

## Blessed By the Word

**Text:** Revelation 1.1–3

**Theme:** We must receive the Word of God in all its various forms

### Introduction – Great book introductions

- “*This is my favorite book in all the world, though I haven’t read it.*” —The Princess Bride (William Goldman)
- “*It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.*” — Pride & Prejudice (Jane Austen)
- Two of my absolute favorites:
- “*In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.*” — The Hobbit (J.R.R. Tolkien)
- “*There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it.*” — The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (C.S. Lewis)

### Our introduction, to Revelation, reads as follows:

*“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.”*

(Revelation 1:1–3 ESV)

- this final book of the Bible starts in a different way from most books
- this tells us that you need to read it in a different way from most books as well

### We’ve considered the reasons “Why?” we should study this book

- Then we began to sing the song of Revelation:
- *A sovereign God’s glorious justice & steadfast mercy strengthen His children to live lives of worship & perseverance by faith until Jesus comes again.*
- then we took six Lord’s Day mornings to consider the masterful sub-harmonies to that song
- I believe this is another reason why we must read Revelation differently
- there is a musical rhythm to the book;
- much like a waltz—one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three
- look at v. 1, for example
- God gave him...Jesus Christ, that’s one
- Jesus made it known by sending his angel...that’s two
- to his servant John, who bore witness...that’s three;
- See it? Hear it? Feel it? One-two-three
- v. 2: who bore witness...to the word of God, that’s one
- and to the testimony of Jesus Christ...that’s two
- even to all that he saw...that’s three
- one-two-three, one-two-three
- and then, v. 3, look at it there
- Blessed is the one who...reads aloud, that’s one
- blessed are those who...hear, that’s two
- and finally, who ...keep what is written in it...that’s three
- one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three
- the divine music of this glorious book creates a dance for us
- and we should rejoice in this

### So, when we read the introduction to Revelation, it tells us how to read it

- it tells us what kind of literature we’re dealing with

- it is a revelation, a prophecy, as well as a letter
- a revelation, a prophecy, and a letter — all rolled into one
- we have to know something of these three things in order to read & understand this book

*So, let's look first at the very first words, where we discover that...*

### **I. IT'S A "REVELATION"**

- the word here is "apocalypse," from a Greek word that simply means "unveiling," "revealing"
- this is the uncovering, the revealing of the things that must soon take place
- don't think of "apocalypse" as end of the world, zombies attacks, and the like
- the word is simply telling us something is about to be made known to us

### **1. "of Jesus Christ"**

- actually, the revelation from Jesus
- God gave it to Christ, who gave it to his angel, who then made it known to John
- and then John writes it down and sends it off to the seven churches
- so, this is a revelation FROM Jesus
- but, it's also about Jesus, of Jesus
- we get to see Jesus in a way we often do not consider
- next Lord's Day, Lord willing, we'll take time to see Jesus in vv. 4–8
- and trust me, it is glorious!

### **2. revelation=apocalypse**

- Some think: "Doesn't this make it hard to understand?"
- sometimes, yes; I won't sugar-coat it
- not everything here will come as clearly as, say, Ephesians or Philippians
- but God wants us to know and to understand
- He wants to pull away the veil from our eyes so we can see His Christ
- so, yes, we'll have to work at some parts;
- fortunately, the earliest chapters are quite clear
- but what we'll see & hear is what John saw & heard
- but he has to use words to describe this, and words may not always do justice
- it's because Revelation is a book of seeing

### **3. "to show" and "all that he saw"**

- the word "see" or "saw" occurs over 50x in this book
- John saw a lot and he seeks to give it to us
- but don't think of this as walking thru an art gallery
- "Oh look, here's the ancient history artwork; and, here's the future room"
- Revelation is not given sequentially...it doesn't follow a strict timeline sequence
- rather, there is, what is often called, a recapitulation of events
- think of it like a movie with lots of flashbacks
- Forrest Gump, Sandlot, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, for example
- you see something retold in different ways, a circling back or over again, as it were
- it's not a movie that begins, goes through, and simply ends

### **4. An example**

*Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,*

*saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.*

*The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."*

*Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail."*

(Revelation 11:15–19 ESV)

- picture of final judgment of everyone and all things
- but look quickly at Revelation 20.11

*"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire."*

(Revelation 20:11–14 ESV)

- is this a **second** final judgment? That can't be, correct? Correct
- what John sees and gives us is a recapitulation; it is not in chronological order
- it is a different way of seeing the end of all things
- this happens again and again throughout this revealing & we must see it like that

## 5. Symbols get used a lot

- pictures John sees and paints for us are not to be taken literally
- now, don't panic and think I'm going liberal in my view of the Bible
- none of you reads the entire Bible literally; you'd be foolish to do so
- we read the Bible using it's plain sense and natural context
- the kind of book tells you how you'll read it
- Leviticus is clear, precise, full of legal language that needs that kind of reading
- the Psalms are poems, songs to be sung, but you never read it all literally
- there isn't a one of you who think trees actually have hands & they clap them, right?
- none of you believe that mountains actually dance
- when it comes to Revelation, must read it as apocalyptic, which uses symbols
- if you read it absolutely literally, you're going to have problems
- no, John uses similes and metaphors and other symbolic language to describe things to us
- later in ch 17 we read "seven heads are seven hills" and "prostitute is a great city"

