

Hello, my name is: Revelation

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[0:00] This morning we're starting a study of the book of Revelation. It's very easy to find. Last book of your Bible. And we're going to be in Revelation chapter 1, verses 1 through 3.

It's part of what's called the prologue of the book. But as you're turning there, I want you to imagine something. Imagine hosting a party at your house for your neighbors.

You've set a date. They're coming to your home. And as they're coming into your house, you're standing inside the front door. And right next to you is a table. And on that table is full of those, hello, my name is, name tags.

Do you know what I'm talking about? People are coming in. They're writing their names down.

They're going to mingle. La, la, la, la, la. And then you see him. Or it.

Something is walking up to your front door. You know it's someone because it's got two legs. But you're not sure what's going on.

[1:05] Everything about him is odd, even bizarre. You're not sure if you want this someone in your home.

As this someone gets closer, you hear him speaking over and over and over again.

He's saying the same things seemingly over and over and over again. Tattooed on his body are numbers.

One particular number shows up in prominence. It's the number seven. There's the word number seven. You see? It's on his neck.

It's on his hand. It's on his body. There's other numbers. Twelve. One hundred forty-four thousand. Ten. Ten. And you immediately sense, well, those numbers mean something to him.

[2:03] I just don't know what they mean. You can't really see his face because his hair is so heavy and dark.

It's hard to really see. And his hair is like that lead guitarist for Guns N' Roses, the Slash, if you remember that guy. Just thick hair.

It's kind of mysterious. Comes up to your front step. And you can see his eyes.

And as soon as you lock eyes, something happens in you. You're immediately overcome with a sense of internal strength.

You're immediately overcome by this sense of confidence. This sense of hope. You're ready to tackle anything. Because you've locked eyes with this one who's now walked up to your front door.

[3:09] You let him in and he leans over on the table and he starts filling out. Hello, my name is? Hello, my name is?

Revelation. The book of Revelation feels like the abstract art wing of the Chicago Art Institute.

You know that there's a lot of meaning in the pages of this book. But oftentimes you're like, I have no idea what this means. So you just avoid the wing. You don't go into the abstract art wing and experience the glories that it possesses.

This morning, the book of Revelation has come to your front door. And he is not bringing doom and gloom, just doom and gloom. He is bringing blessing and he's bringing strength.

He is coming proclaiming good news of Jesus Christ. He has something to show you. And so we're going to look at just a section of what's called the prologue of the book of Revelation this morning.

[4:25] You could split the book of Revelation into the prologue, which is chapter 1, verses 1 through 8. And then there's the epilogue at the end of the book of Revelation, which is chapter 22, 6 through 21.

And everything else in between is the body. It's a giant letter. And so we're just going to look at a section of the prologue this morning. 1, 1 through 3.

Would you hear the word of God? The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.

He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 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. This morning what I want to show you from these three verses is that you, Christian, you, servant of the living God, you need this book.

[5:39] It's not an optional book. It's not a book to avoid. You need it. And I'm going to show you four reasons why you need this book from this text.

And here they are. You need this weird writing. Two, you need its blessing.

Three, you need help. Four, you need to see the Jesus that John saw. And so let's begin our study of the book of Revelation by saying you need its unique, even weird writing.

Notice in verse one, it starts with the revelation of Jesus Christ. And the book of Revelation takes its name from those first two words.

The revelation of Jesus Christ. Literally, it's the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. Now, most of us, when we hear the word apocalypse or apocalyptic, we start thinking in terms of cataclysmic destruction.

[6:52] Recently, there was a bus crash down in Mexico, very tragic. And one of the persons who survived it when he was coming out of the bus and saw just the mass devastation.

He described it by saying it was apocalyptic. And what he was saying was, it's devastating. But when we come to Revelation 1.1, we don't read the mass devastation of Jesus Christ.

It's the apocalypse. The revelation of Jesus. And what apocalypse means, it means unveiling. To reveal something that has been hidden.

