

Revelation 1 (2011)

- Introduction

SLIDES 1-1, 1-2

- Can be a controversial study for some
 - Important for our times
 - Prophecy is revealed progressively and as we get closer to the events themselves more will be understood
 - Many pieces of Biblical evidence support the conclusion that we are living in the very last days
 - Often misinterpreted
 - Because of poor scholarship, eisegesis, false teachers, or because well-intentioned students fall prey to “filling gaps”
 - Filling gaps occurs when we don’t find an answer we’re looking for in the pages of Scripture and we impatiently fill that gap with an answer of our own making
 - Two problems with that practice
 - We go forward with a false understanding, repeating it to others
 - We aren’t looking for an answer any longer and we miss the truth when it does arrive
 - We can’t fill gaps, we must remain teachable
 - How will we handle controversy?
 - The teacher is always right (joke)
 - We will study methodically, verse-by-verse, paying attention to details and following rules of interpretation
 - As always, depending on the Holy Spirit to reveal truth, not filling gaps

- Rules of interpretation we will follow in the class

SLIDE 1-3

- Golden rule

- When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense
- This clears up most mistakes all by itself
- Failure to respect this rule results in non-literal, over spiritualized interpretations that miss the main point
- Law of Recurrence
 - An event in Scripture may be recorded twice with the second account included in order to provide additional detail
 - Failure to observe this rule leads to misunderstands of sequence, order, timelines or authorship
 - Genesis 1 & 2 is the classic example
- Law of Double Reference SLIDE 1-4
 - Scripture may blend together within a single narrative two different events separated in time
 - Failure to observe this rule leads to misinterpretation of events or general confusion
 - The separation is impossible to see until later events or Scripture reveals the break
 - Zech 9:9-10 is the classic example
 - Led Israel to believe in two Messiahs

[John 1:20](#) And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

[John 1:21](#) They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

- Interpretation of Symbols
 - Scripture usually interprets symbolic language within its own context, or else we rely on other Scripture to provide the interpretation
 - We don't have to guess as to the meaning of symbols

- Symbols are common in prophecy, but the interpretation is almost always provided in the same context
- Background on the letter

[Rev. 1:1](#) ¶ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

[Rev. 1:2](#) who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

[Rev. 1:3](#) Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

[Rev. 1:4](#) John to the seven churches that are in Asia: 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,

[Rev. 1:5](#) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood –

[Rev. 1:6](#) and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father – to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

[Rev. 1:7](#) BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

[Rev. 1:8](#) "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

- Revelation is a letter
 - Author(s)
 - Written by the Apostle John, delivered to John by an angel, dictated by Christ, given by the Father
 - This is John's testimony to God's word and to Jesus' testimony
 - Why such a specific line of transfer?
 - Chain of custody to support authenticity
 - The book contains extraordinary details...we must trust their source

- Audience
 - Jesus' bond-servants (doulos, slaves)
 - The Church is to know and understand this revelation
 - Not something to be afraid of, much less avoid
 - In fact, v.3 tells us this is the only book of Scripture that promises a blessing for those who read and hear the words of the prophecy
 - The Greek word for hear is akouo, which means to heed, to understand or give watch
 - We must hear and remain watchful to this revelation, and if we do, we will see blessing, divine favor, in our lives
 - The time is near
 - The phrase in Greek literally means a short time
 - Meaning once these events begin, they will conclude quickly
 - It is not a book that will profit unbelievers directly
 - But it may be used by God to bring an unbeliever to faith, as any Scripture can
- John is instructed to deliver the letter to seven church in Asia Minor
 - We talk much more about these churches and why the letter includes this strange part when we get to chapter 2
 - But why only seven?
 - The number seven is commonly an indication of completion, of totality
 - So the message from the beginning is that this letter is for the entire church
- John probably wrote the letter in the mid 90s
 - Since many know that John was exiled to Patmos during the reign of Domitian, they assume John wrote the letter there

