelation from: God Who knows all and has unlimited power, the Creator of all things, the Risen Savior Who has shown us grace and forgiveness.
- **Do we revere and "fear" God?**
- God wants us to humble ourselves and address our garbage, because if we don't, our internal weaknesses will allow external pressures to overcome us.
- When it's everyone else's fault, **are we willing to turn the spotlight on our dark corners?**