Who's a Fixer Upper fan? Chip and Joanna Gaines. I'd like to spend a half a day with Chip Gaines. I think I would basically laugh all day long.

But basically, what Fixer Upper is, is at the end of the show, there is this revealing of a house that they've been working on all episode long.

[8:00] Think of it as the Fixer Upper apocalypse. There's this couple. They come. They're looking for houses. Oftentimes, they're coming from a hard situation.

Sometimes not. The Gaines say, hey, how about this house? They're like, let's get this house. It's a dump. And so they're like, we're going to fix it up. And as they're fixing it up, this couple can't see it. And so weeks and months go by as they're fixing up this house. And at the end, they bring this couple to the house. And they've got these two huge billboards on wheels.

And between those two billboards, there's this one big picture of the house before they did any work on it. And then one of the Gaines says, are you ready to see your Fixer Upper? And then simultaneously, they open the billboards.

They reveal this glorious house. The Fixer Upper apocalypse. You know why I watch that show?

[9:03] The moment they open it up and I see their expressions. Overwhelming joy. Overwhelming joy.

They see what has been being worked on for them. Revelation is God, through John, pulling back life as we typically see it so that we can see the glories behind it.

What God has been doing all along. Revelation is not the only apocalyptic book in our Bible or kind of portion of book.

Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah. They all have apocalyptic sections too. And what's unique about apocalyptic literature is that it unveils the reality of things unseen with very vivid images.

Unusual symbols. Unusual symbols. Unusual symbols. Cryptic numbers. And oftentimes, that can make the average everyday Joe very uncomfortable. Even fearful.

[10:14] So you avoid it. Well, God has apocalyptic literature. He has this in our Bibles. It's not a mistake. He uses it to communicate profound truths through very vivid pictures.

Here's what you need to know about apocalyptic literature and about the book of Revelation.

Revelation, God wants you to show you something. He wants you to see something. And the way

that you're going to see it is by hearing it, by reading it.

He has things to show. I mean, just look at verse 1. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants.

If you look down at verse 2, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. One of the things that we're going to see over and over again in the book of Revelation is John saying, I saw this.

I saw it. Behold. See. I witnessed. There's something that God has for us to see.

[11:28] And then when you come to a passage like Revelation 12 and there's this woman on a beast, you're kind of like, what do I see? What is this? What am I seeing?

What are these images and numbers referred to? Well, all of a sudden you feel like you need a degree in eschatology to even open up the book of Revelation and you don't.

There's a story of a bunch of seminary students who are playing basketball at a church gym. The janitor had opened up the gym to them at no cost. And while these seminary students are playing basketball, the janitor had his Bible open.

And he's reading the book of Revelation. One of the seminary students picks up on it and says, what are you reading? Janitor, well, the book of Revelation. The student was kind of like, well, I just took my ST607 class and you know what?

My seminary prof still doesn't understand what the book of Revelation is about and neither do I. How are you making sense of it? And that janitor just said very simply, you know what?

[12:34] Revelation is all about Jesus winning in the end. That's what it's about. You don't need a degree to understand with confidence what the book of Revelation is revealing.

Even its images, even its symbols, even its numbers. And so let me tell you real quick how we're going to navigate some of these things so that you have a sense of confidence moving forward.

When we approach the book of Revelation, we're going to have three things in our interpretive kind of pocket that we're going to use in order to make sense of all this stuff.

First is this. We're going to be looking for explanations of these symbols and of these kind of interesting creatures from within the text itself.

So take a look at it with me. If you open up to chapter 1 and you're looking at verse 12, we read, this is John seeing a vision. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And on turning, I saw seven golden lampstands.

[13:36] In the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man. And if you're reading that, you start asking the question, seven lampstands, what is that all about? And then he'd go on to verse 16. In his right hand, he held seven stars.

