**The Revelation**

Revelation 1

Ok, let’s get one thing straight as we start this series that will go through August.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the things that must soon take place.” Revelation 1:1

This is the book of REVELATION. ***Singular. Just the one.*** Not REVELATIONS. It’s actually an important distinction because of what this book is designed to reveal. Or better: WHOM the book is designed to reveal. Jesus Christ. **It is the revelation of HIM**.

That’s what the word APOCALYPSE actually means: to unveil, to make clear. It is “to show his servants” things. To unveil mysteries. But ultimately it is ONE MYSTERY, one revelation, ***one unveiling of JESUS***.

So if you want all the answers about how and when and where Jesus will return, this is not the book for you to study or the series for you to follow. Jesus explicitly said, “no one knows the day or the hour,” and “it is not for you to know times and dates the father has set by his own authority.”

An important rule of Bible interpretation is to START WITH WHAT IS CLEAR. ***Don’t read unclear passages through opaque passages.*** Read mysterious parts of the Bible through the lens of the verses that are crystal clear. What is clear?

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| **Clear Biblical Truth:** |
| * Jesus Christ is Lord. * Jesus triumphed over sin and death forever. * Jesus is coming back soon to make all things new. |

What is less clear?

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| --- | --- |
| **Clear Biblical Truth:** | **Mysteries:** |
| * Jesus Christ is Lord. * Jesus triumphed over sin and death forever. * Jesus is coming back soon to make all things new. * All Christians are called to endure tribulation. | * When will Jesus return? * How will Jesus return? * Who is the Antichrist? * Who will face great Tribulation? |

Will there be a secret coming of Jesus for the church where we are raptured up BEFORE the great tribulation? Will the Antichrist arise in our lifetime, in this generation? Even saying that, WHOSE generation? Those in their 70s and 80s, or those who are 7 or 8?

So, as we set out on this adventure through Revelation, here are some principles of Bible interpretation to keep in mind:

**Principles of Bible Interpretation:**

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| 1. Read BIGGER - the whole book 2. Read OLDER - OT references 3. Read CLOSER - personal application | “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.” Revelation 1:3 |

To understand any book in the Bible you need to read and **study the whole book**. It is easy to get lost in the details, especially in apocalyptic, prophetic books about the end of the world. What is up with the dragon and the beast from the sea? What are these flying scorpions with stingers in their tails? What is the mark of the beast?

Second, to understand this book, you need the whole book, **the whole Bible.** John’s mind was filled with Old Testament passages and pictures. Genesis 1, 2 and 3. The Exodus and the plagues. Ezekiel’s vision of creatures and his new temple. Isaiah’s encounter in the throneroom of God. Daniel’s vision of the Son of Man and his other visions of beasts doing battle with one another.

Third, read closer. ***Read to reveal your own heart.*** The blessing is for those who hear and KEEP the words, who obey and apply them, like the wise man who built his house on the rock, not like the fool who heard Jesus’ teachings but did not put them into practice.

So, with all of that in mind, let’s invite the Lord Jesus to reveal Himself to each of us today and through this series.

PRAY.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants that things that must soon take place.” Revelation 1:1

So, let’s start with verse one and walk through this beautiful first chapter to see Jesus revealed in all of His glory and goodness. We are invited to respond in three ways to the manifold glory of Jesus. There are over a dozen descriptions of Jesus in this passage, but I’ve summed them up in nine dimensions of His glory so there are three for each of our responses. It will all make sense as we go. First.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Humbly **Bow** in fearful reverence for the **One** true God

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits…” Revelation 1:4

As with every theophany in the Bible, ***every encounter with the living God***, our first response should be one of awe, reverence and humble fear. If you don’t fear God, you don’t yet know Him. Yes, perfect love drives out fear, in terms of the fear of judgment, but it never drives out the reverence for the God of all glory, power, and holiness. To see God is to tremble, overwhelmed.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Humbly **Bow** in fearful reverence for the **One** true God

“From him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ…” Revelation 1:4-5

Even in these first five verses of the book we encounter the Trinitarian God. One God, in three persons. The revelation itself of the unveiling of JESUS as given by God the Father. Now we see the seven spirits or the seven-fold Spirit of God. ***Seven is the number of completion and perfection***, there are seven stars for seven angels and seven lampstands for seven churches. Obviously, there are more angels than that and more churches than that, but seven stands for all of them in all of their robust reality.

This is our ONE GOD - the only true God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Bow before The God of love and unity, of wholeness and perfection.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Humbly **Bow** in fearful reverence for the **Eternal** God

“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come.’” Revelation 1:8

And bow before the God who is – ***the God of all being***, from eternity past to present to eternity future. He is the everlasting God who is, who was and is to come. The Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.

***Our lives are a mist***, a vapor that appears and then fades. We are like grass in the field that withers under the scorching sun. But God endures forever. Oh, teach us to number our days, Oh Lord, that we might gain a heart of wisdom.

Show us how quickly ***moth and rust destroy*** the things of this world that our hearts would not get attached to them, but instead would be bound to you and your kingdom, forever.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Humbly **Bow** in fearful reverence for the **Glorious** God

“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.” Revelation 1:7

This is a clear reference to Daniel 7 when ***one like a Son of Man*** comes before God, the Ancient of Days, and is giving glory and dominion that will last forever. This is what Jesus says before Pilate and the Jews that finally gets him convicted of blasphemy and executed. It was a clear and explicit claim to full divinity - that He was in fact the Son of Man spoken of by Daniel, who will come again on the clouds of heaven.

***Jesus ascended into heaven*** after the resurrection and clouds hid him from the disciples. And the angels that day said he would come back in the same way: visibly, from above, with clouds and glory and honor.

So our first response to this unveiling of Jesus:

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Humbly **Bow** in fearful reverence for the One, Eternal, GloriousGod

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.” Revelation 1:17

John was ***overwhelmed by this vision*** and collapsed. Undone. Like Isaiah in the throneroom of God. Like Peter at the miraculous catch of fish. Like he had been with Peter and James on the mount of transfiguration. No doubt the way he felt at the crucifixion and again at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

To see Jesus in his true glory is to see the fullness of God. “If you have seen me” Jesus said, “You have seen the Father.” In Christ we see the One God of all being, the eternal God of the past, present, and future, and the all glorious God of the Bible; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God described in the Law of Moses and the Psalms and Prophets, the God of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

And the only appropriate response to this kind of revelation is to humbly bow. To fall down in awe and reverence. Second response.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Joyfully **Obey** in faithful service to the **Sovereign** King

“Blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written.” Revelation 1:3

After falling down before Jesus, the first thing he does is lift you up, as he did for John and say, “Fear not.” We bow before the glorious God of heaven because He is glorious and holy and just, and we are selfish, sinful, and rebellious. We deserve nothing from God but wrath and judgment.

But He is the God of all grace and glory, the source of love, joy and peace. And he calls us to come to him because ***he knows we are weary and heavy burdened***. He knows He alone can offer us the rest our souls long for.

But that ***rest is found in SERVICE TO HIM***. We yoke ourselves to Him. He leads and we follow. He shows us how to put our shoulder to the plow with him. United with Christ, in Him and with Him, we WORK. We serve. We love.

***The blessing from this book*** is not for those who hear and UNDERSTAND, but for those who hear the words and KEEP THEM, who obey them, who apply them. Revelation is an immensely PRACTICAL book. It is designed to inspire and motivate us to ACTION. So don’t read and listen to be entertained or educated. Read and listen to be CHANGED; to be moved, to be deployed in service to the king.

When we call Jesus LORD, it means we are committed to obeying Him. He is our Master, our Rabbi, our sovereign King.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Joyfully **Obey** in faithful service to the **Sovereign** King

“And from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of kings.” Revelation 1:5

Remember our Christmas series in Daniel. The theme of the book of Daniel is the question, ***“Who is the true king?”*** Nebuchadnezzar was quite sure HE was the king, but God showed him over and over again that it is GOD who rules over the kingdoms of men and places over them whoever he pleases. Jesus is the ruler of kings.

The reason we KNOW Jesus rules over all things is ***because he is the firstborn from the dead.*** Jesus rose again, proving that everything he said was true. He is the Lord, the King, the sovereign ruler of all things.

Once you know that Jesus is Lord, the only appropriate response is to bow down before Him and **pledge yourself in service to the King**. We place ourselves before Him as a living sacrifice, completely surrendered to His service.

As CS Lewis said, “We are not poor students in need of education, we are rebels who must lay down our arms.” We surrender to the King who has conquered all kingdoms and has conquered us. We bow before the small stone who hit the feet of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue and vaporized the whole thing. That small stone is growing into the mountain of God’s Kingdom, and the kingdom expands as more and more people hear that Jesus is Lord and surrender their lives to Him.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Joyfully **Obey** in faithful service to the **Shepherd** King

“I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus.” Revelation 1:9

How does John describe life in Jesus? Tribulation. Kingdom. Endurance. The promises of this book are for those who OVERCOME, who endure. Who persevere to the end.

How do we persevere through even great tribulation? ***Our Good Shepherd walks with us***, even through the darkest valleys. He lifts us up when we fall. He carries us through the most difficult patches. He anoints our heads with oil to heal our scratches and scrapes. He prepares a table before us by leading us to green pastures and quiet waters.

So, we obey our Lord Jesus, who helps us and strengthens us to obey. ***We can’t do anything on our own***, but only as we abide in Him can we bear much fruit. But in Christ, all things are possible. As we put off our old selves that were crucified with Christ anyway, we put to death the misdeeds of the flesh and are made new in the spirit of our minds. We put on the new self, renewed in the image of God.

And one of the key ways God strengthens us is **through each other**. John shares this vision as a gift to the churches. He presents himself as our brother and partner.

Brother, sister, you cannot endure to the end on your own. You need faithful partners beside you to support you, to walk with you, to pray with you, to exhort and encourage you. This is why we are starting ***3-4 new groups NEXT WEEK,*** so everyone has an opportunity to get connected. This Tuesday is our extended Worship Night where we will read and pray through the whole book of Revelation. Only come if you want to be blessed. If you are blessed enough, no need to come.

This book, like the whole Bible, is FOR US. It is Jesus’ own love letter to His church, His bride.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Joyfully **Obey** in faithful service to the **Speaking** King

“Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches.” Revelation 1:10

Our God is **the God who has spoken**. We know God because He has made Himself known thrown this whole book. Jesus is the final Word, the full and final revelation of the person, nature and purposes of God. And this book of Revelation is the last gift of Jesus to the church in terms of his words.

We follow our good shepherd because he calls us to come. He guides us in the way we should go. He modeled what love and service look like and called us to follow his example. We choose the Jesus way. The way of grace, forgiveness, humble service, sacrifice, the way of LOVE.

So first, we humbly bow before the glorious Lord Jesus. Second, we joyfully obey our Shepherd-King Jesus. Third response to this revelation.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Gratefully **Worship** with fervent appreciation for our **Redeemer**

“Jesus Christ the faithful witness… who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood…” Revelation 1:5

Jesus is our Savior, our redeemer. He paid the full price for your sin and mine. He bought us back from slavery to sin. He rescued us from eternal death and judgment under the just wrath of God. He freed us by his blood.

***That was the ransom price.*** That was the cost. The infinitely precious blood of the Lamb. A lamb without blemish or spot. The God of perfect righteousness, the true Israelite who faithfully kept every aspect of God’s Law, the one who faced every temptation without sin, the only innocent man to ever live - went to the cross and endured unimaginable suffering for us. He died in our place.

The only appropriate response to this amazing grace is ***deep, abiding gratitude*** - to worship and give thanks forever and ever. Jesus is our Savior, our Redeemer who died as our substitute and rose with healing in his wings. He became sin for us that in him we might become the righteousness of God. He didn’t leave us in the dungeon of our sin, but traded places with us, going to the darkest pit and allowing the tomb to be sealed over him.

But Jesus walked out of that tomb on the third day, victorious over sin and death forever.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Gratefully **Worship** with fervent appreciation for our **Restorer**

“And made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 1:6

***The kingdom of Israel faltered and failed.*** So Jesus created a new Israel called the church. Now he reigns spiritually over the world through His church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against us. This is our eternal destiny, to reign with Christ, along with the renewed and restored ETHNIC ISRAEL. There has been a temporary hardening of the Jewish people for this time of the Gentiles. But that will swing back to the Jews one day, maybe very soon. Then “All Israel will be saved.” That “all Israel” I believe includes us. We are the true Israel, the true circumcision of the heart. But all Israel in Romans, I think, also includes many from ethnic Israel who are being provoked to jealousy by the conversion of so many Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists and atheists and godless Americans.

Now we are His kingdom. **We are His priests.** We represent God to the people. We are dressed in the righteousness of Jesus and he wears us on his chest like precious jewels.

Jesus is not only our Redeemer, ***He is our RESTORER***. He is renewing and restoring us and through us this broken world. We are the salt of the earth. What does salt do? It restores and preserves, it flavors and enhances.

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. When you receive the good news of Jesus, it starts small in your heart but grows to take over your whole life. In the same way, the gospel takes root in a family or a neighborhood or a workplace or a friend group and it starts small but spreads from person to person, from group to group, until the goodness of Jesus is moving around like a good infection.

***The love of Jesus changes us.*** It changes you from one degree of glory to another as you become more like Jesus. And through you the love of Jesus changes other people.

We know our work of restoration with Jesus will not be completed in this version of the world. That will take place when Jesus comes back, which is our final truth about Jesus today.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Gratefully **Worship** with fervent appreciation for our **Returning** King

“And in the midst of the lampstands [I saw] one like a Son of Man, clothed with a long robe…” Revelation 1:13

The first description of Jesus in verses 5-7 focused on his WORK. This list in verse 13-16 focuses on his PERSON. The two are inseparable but we can see a distinction of emphasis. The Son of Man reference reminds us of ***Daniel 7 when one like a Son of Man*** comes before the throne of God and the Ancient of Days gives Him a throne and glory and dominion and a kingdom that will endure forever.

Back in verse 7 John wrote, ***“Behold, he is coming with the clouds,”*** another reference to Daniel 7, which Jesus explicitly referenced when he was on trial before Pilate. “You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds, with great power and glory and with the angels of heaven.” It was a clear assertion of divinity, a direct reference to Daniel 7. And everyone present knew it, which was why the High Priest tore his garment and pronounced the blasphemy.

Don’t miss that detail. ***The High Priest tore his ROBE***. This long robe in which John sees Jesus, with the golden sash, is a PRIESTLY reference. Jesus is our great High Priest, representing us before the holy presence of God. That was the role of the Jewish priests. Not just anyone could stroll into the temple area. First, you had to be Jewish. Then you had to be a Jewish man. Then you had to be a priest or Levite. And only certain priests could go into the temple itself. And only the High Priest could go into the most holy place, and even he could only go in one time every year.

So, we see **Jesus glorified, REVEALED** in the fullness of His heavenly glory. And that is what will happen when Jesus comes back. Every eye on earth will see him at once. And the nations will wail. At that moment every knee will bow before King Jesus and every tongue will confess that He truly is the one Lord of all.

But we will worship. And we do worship even now. It is the only appropriate response to the revelation of who Jesus is and all he has done. Here is our summary for chapter one.

**Respond to the Revelation of Jesus:**

1. Humbly **Bow** in fearful reverence for the one, everlasting, glorious God
2. Joyfully **Obey** in faithful service to the sovereign, shepherd, speaking King
3. Gratefully **Worship** in fervent appreciation for our Redeemer and Restorer who is returning soon

John goes on to describe the overwhelming ***details of his vision of Jesus.***

* White hair for wisdom and righteousness.
* Eyes burning with fire to show His blazing, all-seeing perception. Nothing escapes his notice.
* Feet of polished, burnished bronze. Not the iron-clay, brittle mixture of the Daniel 2 statue, but a unified, brightly shining, strong and immovable basis to his being.
* A voice like roaring waters, thundering with power and authority.
* In his right hand are the seven stars which are the angels of the seven churches. Jesus rules over all spiritual beings, even as he walks among the seven lampstands which are the churches.
* From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which he will strike down the nations and end all warfare when he returns.
* And his face shining like the sun in all of its glory so you can’t look at King Jesus for long without being overcome by the experience.

***What is your response to the revelation of Jesus?***

Are you humbled? Are your knees shaking a little?

Are you committed? Are you in a posture of submission and obedience to Jesus as the Lord?

Are you grateful? Is your heart moved to worship and praise and thank Jesus your redeemer, restorer, your Savior and King, the One who is coming back soon to judge all people and make all things new?

Let’s pray as we respond to this beautiful vision.