

## Revelation Study 2

1:1-8

### Jesus the Christ – Coming Soon!

Church, let me begin this morning with one of the greatest things you will ever hear - **Jesus Christ is coming back!**

- Isn't that great news!
  - In a time in this world where we hear of nothing but war, and tragedy and mayhem,
    - Knowing that Jesus is coming back, is great news!
- And make no mistake about it; never doubt it; always look forward to it
  - Jesus **WILL** come back to this earth...
    - and He will be back sooner than most people think
- You might recall from the book of Acts, at the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus was taken up into a cloud
  - The disciples just stood there looking up. Similar to a small child watching a balloon disappear into the clouds for the first time
    - I'm sure they were absolutely astounded and amazed at the sight
      - **10** "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, **11** who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, ***will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven***"
- Who these two men were the text doesn't say,
  - But what we do know for certain - is that Jesus is coming back!
    - Jesus declared. These two witnesses from heaven proclaim it
      - And as a matter of fact, the whole of scripture affirms it

Consider these factoids for a moment:

- For every prophecy of the first coming of the Messiah, there are 8 prophecies of His second coming
  - There are over 1,845 verses in the OT that refer to Jesus ruling over a kingdom on earth
    - 17 OT books feature His rule on earth on earth as a prominent event

- In 23 of the 27 books of the NT, the return of Jesus is touched on in some way
  - And some have estimated that there are at least 318 references to Christ's second coming in the NT
    - Jesus is coming back soon! Hallelujah!

Now, to keep things clear, in the context of the book of Revelation, when I say that Jesus is coming back,

- I'm not referring to Him coming to get His church –coming to get you and me
  - That's what is commonly referred to as **the rapture** – A topic we will cover in more detail later in our study
    - But briefly let me say concerning this, that there will be a day when Jesus will come for His church in the clouds
      - and will call us up and catch us up unto Himself
        - And there we, being the church, will be with Jesus forever
          - We see that clearly in Thes and in John 14

But there's a vast distinction between the Rapture of the Church, and the Second Coming of Jesus and so I don't want anyone confused

- The rapture is when Jesus comes **for** His saints
  - It is the blessed event when Jesus will come in the clouds and call his people unto Himself
    - And take us into His presence and there we will forever remain with Jesus
- The Second Coming, on the other hand, is what we see in the book of Revelation,
  - It is the event of Jesus coming back **WITH** His saints (indicating that we are already with Him)
    - And it's at that time He will put an end to evil, put an end to Satan
      - To destroy the wicked and to put an end to sin
        - And when He comes back,
          - He will set up the new heaven and new earth and reign and rule from the New Jerusalem
- And so, as we are studying the book of Revelation, when I say that Jesus is coming back

- I am referring to His Second Coming when He comes with the saints at the end of the age
  - This is what the Book of Revelation speaks of.
    - It the record of the events preceding His Second Coming
      - As well as the events OF His second coming and beyond

This morning, we will try to get through the first 8 verses of the opening chapter of the book

- And as we do, we want to notice 7 things about the book of Revelation
  - Having already set the foundation for our verse by verse study last week
    - We are now prepared for what lies ahead
      - If you were not here last week, I encourage you to go online and download or stream the message.
- That aside, I want to read through the first 8 verses and then get right to it
  - **1** The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, **2** who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. **3** Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near.
  - Greeting the Seven Churches: **4** John, to the seven churches which 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, **5** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, **6** and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
      - **7** Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.
        - **8** “I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End,” says the Lord, “who is

and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Here we see in the opening 8 verses, a greeting to seven churches in Asia.

