

Sermon: Revelation and Praise

Text: [Revelation 1:1-8 ESV](#)

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Introduction: Over the next 9 weeks, my sermons will be looking at [Revelation 1-3](#) with the intent of covering the letters to the seven churches in Asia ([v. 4a](#)). These churches were in what is modern-day western Turkey. After two weeks in chapter 1, we will move on to the letters to the churches.

The book of Revelation is attributed to the Apostle John who wrote this from a Roman penal colony on the island of Patmos. It was written by way of the Holy Spirit's influence on John about 95 C.E. most certainly for the 1st century church, but also for the church down through the millenia to apply to their situations as well.

Conditions for the church around 95 C.E. could not have been much worse. Domitian, the Roman Emperor, was persecuting the Church, all the time insisting they worship him as their Lord and Savior and perform acts of worship in his honor. It is one thing to worship God when the culture allows it, but when you are commanded under penalty of even death to violate your faith and allegiance to God, then what? John is saying, in spite of how it may look, God has his people's present and future in His capable Almighty hands.

St. Augustine said this: "He who loves the coming of the Lord is not he who affirms it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near. It is he who, whether it be far or near, awaits it with sincere faith, steadfast hope, and fervent love."

I. How Revelation Works ([vv. 1-3](#))

[Revelation 1:1-2 ESV](#) ¹ The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants[slaves] 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.

The word *revelation* ($\alpha\pi\omicron\kappa\alpha\lambda\upsilon\phi\iota\varsigma$) is an unveiling, revealing

A. This revelation is to soon take place ([v. 1](#)).

There is a sense of urgency throughout Paul's writings, and John is no different. Something is taking place soon. The word ($\tau\alpha\chi\omicron\varsigma$) translated *soon* ([NIV, ESV](#)) and *shortly* ([KJV](#)) can also mean - quickly or suddenly as well.

One of the problems with the second coming of Christ is, of course, delay.

1. Maybe John was wrong or at least misunderstood the revelation he was given.
2. Peter had said a day with the Lord was like 1000 years.
3. People will mock/persecute us. How long do we have to wait/suffer?

Situations are easier many times when you can see an end to negative events.

Q. What is good about delay?

A. It allows more time for others to be saved. It also can make you appreciate it more when it happens. I am glad God has delayed Jesus' final coming so that people I know might still repent. Yet, for those who are waiting and suffering for Christ, it is easy to understand their cry from the end of the book: "Come, Lord Jesus!" - [Revelation 22](#)

B. Who is involved here ([vv. 1-2](#))?

This is Jesus' revelation, given to Him by God, and then to the angels to John, and through John to the Church of the 1st century and ultimately to us who can still read, hear, and obey God. When this book was written it was done with highly symbolic language that was full of signs to show us the way, as well as to obey and be prepared for what was coming. This is what is called apocalyptic language, much of which should never be understood literally - talking about "today" as well as the "end of days" (eschatology).

So we have God - Jesus - angels (messengers) - John (an eye-witness to Jesus' death, burial and resurrection) who has delivered this new and last word from God - and finally to the Church and literally anyone who has ears to hear. These recipients are called servants (lit. [δουλος](#), slaves) whose job it is to testify ([NIV, μαρτυρεω](#)), or bear record ([KJV](#)) and bore witness ([ESV](#)).

To what did John bear witness?

1. to the word of God
2. testimony of Jesus Christ
3. to all he saw

Even though we have the Word of God on the written page, but it must not stay there. It must be brought into our hearts and be heard then from our lips and observed by practice in our everyday lives. Dealing with God's Word is multi-sensory. "The intent of revelation is not to inform us about God, but to involve us in/with God. It begins a relationship which can save us, if we follow the Author of these great truths.

“This last word on scripture is, therefore, primarily a work of the imagination - that act of mind and emotion by which letters on paper are converted to voices and visions in us.”
(Reversed Thunder by Eugene Peterson, p. 13)

How many of us would be willing to die for our faith if called on to do so?

C. Revelation can bless its recipients (v. 3)

Revelation 1:3 ESV 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.