And you're like, seven lampstands, seven stars? What is all that about? I think I want to go home now. Now, if you just kind of hang on in there and you go down to verse 20, Jesus, the risen Christ, is speaking.

And he says, as for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

He tells us what it means. That's one way we're going to understand some of the symbols and numbers from the book of Revelation. It's right there in the text. We're going to have angels helping us out.

The other way, the second way, is this. The Old Testament is our ally. Much of the symbolism and numbers and images that we find in the book of Revelation, they are tethered to something back in the Old Testament.

[14:51] Take, for example, the number seven. Seven shows up many times in the book of Revelation.

And so when you hear the word seven, you need to be thinking a certain way. What is the earliest reference to the number seven in your Bible? The seventh day of creation.

It's when things were brought to completion. And so when we see these sevens repeated, there is this sense of fullness of completion that's trying to be communicated through that.

And what I want to do is as we go through, I want to help you make the connection. Help you understand when John refers to this woman on a beast in Revelation chapter 12, what is he talking about?

There's linkages back into the Old Testament that give light to it. It brings clarity. The third thing that will help us understand this text is the basic understanding of the historical context going on in the first century.

[16:01] This book was originally written to seven churches in Turkey in the first century. Particular people at a particular place at a particular time dealing with particular issues.

The more that we can understand that, that's going to help us get a sense of what John is saying. So all these together give us great confidence in saying, hey, we may not know everything in the book of Revelation.

But God wants to give us. He wants to show us what he means in the book of Revelation. And these are just simple tools that will help us to do that.

You need it. You need this type of literature. You need apocalyptic literature, even though it may make you feel uncomfortable.

It's designed to affect you. Well, that was the first point. The next three aren't as long.

[17:08] Not only do we need this type of literature, we need its blessing. Look at chapter 1, verse 3. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy.

And blessed are those who hear. And implied is, blessed are those who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. Here's what I want you to start happening in your heart.

That when you hear the book of Revelation, you start thinking blessing. You start thinking, there be blessing in those verses.

There be blessing in the seals and the trumpets and the bowls. There be blessing in these images of beasts and of dragons and of this woman and of all these things.

There's goodness for us. God wants you to see something. God wants you to see something.

[18:36] God wants you to see something. God wants you to see something. You're going to be strengthened. You're going to be empowered by the blessing of it. That word, blessed, in verse 3, is repeated twice.

That's the same word that shows up in Matthew 5 in the Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Throughout the book of Revelation, there are seven Beatitudes.

Seven blessings. Seven blessings. Interspersed throughout it all. God intends for you to be blessed, happy, joyful, a settled goodness of having read this book, to be in this book.

And did you notice who this blessing falls on? Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy. The link is between Revelation and prophecy. The book of Revelation is prophetic.

And that word prophetic has this sense of foretelling what is going to take place. We see that in verse 1. The things that must soon take place. Verse 3.

[19:43] The time is near. But in addition to foretelling, it's also a forth telling. How we must live now. All throughout chapter 2 and chapter 3, these seven letters to the seven churches.

And then Turkey, or now Turkey. We hear this refrain. What the Spirit is now saying to the churches. Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

There is a timely word to obey from the book of Revelation. And the one who reads the words of this apocalyptic prophecy, they're blessed.

They're blessed by it. Because as I read Revelation 1, 1 through 3, guess what? I'm so, so eager for you to be blessed by this book.

For you to see the Jesus of the book of Revelation. But blessing not only falls on the one who reads it, but on the one who hears it. Blessed are those who hear.

[20:53] Who hear it read. Who hear it preached. Those who hear and understand. They're going to be happy to know that Jesus is in control.

They're going to be happy to know that history is not some kind of odd. God going anywhere. Fire hose out of control.

But it is aimed. They're going to be happy to hear what awaits them at the end. Revelation is going to make your soul sing.

All throughout the book of Revelation are praise choruses over and over and over again. It's when blessing erupts into its consummation.