- Don't get confused, this isn't the Asia we would think of in modern times
  - This is what was known as Asia Minor (show map)
    - Today, it's known modern day Turkey
- In verse 4, of course, we learn who penned this letter to the 7 churches – John
  - This is the apostle John. He is also the author of the Gospel according to John
    - As well as the smaller books in the NT of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John
      - All the same author

Not too long after Jesus ascended into heaven, the early church came under heavy persecution

- Many were tortured and brutally killed for their faith
  - The Roman Emperor, Nero, had been an early purveyor of this brutality
    - In 81AD, Roman Emperor Domitian took over
      - And in his reign, tried to rid the world of the last surviving Apostle of the early church
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Century theologian, Tertullian, tells us that Domitian threw John into boiling oil– but survived unharmed
  - Since Domitian couldn't kill John, he banished him to a remote island called Patmos for preaching the word of God
    - And it's there, on the Island of Patmos, that John was approached by Jesus and asked to write to the seven church

Again, we want to notice 7 things about this book

- And we will point them out as we look again at the verses – verse 1
  - “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, **2** who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. **3** Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near”
- The first thing we notice is that Revelation is about Jesus.

- I said it last week and I'll say it here again, if we miss the point that Revelation is about Jesus
  - We have missed the point of the book of Revelation entirely.
    - If your Bible titles the book as The Book of St. John the Divine – or something like that
      - It's in error. That's man's heading. The book of Revelation does not reveal St John the Divine,
        - It reveals Jesus the Christ
- And that's what the opening word means – the Revelation – the <apokalypsis> (where we get our English word Apocalypse)
  - It means to uncover. To reveal. To appear.
    - The book of Revelation is the uncovering, or revealing of Jesus.
- Think of a draped statue that is about to be dedicated in front of city hall.
  - The band is playing, the mayor gives a speech, and the artist who carved the statue tells about designing it.
    - Then, the dramatic moment comes and the canvas is lifted. Everybody sees the statue in all its glory and splendor.
      - That lifting-off of the canvas in the Greek is the word <apokalypsis>

I'm always amazed at some who believe this is a book that cannot be understood.

- In fact some still believe this is a sealed up book
  - But from the opening word, all the way to the end of the book, the theme of the writing is a revealing
    - In fact, Rev 22:10, the Lord tells John – “And he said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand”
      - And so the first thing that we learn is that it is a book to be understood

The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing we learn about Revelation is to whom the message is entrusted: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him **to show His servants**”

- The book of Revelation is not just for John. It's not just for the 7 churches
  - It is a book for all saints of all the ages
    - It's for you and me
- Revelation has been given to his servants – this is the Greek word <doulos> literally “bond servants”.
  - A doulos is one who is a slave by choice. He is one that has been set free from and by his master

- Yet, because of the love and kindness of that master
  - The doulos wants to go nowhere else but to serve his master

Are you a doulos of Jesus Christ this morning? Is there no other master you'd rather serve than Jesus? – we need to take stock of our lives.

- Doulos are those that hear the voice of their Master and respond in faith
  - But, by contrast, those who lack faith in the Son of God are unable to comprehend Revelation because it is not shown to them
    - “This is why unbelievers find the book of Revelation incomprehensible; it was not intended for them. It was given by the Father to the Son to show to those who willingly serve Him. Those who refuse to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord cannot expect to comprehend this book.
      - “A natural man,” explains Paul, “does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1Cor. 2:14) – McArthur
- How awestruck we should be when we read these words of our Lord
  - That the book describing the end of the ages, the judgment of the rebellious and the return of our great God and Savior to the earth -
    - Was entrusted to you and to me. To all the saints
      - How does that strike you this morning?

The 3<sup>rd</sup> thing we notice here in John's opening address, is that the **events of Revelation must take place shortly.**

- Again, verse 1 “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place”
  - The events in Revelation are things that MUST take place – it is a certainty
    - But someone might read “must shortly take place” and say – this book was written over 2 thousand years ago
      - Certainly we are beyond “shortly taking place”
- It's necessary to understand the word here does not indicate soon; but speed
  - The Greek word used here is <tachei>
    - It's where we get our word Tachometer (**show picture**)
      - When you're in a race, a tachometer does not indicate how soon the race will begin,
        - But how fast you're going once in the race.