## 6. So, read Revelation as a revelation

- read it as it was intended: it's a "showing" book
- won't take time to look at them now, but numbers are also exceedingly important
- seven, four, and twelve are key to our understanding; we'll see them soon
- but all this is apocalyptic, an unveiling, pulling the curtain back to see something
- it reveals Christ, the great evil of the world, and the end of all things

*Now, let's consider this about the book of Revelation...*

## II. IT'S A "PROPHECY" v. 3

- prophecy is both fore-telling, giving us something of the future to come
- and it is also forth-telling, giving us God's Word
- John makes that clear in v. 2: John, who bore witness to the word of God
- this is perhaps one of the most concise and clear statements on the process of inspiration of Scripture ever

- these words, this prophecy, comes from God to Christ to man by His means with His words

### 1. Strong connection to the Old Testament

- you really need to know the Old Testament to make sense of this book
- now, if you don't think you know it well, get reading!
- just kidding...kind of...not really
- we will find ourselves going back to OT often to understand what John tells us
- mentions: tree of life, ancient serpent, plagues of Egypt, song of Moses, Jezebel, Babylon, Jerusalem, twelve tribes of Israel, Balaam, winepress of God's wrath and more
- we have to know these so we know what God wants us to see here
- oddly enough, no direct quotes, but allusions all over the place
- there are nearly 500 OT allusions, so we'd better get familiar with it

### 2. Fulfillment of so much of the Old Testament

- Daniel 2: Nebuchadnezzar's vision & dream gets interpreted by Daniel
- four metals of great statue and great rock that destroys that mean things  
*"but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days."*

(Daniel 2:28 ESV)

- Daniel then tells the king what is **going to** happen and what **will** come
- tied in to Revelation
- Daniel: "What **will** happen"
- John: "that must **soon** take place"
- it's close, it is the latter days
- remember, Jesus told us that since His birth, life, death & resurrection...
- we are in the "last days"

### 3. So, get into the Old Testament

- we need to know these things or Revelation won't help us as much
- I'll try to clue you in before we look at passages
- hopefully, you'll look at some of the OT passages before I preach
- then you'll see, know, have it made clear, and see Jesus all the more

*And finally, we must see above all things, John tells us this about Revelation...*

### III. IT'S A "LETTER:

- John tells us in v. 3, this is something to be read
- in vv. 4–7, we see the more formal introduction to this letter
- we'll look at that next Lord's Day
- but this letter comes and is meant to be read...and more

### 1. Read it out loud

- imagine, living in John's day
- no Bibles in print; it's still being written, copied and distributed
- all by hand, on parchment scrolls, delivered over 100s of miles, by foot
- you receive this letter from THE Apostle John, last living of the 12
- you don't open it and see who wrote it and go "Huh; guess I'll get to this later"
- you either call all the believers of the church in Ephesus or Smyrna or wherever
- or you know, come Lord's Day, what that worship service will consist of
- the letter will be read...out loud...by someone who can do so well, maybe several voices
- the entire letter will be read and you'll be held spellbound by it all

**2. Make sure you listen**

- v. 3, part of the blessing comes from hearing it read out loud
- so you have to listen to it all if you want that blessing
- for nearly an hour and thirty minutes, you'll sit and think: "This is amazing!"
- "these are God's words" "What a vision of what we're going through right now!"
- then you'd spend time singing God's praises, praying, probably share a meal
- then you'd sit back down and talk about what was read
- this is difficult for us today to imagine
- why on earth would you spend that much time doing this?
- surely there are better things to do because after all,
- the Lord's **Day** is just couple hours long, the rest is **MY** day, right?
- imagine giving much of each Lord's Day to the Lord

**3. And live it out**

- it's not just a matter of hearing this book read
- it must be read, and heard, but also lived out
- you are to take it to heart...obey it
- otherwise, you'll compromise, you'll capitulate to the world & be part of it
- that is not what you want, is it? Because then the judgment of wrath awaits you!
- so, we'll read it each week, making sure the entire text of Revelation gets read
- I will strive to provide points of application, but you have to hear it and live it

**Conclusion – So, here we have it:**

- God gave this unveiling to His Son Jesus
- who entrusted His angel to bring it to John the Apostle
- John faithfully write down all he saw so the church could receive it
- receive what? The word of God, the testimony about Jesus
- this prophecy is the fulfillment of all God's promises
- and if we receive it as such, God's richest blessings come upon us

**And this is the gospel, is it not?**

- to know that going our own way, doing life our way, brings judgment from God
- but to receive Jesus, to believe upon His name is eternal blessedness
- to see Him, made known as Son of God, sent to give His life for your sins
- to see Him risen again, bringing the promise of new life, eternal life to you
- to hear His Word and take it to heart...this is the Gospel

**Today is the first Sunday in Advent**

- it is the season that prepares us to celebrate the coming of Jesus
- it is the celebration of His **first** advent
- but, with what we've been given here this morning, we need to also look ahead
- looking back to Jesus' birth, to the Incarnation, is good
- but if we fail to look for His second Advent, we disobey this very word of God
- so, are you only looking back, with sentiment and fond memories alone?
- or are you looking ahead to what His next coming will be like?
- do you want this blessing from God Himself?
- then look, listen, and live