



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

"Are We Near Yet?"
(1:1-3)

Jesus Christ is coming back. On the day He ascended into Heaven in His resurrection body two men in white apparel suddenly appeared to Jesus' disciples and said,

Acts 1:11 ... "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Whoever these guys were – whether two angels or the two witnesses spoken of in Bible prophecy – they certainly knew what they were talking about when they stated Jesus Christ was coming back.

Consider the following biblical factoids:

1. For every prophecy of the first coming of Jesus there are eight prophecies of His Second Coming.
2. There are over one-thousand eight hundred and forty-five verses in the Old Testament that refer to Jesus Christ ruling over a kingdom on the earth.
3. Seventeen Old Testament books feature His rule on the earth as a prominent event.

4. There are at least three hundred eighteen references to Jesus Christ's Second Coming in the New Testament.
5. His return is mentioned in twenty-three of the twenty-seven books that comprise the New Testament.

When is Jesus coming back? He's coming back **shortly**!

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants - things which must **shortly** take place...

It is introduced as **the Revelation**. While the book contains a series of detailed visions that reveal many things about the future that is not what these opening words refer to at all. Revelation is the Greek word *apokalupsis* from where we get our word *apocalypse*. It means an uncovering or an unveiling.

Have you ever seen a sculpture or statue presented in a public ceremony? Normally it is covered, or veiled, until the artist pulls the veil off - *unveiling* it for everyone to see.

This book is the unveiling of **Jesus Christ**. One way He's unveiled is by the many names and titles given Him in this book. He is unveiled as:

1. The faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5).
2. The Almighty One (1:8).
3. The Alpha and the Omega (1:8; 21:6).
4. The Son of Man (1:13).
5. The Beginning and the End (1:8; 21:6).
6. The Son of God (2:18).
7. The One Who is holy and true (3:7).
8. The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness (3:14).
9. The Beginning of the Creation of God (3:14)
10. The Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5).
11. The Heir to King David's throne (5:5).
12. The Lamb of God – some twenty-eight times (5:6 – 22:3).
13. The Word of God (19:13).
14. The King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16).

15. The Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star (22:16).

We never want to lose sight of Jesus as we read and study this book.

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, **which God gave Him...**

God the Father **gave** Jesus, God the Son, this unveiling. In His first coming Jesus was veiled. He came as God but in human flesh. Even His own mother and half-brothers and sisters did not 'see' Him for who He was.

The apostle Paul put it like this:

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

That was Jesus in His first coming. His glory was veiled so He could accomplish the work of substituting Himself for our sins. Once there was a flash of that glory. On the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in His glory talking with Moses and Elijah.

Jesus died on the Cross, rose, and ascended. Now He can be unveiled by the Father. As Paul continued in Philippians,

Philippians 2:9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

Philippians 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

Philippians 2:11 and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God the Father gave Jesus this unveiling to **show His servants**. It was timely when it was first shown to Christians. The Revelation of Jesus Christ was written around 95AD. By that date many of the Churches were in a spiritual decline. (We'll read about it in the letters to the seven Churches in chapters two and three). There was a growing heresy that involved a group called the Nicolaitans. (We'll see them in the letters to the seven Churches). John was the last

living apostle and he had been exiled to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea.

Domitian was the Roman Emperor. He demanded all in the Empire worship him and call him lord. Christians of course would not; they could not when Jesus was their Lord! Persecution broke upon them like a flood. It ranged from ridicule to execution and everything you could suffer in-between.

What an encouragement the words of this Book would have been to those struggling, suffering believers. Thy kingdom **was** coming! In the mean time they could count on the sufficient grace of God to sustain them.

They could live daily in the confidence of **things which must shortly take place...** **Shortly** is *en tachei* meaning *quickly* or *suddenly*. Our word *tachometer* comes from it. When you floor your accelerator pedal the tachometer redlines. In the context of end times events it means that once they begin it will be pedal-to-the-metal.

I don't know why people think it is discouraging that these things have not yet begun. They somehow conclude that since they haven't begun they never will. Really the only way to think of it is that these **things** are closer to beginning than ever!

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants - things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John,

We're not told which **angel** delivered these things to John. No use speculating. It was **sent** from Heaven. This is the eternal plan of God consummating.

Signified can be understood as *sign-i-fied*, or *through signs or symbols*. I've heard people say that the Revelation cannot really be understood because it's full of signs and symbols. Stop and think for a moment. We use signs and symbols when we want to be clear. Signs and symbols are better than language. They are universal.

Why the confusion about the Revelation, then? In the four hundred four verses of the Revelation there are more than eight hundred Old Testament references. We tend to get confused because we do not see the Jewishness of this book. The signs and symbols are either from the Old Testament or they are defined in the Revelation itself.

John is the person who received this Revelation and penned the book. He is the apostle John, author of the Gospel bearing his name and three letters. Some critics suggest it was not the apostle John. It was. He identifies himself four times (1:1,4, & 9; 22:8). John is the only writer who calls Jesus the Lamb and he does it in his Gospel and in the Revelation.

He identified himself as a **servant**. He used the word for a voluntary bond slave – someone who chose slavery out of love for his Master.

Revelation 1:2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

The phrase **word of God** is used here as an expression to indicate this was a prophecy. You see this in the Old Testament as time and again the prophets declared that the word of God came to them.

The testimony of Jesus Christ reminds us that God has a complete, consistent, coherent plan. The things Jesus shared with John tie together many previous principles and prophecies.

In verse nine we'll see that he was transported forward to the Day of the Lord and witnessed the future. John saw these future things happen. *Please don't ask me how that works!*

Revelation 1:3 Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near.

It's hard to believe that so many people shy away from the Revelation. **It's the only book that promises you a blessing!**

The **reader** would in this case be the pastor who read the book to the Church. **Those who hear** would be the assembly of the saints. Both pastor and parishioner should then **keep those things that are written**

in it. It means to *pay attention* to them. And it's in the present tense: Keep reading, keep hearing, keep paying attention.

John anticipated that Christians would neglect the things written in this book! That is precisely what happened in the history of the Church.

An influential saint and scholar named Origen of Alexandria, living between 182AD – 251AD, concluded that the straightforward, literal meaning of many prophetic Bible passages were not true but were spiritual or figurative.

Augustine (354AD – 430AD) was a pre-eminent theologian in the early Church. Augustine viewed the age in which he lived as the millennium itself in which the "...kingdom of God (was) already manifest in the Church... the age between Pentecost and the return of Christ was the very millennium itself, marked by the ever increasing influence of the church in overturning evil..."

This view was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church and it is still their theology today.

When the Protestant Reformers did their thing they did not address the doctrine of last things. They continued, and most continue still, in the thinking of Origen, Augustine, and the Roman Catholic Church.

We take prophecy literally. One reason we do so is that whenever someone in the Bible interpreted prophecy he did so literally. Daniel, for instance, was reading the prophecy of Jeremiah. He came to the place where Jeremiah indicated that the captivity of the Jews in Babylon would last a period of seventy years. Daniel believed it to be literal. He realized that the time was almost through and set himself to being ready to return to Jerusalem.

Our time is almost through –

Revelation 1:3 Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; **for the time *is* near.**

The time is a specific period of time. What period is it? Daniel mentioned **the time of the end** five times in his book. **The time** is the time of the end Daniel saw in his own prophecy – the last days before the return of Jesus in His Second Coming.

Are we near yet? Nearer than when the Revelation was given! Two thousand years is nothing in the scheme of things. Our attitude should be that each passing moment brings these things nearer and nearer.