Praise. You're going to want to sing. And then there's those who are blessed who keep what is written in it.

[21:53] To keep means to obey. To hold fast something. And this is part of this theme of the book of Revelation.

It's a call to overcome. To press through the challenges that face us. That face the first century church. And so we are to obey the forth telling of this book.

The moral commands. And we'll see them. But we're also to keep the foretelling of this book. The framing of time.

And realizing that God is sovereign over all things. We're not to add. We're not to take away from it. That's the warning of chapter 22. But we must live our lives now.

In light of what will soon take place. And as a result. We're going to experience a blessing from God. We live now in light of what will be.

[22:56] This book is filled with blessings. It's filled with beatitudes. The sixth beatitude shows up in chapter 22. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

It's nearly identical with what is said here in verse 3. Who keep what is written in it. The book of Revelation begins and ends with a pronouncement of blessing.

For those who keep what is written in this book. God wants to bless you through the book. He wants to bless you with what you will see. You need this book.

Third, you need this book because you need help. You need help. Read 1-1.

The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show to his servants. Servants. It's a reference to the first century church. It's a reference to the seven churches and all the followers of Jesus who were in those churches.

[24:06] And he calls them his servants. Literally his slaves. His devoted ones. His followers. Christians devoted to Jesus in the first century and 21st century.

There's a reason why this book was written to them. Why do Christians need apocalyptic visions? Why do we need to see things? It's because the Christians in the first century and Christians in our century experience multifaceted hardship and challenge.

God knows his church. We're going to see in Revelation chapter 1, chapter 2 and 3 that Jesus is among his churches. He knows what is happening in his churches.

And because he knows his beloved church and he knows when his church is beleaguered, a church under attack, God in this instance, he shows them what they need to see in order to overcome, to remain true to Jesus.

[25:17] And what we're going to see in the book of Revelation is regularly challenged by false doctrine. By teachings that are not true. I mean, turn to chapter 2, verses 14 and 15.

This is a letter written to the church of Pergamum. And in verse 14 we read, But I have a few things against you. This is Jesus saying to this church, I have a few things against you. You have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam.

It's a false teaching. Now look at verse 15. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. It's false teaching. And when you buy into false teaching, you are deceived.

And when you're deceived, you start living your life in ways that are filthy. So this revelation brings us clarity in order to see the truth of who Jesus is and what will soon take place in order for us to overcome false teaching.

And not just false teaching. We're going to be challenged by persecution. Sometimes fierce persecution. Sometimes faint persecution.

[26:28] Look at the letter to the church of Smyrna in chapter 2, verse 10. Jesus says to them, Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested.

And for 10 days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death. Severe, fierce persecution. And when God's church, the people who follow Jesus get persecuted, whether fiercely or faintly, what

can happen is you start to despair.

You start to become discouraged. You can deny Jesus and you can get distracted. So what this book does, this revelation of Jesus, it focuses you on Jesus.

It puts courage in your heart so that you can see Jesus in incredible ways that will say, he's worth it. And it gives you the strength to press through, whether fierce or faint persecution.

Whether it's jail time or whether you're being gossiped about by work, at work. This book gives courage.

[27:43] You need help. The third thing, the third challenge that we encounter, filthy practice. Look at the church, Thyatira, in chapter 2, verse 20.

But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman, Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

There's a connection between false teaching and filthy practice for sure. But here, I just want you to see the filthy practice of it. We are going to encounter, we are living in a time where seduction to filthy practice is all around us.

Sexual immorality. And the result is defilement. It's dirtying the white robes that have been given to you by Jesus.

And so what Revelation does is it calls us to cleanse ourselves in the blood of Jesus and then overcome filth by walking in purity.

[29:01] First century Christians were challenged by that. And absolutely, we're being challenged to that today. We need help. And this book gives us help by calling us to overcome, by focusing on a Jesus who is glorious.

