

Revelation Chapter 1:3-20

Teaching Notes

* Review - Revelation Chapter 1

Verse 1 – “Revelation OF Jesus Christ/Messiah” and/or “Revelation FROM Jesus Christ/Messiah”

1 – Christologically focused – what will be revealed/unveiled/uncovered ABOUT Jesus – this translation targets the WHO – who is going to be revealed

2 – Message/Text focused – what will be revealed/unveiled/uncovered FROM Jesus – this translation targets the WHAT – what is going to be revealed

*“Revelation is given to us as a gift but also as a true disclosure of who Jesus is – Jesus is the content and agent of the book” – Eugene Peterson, *Reversed Thunder**

1. Chapter One - setting the stage

- A. Verses 1-3 - Urgency of the message of Revelation. When people are under fire in their lives, they are desperate for hope; a message, a word of hope, or someone who is a “living hope.” Urgency gets and heightens our attention and amplifies our response.

Around every bend in the story of Revelation, people are challenged to make a decision: “Are we going to shape our lives around these truths, this Revelation of who Jesus is and what God is doing in world/kingdom?” “Are you on the side of Jesus or the beast?” There is a decisional character of the prophetic/apocalyptic literature of the Bible, especially the New Testament.

Question for Discussion - Do you have a sense of urgency in the mission that we share with Jesus?

1:3 – “Blessed is he – who reads” (action), “those who hear” (action), “the words of the prophecy” (prophetic material in the Bible is blatantly urgent and decisional), and “heed the things which are written in it” (action).

1:3 – “blessed” – same word that Jesus uses in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. There are 7 “blessed” in the book of Revelation (1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14).

Question for Discussion – what does it mean to be “blessed?”

1:3 – “Aloud” – remember, John’s audience is not a literary audience – book of Revelation was meant to be read ALOUD

1:3 – “Time in near” – in other words, something is coming – this is about a decision and the imminence of Jesus’ judgement and coming justice.

- B. Verses 4-8 - The centrality of Jesus is all of life

Question for Discussion – why is it important to have Jesus as CENTRAL in your life?

1:4 – This section starts like so many of the letters of the New Testament but it underscores the diverse literary genre of the book of Revelation – as we’ve already mentioned, Revelation is Apocalyptic (1:1) and Prophetic literature (1:3) as well as a Letter (1:3-4).

1:4 – “*Grace and Peace to you.*” Grace – what does that mean? Peace – what does that mean? To whom? “*to you*” – why is that important?

1:4-8 – Do you see the Trinitarian “formula” in this section? Even before the Trinity was an articulated doctrine of the Church, people who followed and loved God knew that God was “beyond” description. Our tendency to put God in a box. The Trinity reminds us that we can’t define God.

1:4 – “*Who is, was, and is to come*” – note the ORDER. Logic says, “who was, who is and who is to come” or liturgy “as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.” - that makes sense! Then WHY does John say, “who is, who was and is to come?” Kairos and Kronos time are different. How?

1:4 – “7 spirits” – 7 is a number of “perfection” – 7 is God’s number of heavenly or eternal realities and a key image in Revelation.

- You will also see – “12” – number of God’s PEOPLE – chosen people – 12 Tribes, 12 Apostles, the Body of Christ
- You will also see the number “1000? It is a number that typically signifies the idea of “immensity,” “fullness of quantity” or “multitude.” The number can represent a large number or extended period of time. This general interpretation applies both to the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. The number 1,000 is special because it is the result of 10 to the third power (10 x 10 x 10). The number 10 symbolizes completion.
- There are certain numbers in the Bible that appear much more frequently than others and therefore have significance for the special meaning they convey. The number “40” is also a significant one, for example; it is believed to signal a period of trial or testing.
- Being familiar with the spiritual meaning of numbers in the Bible can be helpful in interpreting difficult passages; however, it is important not to give them too much value. If anything, they simply lend credence to the fact that the Bible is the result of divine inspiration.
- By the way, “*seven spirits who are before His throne*” – different interpretations:
 - In one interpretation, the “Seven Spirits” represent the sevenfold ministry of the Spirit as depicted in the Book of Isaiah 11:2–3.
 - Another interpretation - is that the seven grace-gifts (“charisms”) of Romans 12:6–8 reflect the seven spirits of God.
 - Another interpretation - seven distinct spiritual beings – some suggest that in the New Testament, the Greek term “Dunamis” (translated by some as “Power”) suggests a class of exalted spiritual beings.
 - Lastly, “seven spirits” is symbolic of God’s completeness, omnipresence, omniscience, perfection.

