

# A revelation of Jesus who loves us

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     So Revelation chapter 1 and verse 1. The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.
- He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw. That is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.
- Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia, grace and peace to you from him who was, sorry, him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.
- To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father. To him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.
- Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all peoples on earth will mourn because of him.
- [ 1 : 2 7 ]     So shall it be. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. Well, please do keep that open as we look at it together.
- I was chatting to a lady recently, and she was telling me about how in one particular country, at the moment, if you are the pastor of a church, and if you are unwilling to subscribe to the government-run church, there's a very real danger that you will be put into prison as a result of not being willing to subscribe.
- And so there is this growing wave of opposition, of persecution, not just for pastors, of course, but for Christians who are wanting to live out their faith and speak for Jesus in that particular place.
- And as you hear that, I wonder what you would say to somebody in that situation. What would you want them to take to heart that would enable them to keep going when they're facing that kind of opposition or that kind of persecution?
- The reason that comes to mind at the moment is because as John is writing this letter, this book of Revelation, he's writing at a time when the church was facing opposition and facing growing persecution.
- [ 2 : 5 1 ]     John himself was in exile as a result of preaching the gospel, of clinging to Jesus. The church itself was under growing persecution from different emperors, so like Nero and Domitian.
- So Christian businesses were being boycotted, insults were being hurled, some were being thrown into prison, and others would even have been killed for their faith. And so it's interesting that as John writes this letter, in verse 3 he says, Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy.

Blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it. So John sets out from the beginning that what is good for us, or what would be good for the church in that situation, is to take particular things, particular truths to heart.

He wants them to realize the opposition that you're facing, the persecution that you're facing. If you take these things to heart, it will enable you to keep going.

And so if what John is saying to the church here, the churches in the book of Revelation, is sufficient for them to keep going through strong opposition and strong persecution, it is certainly sufficient for us with what we face day to day to enable us to keep going, whether that's tension in relationships or temptation, whether it's financial pressure, whatever it is we may be facing, what John wants us to take to heart will be good for us.

[ 4 : 30 ] And so we want to think about what John wants us to take to heart. There's three that I'm going to draw out from this passage, three things that John would have us take to heart that would be good for us.

And here's the first one. It would be good for us to take to heart that Jesus will win soon. It'd be good for us to take to heart that Jesus will win soon.

We need to see Jesus. In verse one, John says, the revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants, that is the church, what must soon take place.

He made it known by sending his angel to his servant, John, who testifies to everything that he saw. Now, as you read the book of Revelation, in one sense, you do get an idea of what John is like.

And we know that John was the brother of James. He was the son of Zebedee. He was an apostle of Jesus. He would have seen Jesus' power. He would have heard Jesus' authoritative teaching.

[ 5 : 34 ] He would have been with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He would have eaten the bread, drunk the wine. He would have seen Jesus on the cross. And not only that, but he was at the empty tomb and saw the risen Lord Jesus after he had come back from the dead and saw him ascended into heaven.

And you're thinking, wow, imagine we have John's words to us. And as we dwell on that fact that we have the words of this man from the first century, we realize that he does not want us to see John.

John doesn't want us to see John. John wants us to see Jesus. And there's an angel in the mix here as well. In verse 1, he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.

Now, when you think angel, you need to think heavenly postman or heavenly messenger. So this angel, which brings God's message to God's people.

And what's striking again is that although angels, when they show up in the Bible, are frightening prospects, the angel does not want to be the center of attention.

[ 6 : 45 ] The angel does not want us to see the angel. The angel wants us to see Jesus. We need to take this to heart that what we need to see, who we need to see is Jesus.

This book is a revelation from Jesus Christ. And so as we work back upstream from John to the angel to Jesus and God, we realize, yes, these are John's words, human words, but they are God's words to us as he makes clear in verse 2.

That is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And so we realize that, yes, it is a revelation from Jesus Christ in the sense that Jesus is the one who is revealing these things that are to happen to us.