Here we encounter the first of seven beatitudes found in the book of Revelation. The “one reading” is a reference to the official reader in public worship patterned after the Jewish practice. This singular reader does not preclude others reading the same book and coming away with a blessing. Also it is “the ones hearing” or maybe “the ones who keep on hearing.” But there is no blessing when God’s word is not read, shared and finally obeyed.

“What is written” can certainly be understood as “it stands written.” This is the settled text of the O.T., and Revelation is the final word in the Bible for the Church. Any other proclaimed word, whether written or spoken, must be checked against the “settled” and final word from God through John, the Apostle.

The last book of the Bible is indeed a book of prophecy (**Rev. 22:10, 18, 19**) while being an apocalypse. And in the very next verse (**4**), we see it is also a letter or epistle.

II. John Delivers God’s Message and a Benediction (vv. 4bcd, 5-6).

Revelation 1:4b-6 ESV ^{4b} 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.

A. God wants us to experience grace and peace (v. 4b).

Grace and peace had become a common salutation or greeting for letters, but this is more than “hello” and hope you are well. We must always understand that our salvation is through grace given (as a gift) from God. We can never experience grace that brings salvation through anyone other than God. He is the one who both makes peace and gives it!

This is the timeless gift of God to those who will obey Him. This **verse 4** seems like a declaration from the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God has always been.

B. John reminds the people who God is (vv. 4cd -5abc).

He is the Eternal One: **“who is and who was and who is to come.”** This sounds a lot like the “I am” passages of John’s Gospel and even the prologue or beginning of that Gospel where **“the Word was God.”** This also echoes the words between Moses and God when Moses needed God’s name. God said tell Pharaoh and the people **I AM** sent you.

The phrase **“who is to come”** is literally translated **“the one coming,”** in other words, Christ’s coming is in process. At the ascension two men in white robes (angels) had told his disciples Jesus was coming back the same way he departed the earth.

The seven spirits are mentioned here as also the source of this blessing. Knowing what is commonly understood about numbers in this kind of literature, seven (7) must be more about completeness and perfection. We know God is one and there is certainly not 7 Holy Spirits, but simply one. R.C. Trench says this represents the seven-fold operation of God’s Holy Spirit and references: **Isaiah 11:2 ESV** ² And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

C. John reminds the people what Jesus has done (vv. 5d-6).

Our Savior’s name is Jesus and his title is Christ. Jesus literally means **“God saves,”** and Christ is not a last name because there were no last names then. Christ is a title (Greek) that means **“Messiah,”** or **“anointed one.”**

Jesus is a faithful witness - one who was determined to die for the sin of all humankind. Jesus is the **“first-born from the dead.”** Jesus died for us. He was resurrected for us to guarantee our own resurrection. **John 11:24-26 ESV** ²⁴ Martha said to him, **“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”** ²⁵ Jesus said to her, **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”**

Within the context of this book there was a myth that the emperor, Nero, had come back to life in the person of the Roman emperor, Domitian. Yet, that is exactly what it was - myth! Christianity is the only world religion to be tied to a real, historical resurrection. In light of Jesus’ victory over death once and for all, He can be called ruler of the kings of the earth. He is King of heaven and earth. Later He is called **“KING of kings and LORD of lords.”**

And as the ruler of kings on earth... **Philippians 2:9-11 ESV** 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Someday every knee will bow to the Coming One. This past week, we were watching the funeral for Queen Elizabeth and the establishing of Charles as the new King, yet King Charles has a King over him as we all do, and His name is Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Benediction takes over here as John asks his readers to recall what God has done:

v. 6 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.

Jesus is not Someone who “loved” (KJV) us; the fact is, Jesus’ love is not a past action, but a present reality. He loves us now and continues in that commitment to us. His love is not dependant on us.

Also in **verse 6** the KJV is incorrect when it translates λυσαντι “washed.” The NIV and ESV have a correct understanding of our being “freed” from our sins. “Freed” is in the aorist tense which means this is something that happened in the past and is still going on in the present. How are we set free, but by the precious blood of Jesus.

