

## ***No Fear of the Revelation***      Revelation 1:1-3

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

Revelation = *apokalupsis* > Apocalypse = “an unveiling”

Of Jesus Christ = He is the central figure of the unveiling. “Of Jesus Christ” could mean either that Jesus was “being revealed” or that Jesus was the “one revealing.” In a sense, it is both. Jesus is revealed in Revelation as he is – the glorified Christ (1:12-16). He is worthy to open the scrolls to reveal the seven seals (5:1-6). In chapter 12, His destiny is established, and in chapter 19, Jesus returns in His glorious appearing to establish a new heaven and new earth. And yet, in verse 2, John confirmed that this unveiling is the “testimony of Jesus.” (Verses 4-8 contain John’s testimony, an eyewitness testimony, to the identity of Jesus. We will unpack these verses later in October in a sermon entitled, “*Whose Revelation is it?*”)

That God gave Him to show His servants = God is the divine source of all that unfolds in Revelation. God gave this revelation to His only begotten Son – Jesus, who is then one of three intermediaries unveiling the message. Jesus is the divine messenger, the angel the heavenly messenger and John human messenger.

To show His servants what must soon take place = *techai* (soon) can mean certainly or shortly. “His servants” = the seven churches, representing the church of all eras. When we engage the words “soon” and “near”, we look backward from our vantage point and conclude that for us, “soon” and “near” means certainly. But we stand in the present looking forward, and therefore, we must conclude that “soon” and “near” may certainly mean “shortly”. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus warned in Matthew 25:14 – “*Therefore be alert, because you don’t know either the day or the hour.*” Revelation challenges us that the end time is certain and near. It is coming (a certainty) and it could be very soon (shortly).

He made it known by sending His angel = Revelation declares historical truth (Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead) using picture language to unveil what soon must take place. The unveiling is made known through signs, symbols, analogies, hyperboles, figures of speech, cryptic numbers, and visions. For example, Jesus is portrayed as the “lamb of God and the lion of Judah.” Is Jesus a literal animal? No. Lamb is a symbol of Jesus’ sacrificial death whose death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins. (John the Baptist – “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world). Lion is a symbol of Jesus’ strength and control, the one who will occupy God’s throne (Revelation 5:5) The woman who sits on seven hills does not depict an extremely large woman but a symbol for the city of Rome, built on seven hills. The New Jerusalem is a cube, not because we will ride elevators in eternity, but to depict God’s eternal presence in the holy city (the holy of holies in the ancient Jerusalem temple was the shape of a cube). Pictures unveil historical truth, but we should look for what the image, symbol, or vision represents instead of always literal interpretation.

To His servant John = All evidence points toward John, the beloved Apostle, author of the Gospel of John and the epistles of 1, 2, and 3 John. He lived longer than all the other Apostles. Most date Revelation approximately the year 95, the last year of the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian. In verse 4, he introduces himself as the transcriber of this unveiling. Later in verse 9, he identifies himself: “*I, John, your brother and partner in the affliction, kingdom, and endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island*

*called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*” John is a fellow sufferer, a partner in affliction and endurance. He has been banished to Patmos, a Mediterranean island 40 miles to the west of Ephesus, the great church planted by Paul. His exile was caused by his commitment to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever he saw = John is the one called, commissioned, and designated to write whatever he saw. So, from this introduction, John will write what he sees and who he sees. (Read 1:9-20)

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it = Revelation is a book of prophecy. Biblical prophecy often spawns two reactions: Leave it alone or be obsessed with it. Some view Revelation as the weirdest book in the Bible and only a select few can understand it, so they leave it alone. Others become so obsessed with it – they are all in to end time predictions. Revelation read, heard, and obeyed, in its proper context, will be a blessing – unlocking the mystery of history, bringing sense to difficulty, and stabilizing chaotic times.

Because the time is near = the time is imminent, not immediate. Jesus Christ can come at any moment. Prophecy emphasizes the imminent return of Jesus. We are not waiting for some main event to occur before Jesus comes back. Christians are people of hope who live on the edge of eternity – ready. Paul, Peter, James, and John all believed that the end of things is near, the Lord’s coming is near, and we are living in the last hour (1 Corinthians 10:11; Philippians 4:5; 1 Peter 4:7; James 4:8; 1 John 2:18).

#### Affirmations:

1. Revelation is a book of hope and encouragement. No matter how difficult and desperate and discouraging life unfolds for us in the here and now, Revelation reminds and encourages us that Jesus is coming back soon and very soon. The Second Coming of Jesus will be so different from His first coming. Jesus came the first time for the purpose of dying = crucifixion. He is coming again to a coronation = king of Kings and lord of lords. His Second Coming will signal the defeat of His enemies, the rescue of His people, and the restoration of His creation. One day God will judge evil and live among His people in a new heaven and new earth. To persevere through life and to remain steadfast in the face of hardship and difficulty requires hope (Titus 2:14 – “the blessed hope”) Revelation encourages us to hold on to a sure and certain hope in a world often hostile and mean toward Christians.

2. Revelation declares that the future is in God’s hands, and the best is yet to be. God has always been in control and the future is controlled by Him. Although we learn from the past and live in the present, as followers of Christ and heirs of eternal life, we look forward to a certain future. I want to know, don’t you, God’s plan for the this universe in which we are privileged to live.

3. We have more reason to believe than any other generation before us that Jesus could return soon and launch the end times. I’m more and more convinced that our generation, our culture, our worldview, is more common to the first century than any other generation before us.

4. We know the end of the story – in the end, WE WIN.