- Interesting that one way to translate this would be “seven-fold Spirit” not “seven spirits”

1:5 - “*Jesus Christ, the faithful witness*” – Jesus is the “Revealer” of God’s character, nature and disposition. You want to know character and disposition of God? Look to Jesus! Jesus is the snapshot/portrait of God.

1:5a- “*firstborn of the dead*” – John’s emphasis on the power of God and empty tomb.

1:5a - “*ruler of Kings*” – Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

1:5b-6 – Answers question - what Jesus has done? - love, freedom from sin through cross, and transformation through the Spirit, made us a “kingdom” (Kingdom of God is not a WHAT but a WHO), made us priests to God.

1:6 – “*Kingdom and priests*” - the Bible has a high view of humanity – John did NOT call his audience “poor, miserable sinners” – he called them by their new identity in Jesus – God’s coming, and promises are not motivated by pity but by the fulfillment of God’s promises that the Lord knows will change and transform our lives.

1:4-6 – Followed by worship – when we realize who God is, or when God (Jesus in this instance) is fully revealed, it should lead us to worship.

1:7 – “*Behold he is coming with the clouds*” – this John takes from book of Daniel (7:13-14) used to speak of the coming of the Son of Man to receive authority over the kings of the earth and Zechariah 12:10-14 which outlines the significance of that event for all of humanity. Universal revelation of Jesus! See Philippians 2:10-11.

1:8 – This is the first time that the Lord speaks – “*I am alpha/omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*” – iconography as early as the 4th century used the alpha and omega – denotes the oneness of Godhead – coeternal nature of Trinity – in addition to the great “I am.” (Key to John’s gospel – seven “I am” statements in the gospel - “I am the bread of life, light of world, door of sheep, resurrection and life, good shepherd, way/truth/life, true vine).

C. Verses 9-20 - The Vision of the Resurrected Jesus

Question for Discussion - How would you describe Jesus as you know Him? Is John concerned with how Jesus looked? What’s his “point?”

1:9 – John – brother and going through persecution (like we are) – tribulation, kingdom and perseverance.

1:9 – John is in exile on Patmos – why?

1:9 – John was “*in the Spirit on Lord’s Day*” – are you “in the Spirit” now? What does that mean? The preposition “the” doesn’t appear in the original language so it could read, “I was in Spirit.”

1:9 – “*loud voice like the sound of a trumpet*” – distinct sound and volume. Exodus 19:16 – the sounding of the shofar always denoted a call to gather. Announcing and proclaiming, “here is royalty.”

1:11 - Remember Jesus has our past, present and future in his hands – death couldn't keep him, the tomb couldn't hold him - so now, "John, get to work – you have a book to write."

1:12 – "*seven golden lampstands*" – that's clarified in 1:20 "seven churches." The issue is that Jesus is standing in the middle of them. Key is that Jesus KNOWS the Church. Jesus knows His people (see that consistently in every one of the seven sermons/letters in chapters 2 and 3 where Jesus repeatedly says, "I know your...")

1:13 - John sees one "*like the Son of Man*" – the expectation that John had was that Jesus "looked" like he did as he walked the earth – but Jesus has changed – this is a reference to John's experience on the Mount of Transfiguration.

1:17 - John falls down ("at His feet like a dead man" 1:17) on his knees – this is the conquering Jesus revealed to John and John's purpose in the book is to "go and tell" others about this all-sufficient Jesus.

D. Vision of Jesus

1:13 – "*Robe reaching to his feet and wrapped around chest with golden sash*"

1:14 – "*White hair*"

1:14 – "*Eyes of fire*"

1:15 – "*Feet like Bronze*"

1:15 – "*Voice like water*"

1:16 – "*Seven stars in his hand*"

1:16 – "*Face like the sun*"

1:16 – "*Out of his mouth, sharp two-edged sword*"