But it is also a revelation of Jesus Christ. You could easily translate it as a revelation of Jesus Christ in the sense that it is Jesus who is being revealed to us.

And when you read through the book of Revelation, you realize, yes, it tells us many, many things. But front and center is Jesus. We need to see Jesus.

[ 7 : 50 ] I remember preaching in Mississippi years ago in the pulpit. It just had this little bronze plaque. And inscribed on the plaque was these words, Sir, we would see Jesus.

Taken from John's gospel, a reminder to the preacher, what people need to see is Jesus. What I need to see is Jesus. And John makes that very clear to us from the outset that what we need to see, what we need to take to heart is Jesus.

This is what the church needed in John's day. It needed to see Jesus. As one author puts it, A church with its back to the wall fighting for survival needs more than moral exhortation and pious entreaty.

It must see Christ. And not only do we see Jesus in the book of Revelation, but we see that Jesus wins. Jesus wins. There's so much else going on.

And yet have we missed this? We've missed the point. The fact that Jesus wins. He wins over sickness. He wins over suffering. He wins over sin.

[ 8 : 58 ] He wins over death. He wins over Satan. He wins over all the enemies who would oppose him in his rightful rule and reign. Over every earthly power, over every spiritual power, Jesus wins.

He will win. And because he will win, we will win. He will give us to that victory one day over suffering and sickness and death and Satan and sin.

And he will do away with evil in a way that will take our breath away. And the church in John's day needed to hear this as they face this all-powerful Roman Empire.

And we in our day need to hear this when we are tempted to give up. For whatever reason it is, we don't even need an empire facing us down to be wanting to give up sometimes.

If you're like me, you need something far less than that at times to give up. Or to be tempted to give up. I cannot do this. I can't keep going.

[ 10 : 06 ] I'm not able. And John says to us, you're right. But Jesus is. Jesus will win. And because he will win, you will win. You need to take this to heart, John says.

Not only that he'll win, but he'll win soon. Verse 1. What must soon take place? At the end of verse 3, because the time is near.

Now, as John uses language like that, our thoughts, of course, think to the future. And it's clear in the book of Revelation that John is writing at times about the future.

But before we think about the future, we need to think about the past. And the reason I say that is because John is absolutely soaking in the Bible.

He's soaking in the Old Testament. He's immersed in it. He oozes it. If you cut the Apostle John, to borrow a phrase, he bleeds Bible, which is the Old Testament.

[ 11 : 11 ] And here what he's doing is he's picking up on phrases from a prophet in the Old Testament. So in Daniel, the language that Daniel uses is language like revealing and showing and signifying and concerning.

The exact same language that John is using. Listen to this, for example. This is in Daniel, back in the Old Testament. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar.

Sorry, there is a God in heaven who reveals. There's the revelation word. Mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come or in the latter days.

Or listen to this. Your majesty was lying there. Your mind turns to things to come. Or listen to this. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future.

Now, as John picks up on this type of language from Daniel, what he does is he changes some of the language to emphasize not so much how much future it is, but how it's very near.

[ 12 : 14 ] It's very close, John says. And the reason he says that is not so much that we can put it on a calendar, not so much that we can set a reminder on our phone.

His point is, look, we're so close. We're so near. So much has happened. Look at all that God has already done.

I've seen Jesus in the flesh. He died. He was raised from the dead. He's ascended to heaven. The crucial events of salvation history has happened.

We're so close. We're so near. Don't give up now, is what John is saying to us. It's kind of reminiscent of when Jesus says in the Gospel of Mark, the time has come.

The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news. Yes, there's more to happen, but the crucial events have happened. You're nearly there. Keep going.

[ 13 : 12 ] Keep pursuing Jesus. It is good for us to take to heart that Jesus will win soon. It's like if you went up to a marathon runner in Cork City next summer when the marathon is on, and they're on mile two, and you jog along beside them for a minute, and you say, you know, you have another 22 miles to go.

And they think, oh. And at best, they slow down, and at worst, they give up. But if you come alongside the one who's at mile 23, and you say to them, you're nearly there.