- That is tachei and that's what John is saying when he says these things must shortly take place
  - Once they start, the order in which they progress will be rapid!
    - Like dominoes...illustrate
- Each domino representing each piece of the prophecy
  - The 7 seals, the widespread death on earth, the 144, 000, the Trumpet judgments, the locust from the bottomless pit,
    - The drying up of the Euphrates river, the 2 witnesses, the anti-Christ
      - The false prophet, the bowl judgments, Armageddon, the new heaven and new earth
        - And once the first domino goes, the rest follow in rapid formation....
          - This is what John is saying here

The 4<sup>th</sup> thing we want to notice here is the great blessing for the believer

- **3** Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near"
  - This is the first of seven Beatitudes from the book of Revelation
    - Just like Matthews Gospel where we read of the famous Beatitudes
      - Revelation has its own Beatitudes and there are seven of them
- 1. **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."
- 2. **14:13** "and I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, '**Blessed** are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."
- 3. **16:15** ""Behold, I am coming as a thief. **Blessed** is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.""
- 4) **19:9** "Then he said to me, "Write, '**Blessed** are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."
- 5) **20:6** "**Blessed** and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."
- 6) **22:7** "And behold, I am coming quickly. **Blessed** is he who heeds the words of the **prophecy** of this book."

- 7) **22:14** “**Blessed** are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.”

Notice the usage of the pronouns in verse 3

- Blessed is HE (singular) who reads and THOSE (plural) who hear and keep the things that are written in the book
  - This is a unique feature of this book in all the bible – no other book promises a blessing
    - And the usage of the pronouns not only reflects the situation in the early church
      - where one letter is written and given to the pastor to read to the congregation
        - But it is also what is happening right now this morning.
- And it’s incumbent upon every pastor to read and teach through the book of Revelation on a regular basis.
  - This book should be in the normal rotation of teachings
    - I sat down with a pastor not too long ago, a sweet man whom I love and appreciate deeply,
      - But when I told him that I was soon to be teaching through Revelation,
        - He told me that he would never teach through it, alluding to its difficulty and potential to polarize God’s people
- But that’s not God’s heart for His book
  - He wants it read in the congregation, and He also desires that it is heard and kept as well – and this triplet is where the blessing comes from
    - It’s not from avoiding it all together
      - But in it being read, listened to and kept by all His servants in which the book was entrusted to
- This word, keep, is the Greek word <tēreo> is in what’s called the Present Active and would be best rendered “while holding fast”
  - The saints are told to continually hold on to the things John writes in this book
    - Can you say that this is us? Are we continually holding on to the prophecies written in this book as we’re instructed?
      - It’s a good question to ask ourselves from time to time



The 5<sup>th</sup> thing we want to notice here is that the **time is near**. See that at the end of verse 3?

- We are to read, listen and keep because “the time is near”
  - Again, like the previous phrase “must take place shortly”,
    - If we don’t take time to understand the original language, we could come away with the wrong understanding
      - We might erroneously think that things will take place right after John writes the letter – but that’s not the case
- When John tells us that we need to read, listen and keep the prophecies in this book
  - He lays at our feet the critical importance of it because of the coming crisis that is associated with the end times
    - – it’s because the time is near
- But the word used here is **<kairos>**
  - It doesn’t speak of the time of a clock or calendar, that’s the word <kronos>
    - But <kairos> speaks of “the right time,” “at the right moment,” “the opportune time.”
      - We see the same word used in Galatians 4:4 wherein the Bible states, “But when the fulness of the time [*kairos*] was come, God sent forth His son. . .” Christ came at just the right moment.
        - The time was “ripe” for the coming of God’s Son
- The Lord’s half-brother, James, gives a good understanding of this
  - “7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”
    - See how James equate “the Lord is at hand” with waiting patiently for the early and latter rains that will produce the crops
      - Harvest comes at the right time – the opportune time

So, too, Jesus will come back at the right time. At the right moment.

- When the early rain and the latter rain have come
  - He will come when He ready!