- But early church fathers wrote that John was allowed to return to his home church in Ephesus after Domitian died
 - John likely delivered the letter when he returned
 - The letter makes allusions to many books of the OT
 - In fact, this letter can only be understood in light of the rest of the Bible
 - We must examine many passages, even major sections of OT books to properly understand this book
 - Some scholars have calculated that 278 of the 404 verses of Revelation contain references to OT books with over 500 mentions altogether
 - Yet there is no direct quote of the OT in the letter
 - Since the author of Scripture is the same God, it's clear that the revelation of this letter is a continuation of all prophecy from earlier in the Bible
 - It's my job to show you how it all comes together
- John begins his greeting in v.4 as from the Trinity
 - The Father, Spirit and Son are mentioned
 - The Son is listed last because He becomes the focus for the remainder of the letter
 - The next verses are a praise to the Son's name
 - He is a faithful witness to the Father (prophet), the firstborn of the dead (priest), ruler of the earth (king)
 - Our Salvation
 - In v.7 we have the theme or purpose of John's revelation
 - Behold, He is coming on the clouds
 - From Dan 7
 - Every eye will see Him...tribes will mourn? How? We'll see in chapter 19...
 - The theme of the letter is Jesus' return

- The early church had been told to expect the return and were waiting for it
- Now we have the definitive book in Scripture explaining the circumstances of that return
 - But most of the detail is found in OT books
 - Finally in verse 8 the Father is mentioned again

[Rev. 1:9](#) ¶ I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

[Rev. 1:10](#) I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,

[Rev. 1:11](#) saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

- John's identity
 - The Apostle, partaker in tribulation
 - Not all tribulation is The Tribulation
 - Also partaker in the kingdom, perseverance
 - On Patmos
 - Because of tribulation (persecution)
- John's experience
 - He was in the Spirit on the Lord's day
 - In the Spirit refers to a time of prayer, meditation, worship
 - And Lord's day is actually "lordy" day
 - Either a formal day of worship or just a day the Lord has made
 - He first heard something
 - A loud voice, but like a trumpet
 - It spoke words

- John was to record what he saw and then write it in letters to seven churches
 - What follows in chapter 1 is what John saw

[Rev. 1:12](#) ¶ Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

[Rev. 1:13](#) and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

[Rev. 1:14](#) His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

[Rev. 1:15](#) His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

[Rev. 1:16](#) In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

- Notice what followed...I turned to "see"
 - This begins the section of what John saw
- He turned to see Who was speaking
 - He sees seven lampstands
 - And He see in the middle the Lord, the Son of Man (from Daniel)
 - He is dressed in a robe, a golden belt
 - His face and hair are white with eyes like flames of fire
 - Feet are glowing like bronze in a fire
 - Voice is like a roar
 - He is holding seven stars and has a sword in his mouth
 - And His face shines like a sun (which is why it is white)
- This is a different Jesus then John saw in the Gospels
 - This is a prophetic vision of Christ ruling on earth as King
 - John saw the earlier vision of Christ as Prophet
 - Today Christ sits as Priest

SLIDE 1-4

- Every chapter of Revelation is prophetic
 - Chapter 1 is a prophecy of what John saw
 - Of Jesus as He will appear as King on Earth
- Each detail conveys an aspect of Jesus' character
 - From His purity, His majesty, His truth, His judgment, His authority, His piercing insight

[Rev. 1:17](#) ¶ When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, [Rev. 1:18](#) and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

[Rev. 1:19](#) "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

[Rev. 1:20](#) "As for the mystery of the seven stars which 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.

- John's reaction is the natural reaction of unholy creatures to a holy God
 - The first thing angels tell anyone they appear to is don't be afraid
 - Fear is the natural response when sinfulness comes into contact with holiness
 - Jesus assures John he shouldn't be afraid since John knows this person
 - This is the Lord John walked with for three years
 - Yet the appearance of Jesus is so different that John reacts as if he doesn't know Who this is
 - Jesus identifies Himself in novel ways for John
 - He is the living One (a reference to His resurrection)
 - John saw Him dead and saw Him alive again
 - What a privilege for John to see Christ in all four states: incarnate, in the grave, alive again, glorified
 - Jesus has the power over death and Hades (we'll talk more about these in chapter 6)

- In v.19 we reach the outline of the book SLIDE 1-4
 - John is to write about three things
 - What he has seen
 - The things that are
 - The things which will take place after these things
 - Each of these parts is prophetic
 - First, the things John saw are chapter 1, the vision of Christ
 - Then in chapter 4, we see the things that are after
 - This leaves the things that “are” in chapters 2 & 3
 - The things that “are” remain a present tense prophecy until the things that happen after these things begin (i.e., chapter 4)
 - The things that “are” therefore refer to the church age which occurs between chapter 1 and chapter 4