Look at all that has gone before. We're so close. What's that going to do? It's going to put wind in their sails. You're going to win because Jesus has won, and he will win.

It's so close. It puts wind in our sails to hear this. This is what pastors in prison in parts of the world need to hear. Christians in prison in parts of the world need to hear.

Keep going. Jesus will win soon, and because he will win, you will win. He is the one who will enable you.

[ 14 : 23 ] Spouses struggling to love one another. We're nearly there. Keep going in the strength of Jesus. Employees wondering why you keep living for Jesus in work.

We're nearly there. He will win soon. John wants us to take this to heart, that Jesus will win soon.

He also wants us to take to heart this second point. He wants us to take to heart his relationship to us. He wants us to take to heart Jesus' relationship to us.

John is writing to seven churches. In verse 4, he says, John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia. Now, Asia is modern-day Turkey, so the Asia that John is referring to there.

And there was more than seven churches in Asia at the time that John was writing. You'll see in chapters 2 and 3 that, yes, he does write to seven specific churches.

[ 15 : 24 ] But the reason he picks up on seven is because seven, in John's mind and in biblical terminology, is often representing the idea of completeness or fullness.

So what John is doing is saying, yes, I'm writing to seven churches, but this is for the complete church. This is for the full church. This is not just for the church in John's day or for the church at the end of time.

This is for the church all over the world and at all times. And you get some of that in the letters to the churches when it has this repeated phrase, he who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

That's what God would say to us this morning, to hear what John is saying to the churches because it is to these seven churches, but it is for his church.

And what does John say about how God relates to the church? What does he want to take to heart about this?

[ 16 : 25 ] He says it's a relationship of grace. Verse 4, grace to you. A relationship where we are not treated as we deserve.

A relationship where we are not punished for the sins that we have done over our lives. A relationship where we receive what we don't deserve through the Lord Jesus.

John says to the church, this is how God relates to you. It is in grace that he has forgiven you through what Jesus has done.

He hasn't ignored your sin. He hasn't overlooked it. He hasn't downplayed it. He has taken it seriously. So seriously, in fact, that Jesus has gone to the cross to deal with it.

And because of that, we receive from him all the blessings that he deserves. John says, God relates to you, church, in grace.

[ 17 : 36 ] Not only that, but he relates to us in peace. Verse 4, grace and peace to you. Church Nero may be at war with you, but God isn't.

God is at peace with you. God is pursuing your spiritual peace, your spiritual flourishing under his fatherly care.

He is relating to you in grace and in peace. This is how God relates to us. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Father, in verse 4, grace and peace to you from him who is and who was and who is to come.

This is God the Father who has always been there, not just been there, but the Lord of all history. And that is true also of the Son and the Spirit. But Jesus here specifies it of the Father that he is not bound by time or space.

And it is from God the Father that we receive grace and peace. And it is from God the Spirit that we receive grace and peace. In verse 4, from the seven spirits before his throne, or as the footnote puts it, the sevenfold spirit.

[ 18 : 51 ] And you think, has John lost the run of himself here? What about the Holy Spirit? This is the Holy Spirit. But John is referring to the Holy Spirit in this symbolic way, this seven number of completeness and fullness.

That it is God the Holy Spirit who communicates to us this grace and peace from God the Father through God the Son. And it is grace and peace to you from God the Son.

In verse 5, from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Jesus is the faithful witness.

Jesus, you look at Jesus and you see God the Father. You listen to Jesus and you hear God the Father. This is what God would have us hear. Jesus said he testified to what God would have him say and what God would have him do.

Not only is Jesus the faithful witness, he's the firstborn from the dead. Which means, as a result of Jesus being raised from the dead, this is the beginning of the new creation.

[ 19 : 55 ] This is the start of it all in the resurrection of Jesus. The death has lost its grip on him. He has won. And he is the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Jesus raises them up. Jesus dethrones them. They don't go an inch further than Jesus allows. Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth. And it is from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit that we are related to with grace and with peace.