I am not picking on the KJV here, but there is a problem also with its translation and the underlying theology. Q. Why do you think it is impossible for us to be kings as the KJV reads? A. There can only be one King in a kingdom.

If we reign “with him” that can never mean we are equal to God.

The concept of the “priesthood of all believers” is not just a Reformation cry from Martin Luther, it is as old as Scripture. **I Peter 2:9 ESV** 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

The priesthood exists to serve God and everyone is a servant. In the NT Church there is no distinction between clergy and laity. It is our job to serve, glorify and recognize God’s sovereignty over us forever and ever. It sounds like Handel’s Messiah and the *Hallelujah Chorus* being played in the background.

Illus. General Eisenhower once rebuked one of his generals for referring to a soldier as “just a private.” He reminded him that the army could function better without its generals than it could without its foot soldiers. “If this war is won,” he said, “it will be won by privates.” In the same way, it is the common, servant-like believer who becomes the very backbone of the body of Christ. We are often overly impressed by our great evangelists and superstar Bible teachers and leaders who stand before large crowds, but if the glorious message of the person and work of Christ is to reach the world, it will be done by a church that functions as bondslaves of the Savior (cf. [Luke 12:15; 12:32; 2 Pet. 2:19; 1 John 3:17](#)). - [Bible.org](#)

III. Judgment Is Coming and Guaranteed (vv. 7-8).

Revelation 1:7 ESV 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[mourn] on account of him. Even so. Amen.

- A. How is He coming (v. 7a)? Jesus is coming back as he left - with a cloud and certainly in his glorified body.

Matthew 24:30 ESV ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

- B. Who will see this coming (v. 7bc)? Absolutely everyone will see Jesus return to earth. “Every eye” will see him, and this does not mean simply the church, but even those who pierced him.

No hidden rapture here, no secret second coming either.

- C. What will be the reaction (v. 7d)? all tribes of the earth will wail [mourn] on account of him. Tribes here are understood as linguistic groups. No group will escape the second and final coming or be exempt from punishment where deserved. There is no universal salvation.

Q. What would be the reason for wailing here?

- A. There will be a realization of the significance and occasion for His coming.

James Strauss says (p.32) “John is led by the Spirit to use a verb which means to smite, to beat or pound one’s self in mourning. This picture presents men wailing (beating on their chests), because they have rejected the only One who can forgive their sins.”

D. How can we be sure of His coming (vv. 7e - 8)? - because of His credentials

Revelation 1:8 ESV 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

A and **Ω** are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. There is nothing before or after God. He is eternal Creator/Redeemer.

The thing that is new in this last verse (1:8) is the word translated Almighty (παντοκρατωρ). This term is only used here and in **II Corinthians 6:18**.

II Corinthians 6:18 ESV 18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.” - a quote from II Samuel

The term, “Almighty,” was used frequently in the OT (LXX) as a descriptive title for the Lord God.

Strauss - In our age of power struggles we need to realize that power can be destructive as well as creative. Power can enable one to take what he wants or to give what he wants. Paul tells us that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.” - **Romans 1:16**

Conclusion: I pray we all can learn from the ancient Church and especially from God who continues to speak to us, the church of today, through His word and the help of the Holy Spirit.

“Jesus Christ is the central figure of the opening eight verses of Revelation. As the Source of revelation He is presented in **verse 1**. As the Channel of the word and testimony of God He is cited in **verse 2**. His blessings through His revealed word are promised in **verse 3**. In **verse 5** He is the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. He is revealed to be the source of all grace who loves us and cleanses us from our sins through His shed blood. He is the source of our royal priesthood who has the right to gather in Himself all glory and dominion forever. He is promised to come with clouds, attended with great display of power and glory, and every eye shall see the One who died for men. He is the Almighty One of eternity past and eternity future. If no more had been written than that contained in this introductory portion of chapter 1, it would have constituted a tremendous restatement of the person and work of Christ such as found in no comparable section of Scripture.” (John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1966, p. 40.)

INVITATION: