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REVELATION 1:1-20

Today we begin a three month study in the Book of Revelation. I want to tell you, even though I did a 9 month Precept study in this book many years ago, and even though our pastor preached through this book about 6 years ago and even though you and I went through this book together 4 years ago, it is still with much fear that I approach teaching this book.

Having said that, let me also say that it is with much anticipation and excitement that I approach this book. This book is **so special** and I look forward to seeing just what God is going to teach each of us through it.

As we always do when we begin a new book...let's set a little background.

This book was written by the Apostle John. John was an old man and he had been exiled to the Isle of Patmos for preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Patmos was off the coast of Greece and was the "Devil's Island" or the "Alcatraz" of that day. It was a place where criminals were punished.

In 63 BC the Romans had conquered the known world and during the latter years of John's life an emperor by the name of Domitian had come on the scene. Domitian hated Christians because he had commanded that all the people under his rule bow down and worship him!

It is believed that by this time, all the other apostles had been killed...so Domitian thought if he could put John on the Isle of Patmos then that would put an end to the fervor and the growth of Christianity.

Domitian knew **about** Christianity, but Domitian did not know the God of Christianity, or he would have known that he could never thwart the purposes of Almighty God!!

So, with that little bit of background, let's read the first chapter and then we're going to see an introduction to the **Book of Revelation**.

Revelation 1:1-20...

I want us to see five things about this book today. The first thing I want us to see about the **Book of Revelation** is that

1) It is a revealing book...

It seems that more and more programs on TV today are focused upon revealing to us more than we ever wanted to know about a person or an event...either an historical event or a contemporary event. Have you noticed that?

The **Book of Revelation** by definition means this is a book that will reveal something to us. The word "revelation" is the word "apocalypse" and it means "an unveiling of something previously hidden."

Winston Churchill once described the former Soviet Union as "a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma."

Many times we think of this book as mysterious and we think that there's so much truth hidden away in this book that we cannot possibly ever understand it!

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But that's the opposite of what God says about it...

God says, "This is a lifting of the veil. This is a drawing back of the curtain." God says, "I'm going to let you see things that have previously been hidden from you."

Well, the question naturally comes to our mind... **"What is to be revealed?"**

Basically, two things are revealed in this book...

a) "the revelation of Jesus Christ"... **verse 1...**

This is not the revelation of John, as my Bible says... As we go through this book, we need to be looking for the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't need to be looking for four-headed monsters on every page and ten-toed statues... we need to be looking for Jesus!!

That's what it says... "the revelation of Jesus Christ..." The unveiling of Jesus.

Well, wait a minute... I thought we said this word means "the unveiling of something previously hidden." We've been hearing about Jesus all our lives, haven't we? I mean, we know about Jesus. We know

how He was born and how He grew up...

how He preached and taught and healed the sick and raised the dead...

how He spent time with sinners and how He loved little children...

how He died at Calvary and was raised from the dead and

how He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father.

All of that has already been revealed to us, hasn't it?

But, look down at verse 13...

Now, this is not the picture of Jesus that we've seen in the Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have given us a picture in their gospels of a man who had a sweet face and a gentle smile... maybe with dark brown hair and a plain robe and sandals... but this is not the picture of Jesus we see here!

In other words, Jesus has changed in His physical appearance since ascending back to heaven. And all throughout the **Book of Revelation**, that's the Jesus you and I are going to see. We're not going to see a baby in a manger, or a meek and lowly carpenter's son...

but we **will** see this majestic King, girded about with a golden girdle, with hair as white as snow and eyes like a flame of fire and feet like bronze and a voice like the sound of many waters. and out of His mouth comes a two-edged sword and He has a face as the shining sun!!

John tells us that God is revealing the Person of Jesus Christ as this world never knew Him and as the world never saw Him!

Not only do we see the Lord Jesus Christ revealed, but we also see

b) "the things which must shortly come to pass"... **verse 1...**

Beloved, this is a book of prophecy. God has chosen to tell us that certain things are going to happen. This book that is so taken for granted is God's letter to us. He wants us to be informed about what will take place in the future.

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I know many of you have read Tim LaHaye's books on the end times. And I'm not knocking these books...I can't knock what I haven't read...but I want to make a suggestion...

Don't base your knowledge and understanding of end time events solely on books written by mortal man.

God has chosen to reveal to you and me certain things that are going to come to pass. Now, as we go through this book, some of these things will be obvious. Some will not be so obvious. Some things we need to see in the light of other Scripture God has given to us.

But, more than anything we need to understand that God is in control. He knows the end from the beginning and everything in between. Nothing takes Him off guard. Nothing sneaks up on God's blind side.

Listen, do you want to know an interesting thing? Some of the commentaries I have on my bookshelves are wrong! I mean, some Godly men have written commentaries and have told us that certain nations would be in power in the end times and those nations as we knew them several years ago don't even exist anymore. Their governments have been disbanded and their leaders have toppled!

Now, let me ask you...do you think this took God by surprise? Do you think God is saying, "Oh my, what in the world am I going to do now?"

Well, of course not!! God knows what the commentators don't. Godly men give us their best shot...but God does what He will among the host of the heaven and the inhabitants of the earth and no one can ward of His hand, or say to Him, "what hast Thou done?"

So, God has lifted the veil and allowed Jesus to be seen as we've never see Him before, and God is lifting the veil to reveal to us things that must shortly come to pass.

The **Book of Revelation** is a revealing book, and

2) It is a God-given book...verse 1... "God gave Him..."

But He doesn't stop there... "He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant, John..."

and what did John do with it? John wrote it down so he could share it with us.

It started with God the Father. God, the Father, gave the book to His Son. Jesus gave it to His angel and His angel gave it to John, and John wrote it down for us!

In **verse 2** we see that it is the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It is a God-given book.