And John is saying to us, if you take that to heart, it gives you such ballast. It gives you such steadiness.

It gives you such stability in your life. Whatever else anybody may say, whatever else anybody may think, to take to heart the fact that the God of all creation relates to you with grace and peace.

That is good for us to take to heart. When ideas about God bubble up in our minds and our hearts, that he's out to get me today because I stubbed my toe against the corner of the cupboard in the kitchen.

[ 21 : 15 ] What? Where did you hear this? That's not from the Bible. God relates to his people, to those who have trusted in him with grace and peace.

He is not out to get you. He is not at war with you. He's not waiting for you to slip up. He has done everything through the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be in this relationship of grace and peace towards his people.

It is good for us to take to heart his relationship to us. And lastly, what we want to take to heart is our relationship to him.

Our relationship to him. We want Jesus to have all the glory in our lives. Verse 6. In the middle of the verse, to him be glory.

We want him to have all the honor, all the praise. We want to give him glory in how we live. That we live according to what he calls us to do.

[ 22 : 29 ] We live according to what he commands us to do. We want to make much of him. We want to speak much of him. We want to think much of him. That others would see in us how great God is.

Get a glimpse of that in how we treat them. In how we speak to them. In how we relate to them. We want God to have the glory. Not only to have the glory, but to have the power.

Verse 6. To him be glory and power. Or authority, to put it another way. We want him to rule over our lives.

That we would live according to his commands. That we would live under his good authority. That as we read his word, we want to be asking this question. How should this change how I'm thinking?

How I'm speaking? How I'm behaving or acting? He has promised that he will shape us and change us through his word. And so if we are living under his authority, when we read his word, it's going to bring about change in our lives.

[ 23 : 38 ] If we stay the same from year to year, we're missing something. There's a danger then that we might be taking what we like and leaving what we don't.

If we're going to live with Jesus as the one who has all authority in our lives, it's going to change our lives. Change our hearts. And we want him not just to have the glory and the power, but to have it forever.

Verse 6. To him be glory and power forever and ever, John says. Why would we want this? If you're sitting here and you're thinking, I don't know Jesus.

I don't love Jesus. I have no interest in Jesus. Why would anybody sign their lives away to Jesus? To give him all the glory, to give him all the authority in your life.

Well, here's why. Verse 5. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood. Here's why we want God to have the glory.

[ 24 : 36 ] Because he loves us. And he has shown his love for us in this. That he has freed us from our sins. Jesus has freed us from our sins by his blood.

This is how much Jesus loves you. That he has gone to the cross for you. In order to free you from your sin. In order to free me from my sin. To free us from the power of sin over us.

He has taken the throne in our lives. So that sin no longer has the dominion or the power or the authority over us. So that once we were not able to not sin.

Now if we know him and love him as our Lord. We are able to not sin. We are able to say no. Not perfectly. But one day we will be not able to sin.

And that day is when he will return. He has freed us from sin. Through his death. Through his life giving death.

- [ 25 : 45 ] As he has taken the consequences. The punishment of our sin on himself. And not only has he freed us from what we deserve.

He has brought us into a place that we don't deserve. Verse 6. He has made us to be a kingdom. And priests to serve his God and Father.

He has made us a kingdom. He has brought us into his kingdom. As we live for our King Jesus. And he has made us priests. Priests in the Old Testament are those who could come into the presence of God.

Through the shedding of the blood of an animal. We can come into the presence of God. Through the shedding of Jesus' blood once and for all.

We come into his presence because of Jesus' finished sacrifice for all his people. And the more we take this to heart.

- [ 26 : 44 ] The more we will give him glory and power in our lives. The more we take to heart the fact that he has loved us. He loves us. He has freed us from sin.

By the shedding of his blood. The more we will give him the glory. The more we will give him the power. The more we will give him the reins. Of our life.

The more we will let go. Of one area after another. Where before we didn't want him to have the power. But we realize. I can trust him.

I can trust him with this. Because he has died for me. And if he has died for me. Whatever he does. With this power in my life. Will be for my good.