You need this book. Which brings me to the last point. You need to see the Jesus that John saw. You need to see the Jesus that John saw. You need this book. In chapter 1, verse 1, we read the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The unveiling of Jesus Christ. The pulled back and see Jesus. It has a dual sense that Jesus is in one sense the giver of the revelation.

And it carries this other sense that Jesus is the one who this revelation shows us. Over and over again through the book of Revelation, you're going to be given visions of Jesus in his glory.

[30:20] Can I give you a sample platter? Revelation chapter 1, verses 12 through 18.

We'll be there in two weeks. John sees the risen Jesus. And in verse 17, he falls down like a dead man.

What he sees is so overwhelming. And it's glory. It's glory. And then Jesus says in that section, Fear not, I'm the first and the last and the living one.

I died and behold, I am alive forever. And I have the jingle, jingle, keys of death and Hades. Do you know what that means? He's got authority over death.

It's glorious with authority. You need to see the Jesus that John saw. And when you see him, it's going to give you strength to overcome.

[31:30] In chapter 5, 1 through 7, we have this striking vision. Who's going to be able to open up the scroll with its seven seals?

Who has authority over the unraveling of time in history? John freaks out. He starts to cry because there's no one.

And then someone says, The lion of the tribe of Judah is able to do it. And do you know how he does it? The lion of the tribe of Judah is able to do it.

Standing in the midst of them was a lamb who was slain. The lion gets it done by being a lamb who was slain.

you've got to see what John saw you've got to see this glorious one and everybody bowing down and worshipping him Revelation chapter 12 Jesus is this male child born to this woman out in this wilderness who's trying to get gobbled up by a dragon and he is the one who will rule all the nations with a rod of iron Psalm 2 that's him you've got to see what John sees about this one you need it it will give you strength to overcome Revelation 14 Jesus is the great reaper of souls with a sickle that he brings over the entire earth reaping all souls of men authority over all you've got to see what

John saw it will give you strength to endure

[33:16] Revelation 19 there's this rider on the white horse who has come to conquer and he has four names and the last name is the king of kings and lord of lords authority over all and he has come and he vanquishes all of his foes with words you need to see the Jesus that John saw you need that you need big Jesus because he's big and he's Jesus Revelation 21 Jesus is at the center of the new Jerusalem portrayed as the source of light so there's no need for sun no night in him the light all the redeemed of the nations walk authority fulfilled that's who your Jesus is you need to see him the way that John saw him because that's how he really is and he'll give you strength to overcome you need to see him

Revelation opens with a prologue and one of the refrains is to show what must soon take place the time is near and then the epilogue at the end of Revelation Revelation chapter 22 there's three declarations that Jesus says three times he says I am coming soon verse 7 verse 12 and then of course verse 20 I'm coming soon what must soon take place the time that is near I am coming soon the early church when they would have gathered together they would have heard the entire book read and they would have heard that this Jesus who is displayed in all of his authority at the beginning he's going to show what must soon take place and at the end

I am coming soon do you know the intended effect on you you're looking for Jesus set your heart on him he is coming for you he's in the presently seeking to come to you this morning we've covered quite a bit of ground just to introduce this book you need this book even though it's kind of weird you need it you need its blessing doesn't confuse you need its help you're under siege and you need to see the Jesus that John saw because we forget brothers and sisters revelation has come into your home hello my name is revelation he's not a party guest to be avoided he is to be welcomed he's to be embraced he's to be knit into our life because he uniquely brings good news of Jesus Christ that is going to put courage in your heart and enable you to overcome the challenges we face you need the book of revelation pray with me

God in heaven thank you for this book and over the next several months as we make our way through would you wow us again and again with Jesus give us strength to endure to overcome for you Jesus bless us bless us God with the words of this book in Jesus name we pray amen we pray and again we pray in Jesus to length all to be we pray for him we pray in Jesus Hastings and again you come 21 tombe to be him and then do my to ông