I believe that we take this gift far too lightly. I believe it grieves the Father that sometimes days go by when His children don't even open the wonderful gift that He has given them. I believe we need to ask ourselves how we would feel if we gave our children a precious gift and they never bothered to open it...

3) it is a book of symbols...verse 1... "communicated" NAS

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“signified” KJV – sign i fied

It means that God has taken symbolic language and used it to communicate literal truth.

Let me tell you why God used symbolic language in this book.

Over time, the meaning of many words have changed...but symbols don't.

For instance, Jesus said,
“Suffer the little children to come unto Me...”

Now, let me ask you...do we talk like that today? The word “suffer” back then meant “let” or “allow” or “permit.” When was the last time you called your children and said, “Why don't you suffer my grandbaby to come and spent the afternoon with me?”

Meanings of words change...but symbols don't. God uses symbolic language because symbolic language doesn't change.

Verse 12... “*candlesticks*” “*lampstands*” Can you picture that
In your mind?

Verse 16... “*stars*” You know what a star is.

Verse 20... Here John explains the seven stars and the seven lampstands. The stars are the angels or messengers. The lampstands are the churches that we'll see next week.

Most of the symbols in this book are explained to us. Some we will need to use our common sense to figure out. And having said that, let's not go off the deep end and see things that aren't there. Some folks have seen the locusts over in **chapter 9** and they've decided they must be modern day army helicopters.

The symbolic language is given to help us understand the book better, not to confuse us! Are we to take the **Book of Revelation** literally, or symbolically? The answer is YES! We are to take the symbolic language of this book literally!!

Okay, so it is a revealing book, a God given book, a symbolic book and

**4) It is a blessing book...verse 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.”**

God says there is a special blessing that comes to a church or a class or an individual who will spend time reading and hearing and heeding the truths of this book.

Let me ask you...do you want a blessing from God this week? Then read the **Book of Revelation!!** Read it!! God will bless you!!

This is the only book of Scripture that promises that kind of blessing. Let me share with you one blessing you'll receive when you read this book.

When you read this book, you'll find that Satan is going to lose. Jesus is going to win. Right is going to prevail. God's people are going to come out victorious.

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Things may not be going well for you right now...

Your marriage may not be all that you want it to be...

Your children may have disappointed you...

You may have lost the person most dear to you in this world...

You may be the only Christian in your family...

You may be the only Christian on your job...

But, Beloved, it won't always be that way...

One day, God's will **will** be done on earth as it is in heaven.

One of the keys to understanding the **Book of Revelation** is knowing where things take place. Some things take place in heaven. Some things take place on earth. It will usually tell us at the beginning of each chapter. If we figure out where we are, it will help us understand this book so much better. God's going to do some things on earth and God's going to do some things in heaven. The ultimate goal is that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven...AND THAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN!!

Satan will lose. Jesus will win. Right will prevail. God's people will come victorious. And knowing that is a pure blessing!

One last thing...

5) It is a timeless book...verse 3... "the time is near..."

Do you know what that means? It means all this is soon to happen!!

How do we know this? I mean, John wrote this 2,000 years ago and it hasn't happened yet!! Well, that's all the more reason for us to know it is soon to happen!!

Peter said, "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day in His sight."

That means as God looks at it, it's only been a couple of days since John wrote this... ☺

Let me just say this...

There is absolutely nothing left to be fulfilled before Jesus can come for His church. He could come today. He could come before we even get out of Sunday School or church.

But, folks couldn't always say that. Jesus had made certain promises and certain prophecies that must come to pass before He came back.

One of these prophecies was that Jerusalem would be destroyed...and it was! In 70 AD Titus of Rome came in and completely destroyed Jerusalem.

Not only that, but the people of Israel were dispersed, and there was no nation of Israel for almost 1,900 years.

However, Jesus had made another prophecy.

Jesus said that one day the fig tree would begin to bud and flower and then we would know that Israel would be reborn. Not only that, but Jesus said when this happens...

"Recognize He (Jesus) is near, right at the door..."

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Well, the nation of Israel was “rebirthed” on May 14, 1948. And let me remind you what else the Bible says...it also says the generation who sees this come about will not pass away until all these things take place.

I'm of that generation. You're of that generation! I was 7 years old when Israel became a sovereign state in 1948. Now, how long is a generation? I don't know...the Bible doesn't make that clear. It could be 70 or 80 or even 120 years. We're not setting dates...Jesus said, “no man knows the day or the hour...”

So it is a timeless book and it is a timely book, because more than any other period in history, it speaks to you and me today! The bottom line is this...Jesus can come back today! He can come back at any time!

God's time clock...His calendar revolves around Israel. Two thousand years ago, when Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah, the clock stopped. It went into a state of “suspended animation.”

During this 2,000 year interlude, God has been calling out a people for Himself...a church from among the Gentiles, mainly...and that's you and me, Beloved! And, when Israel became a sovereign state, it set the stage for God's prophetic clock to start ticking one again...

and when it does, it will signal the Rapture of the Church,
and the Great Tribulation...

And that's what we're going to see in the ***Book of Revelation!***

So, I want to ask you, when He comes, will He come for you? John said in **verse 5** that Jesus has released us from our sins BY HIS BLOOD! Has He? Are all your sins washed away by the precious blood of Jesus? If you don't know, or if you're not sure, why not nail that down today?

Well, let's wrap this up...

Understand and remember that God wants you to study this book and be blessed by this book...He's even promised you a blessing for your effort!!

We've really just seen an overview of this book today. We didn't even cover the first chapter in depth. We'll do better next week.

But my challenge to you is that you really take the time to dig into this book. We have two chapters each week at the most and sometime we only have one...Don't wait until Saturday night and lightly scan over your lesson. You'll be the loser if you do!!