And you know it will be a process. As we release the reins. So that Jesus might have all the glory and power in our lives.

- [ 27 : 44 ] But one day we will do this perfectly. One day we will give him the glory he deserves. The glory he's worthy of. The power that he's worthy of in our lives.

Verse 7. Look he is coming. With the clouds. And every eye will see him. Even those who pierced him. And all peoples on earth will mourn. Because of him. John here is quoting from two prophets in the Old Testament.

So Daniel. Quoting from Daniel as he paints this picture. Of one who has been given all authority. All glory. All dominion. And an everlasting kingdom.

As he describes Jesus. And he's quoting from Zechariah. Zechariah. Where people will see Jesus for who he is. And they will mourn.

Now when Zechariah says that. The idea is that people would mourn. In repentance. As they realize what they have done to Jesus. And in one sense.

- [ 28 : 48 ] You can see that in the gospels. As the soldier at the cross. As truly this man was the son of God. And you know perhaps even for us. When we see Jesus on that day.

If we have trusted in him. There will be a little moment of mourning. I can't believe that I treated him like that. I can't believe that I didn't give him more glory.

More power in my life. That will quickly give way to joy. But for some that mourning. On that day will be a mourning. As they realize Jesus is who he claimed to be.

That he has all power. That he has all dominion. And it will be too late then. To find repentance. It will be too late to turn back to him. And so today.

If you don't recognize that Jesus has all power. And all dominion. And deserve to have all glory in your life. Today is the moment to turn to him. Rather than putting it off.

- [ 29 : 50 ] Rather than waiting any longer. Who else would you want to have as Lord of your life? As this one who has loved us.

And has freed us from our sins. By his blood. John says we should take to heart. Our relationship to him.

That he is to have all the glory and power. I remember a couple of years ago. A friend of mine who was struggling. Just to cope. Mentally and emotionally.

And he texted. Another friend who was up in. A city far far away. And at the drop of a hat. This other friend drove. Probably 160 miles.

Something like that. To be with. My friend who was struggling. And what that showed was. Just this deep love. And compassion.

[ 30 : 46 ] For this guy. Now I'm sure. The friend who drove. Listened. And heard. What was going on in this guy's. Heart and mind and life.

But I'm sure also. That when he spoke. Whether he had. Easy things to hear. Or more challenging things to hear. I'm sure that my friend.

Who was struggling. Will have listened to him. Will have heard him. And the reason I know that. Is because he must have been thinking. If this guy is willing. To drop everything.

And drive. 160 miles. To be with me. Because he loves me that much. I'm going to listen. I'm going to hear what he has to say. To me.

And what John is saying to us. Is that we should treasure. Treasure the fact that Jesus. Should have all glory. And power. Who else can compare to him.

[ 31 : 42 ] Has anyone else done this for you. That they would lay down their life for you. We want to take this to heart. We want to ask the question. Does he have all glory.

And honor in my life. We want to scan our lives. And think is there somewhere. That I'm just not willing to let go. That I want to have the power. That I want to have the glory.

If that is the case. The solution is this. Not to try harder. But to see again. The cross of Jesus. Where he has loved us. And he has died for us.

Because he has done that. We can trust him. Implicitly. With every part of our lives. And so John wants us to take to heart. These things as we begin.

This letter. This book of revelation. He wants us to take to heart. The fact that Jesus will win. Soon. He wants us to take to heart. Our relationship to him.

[ 32 : 40 ] It's one of us giving him glory and power. Because of his relationship to us. Which is one of grace. And peace. Let's take a moment to pray.

And to ask for God's help. Father we do ask Lord. That you'd help us to see Jesus. For who he is. That is what we desperately need. We need to see him as the one who has loved us.

And has shed his blood. For us. We need to see that more. And more. And more. In our lives. That we might grasp it deeper. And deeper. So that. He might have the glory.

And power in our lives. That are his. Objectively. All authority. In heaven and earth. Is his. But Lord. Help us to live accordingly. In Jesus name. Amen.