- This speaks to the immanent return of Jesus. That He can come at any time
- But for believers, we will not be caught off guard.
  - We will be aware of the times and seasons and know that our redemption draws near!
    - This is the promise of 1 Thes 5: “ But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. **2** For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. **3** For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. **4** But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. **5** You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.
      - This is good news! That we as children of the light
        - Will see the signs of His coming and know the time is near
- But even though we are not to be caught off guard, there are many who will
  - And so we need to follow the example of our Lord Jesus and be about our Father’s business
    - By teaching and preaching the Good News that Jesus has come to set men free from their sins
      - By taking upon the penalty due their sins and nailing it to the cross
        - And there dying for our sins and rising again that we might have victory in Jesus over sin and death
  - We need to be caring - by sharing the Good News
    - So that those who are in darkness can be in the light and see clearly
      - And that can only happen when we introduce people to Jesus and they receive.
        - “Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” – Gal 6:9

And so the first things we notice here in the opening verses:

- First, that this is a book about Jesus

- 2<sup>nd</sup> – That this message is entrusted to His saints
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – The events of this book will happen rapidly, one after another
- 4<sup>th</sup> – that there is a great blessing for believers who read, listen and keep the prophecies in this book
- 5<sup>th</sup> – that the immanent return of Jesus will be at the best time. At the peak, most opportune time
  - The 6<sup>th</sup> thing we want to notice here is the persons from whom the message was given

Read with me, the last of verse 3... “Greeting the Seven Churches: **4** John, to the seven churches which 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, **5** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, **6** and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

- First, verse 4 tells us that this the message of Revelation comes from the Father. The eternal God
  - This is a letter from “Him who is and who was and who is to come”
    - This is a way of stating eternity – is and was and is to come
      - And we know it’s a reference to the Father, because the Son is mention in the following verse
- Verse 4 also says that this is also a message from “the seven spirits who are before His throne” – does that sound odd to you?
  - There has been much debate on what this references.
    - The two major views:
      - that it refers to the Holy Spirit Himself or that it refers to the 7 angels that stand before God’s throne
        - Used of The Lord to proclaim the judgments on the earth

Honestly, in my opinion, both views are not without their issues. Neither view, in my opinion, should be held dogmatically because the text is not specifically clear.

- Many look to Isaiah 11 for support in this being the Holy Spirit
  - Verse 2 says “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord”
    - Since Revelation says that there are seven spirits and seven being the symbolic number of completion...

- Many believe that it is a way of describing the completeness of the Holy Spirit
  - And that Isaiah 11 gives a 7-fold description of the One Person of the Holy Spirit.
    - Therefore, when Rev. says “seven spirits who are before His throne”, it is a reference to the Holy Spirit – get it?
- In all honesty, they might be right but there’s a problem in the text for this viewpoint
  - And that is, Isaiah has only 6 descriptions of the Lord – not 7
    - Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and fear of the Lord
      - When Isaiah says “The Spirit of the Lord”, that is a title, not a description of His character
- To further the point, the Hebrew is even more clear.
  - As Dr. David Hocking points out that in the “Hebrew, there are three couplets or categories in the text noted by the words “the Spirit of” - indicating six characteristics, not seven”
- Another concern some bring up with this being the HSp, is the order in which He would be listed
  - In every reference to the triune God, it’s the Father, the Son and then the Holy Spirit
    - It’s argued that by this being out of order, John is indicating something else
- And to think that 7 attributes make up the completeness of the Holy Spirit is skeptical at best
  - These are the arguments against

The other major view on who the 7 spirits are before the throne is that they are the 7 angels before the throne of God

- Rev 3:1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”
  - In Rev 1:20 “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 which you saw are the seven churches.”
    - The seven stars are what – the seven angles
- Rev 5:6 “And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as

though it had been slain, having seven horns and **seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth**"

- The ones "sent out" into all the earth are the seven angels who give off the message
  - They are the ones who blow the seven trumpets. They are the ones that dump the bowls of wrath out
    - And these are the seven angels who stand before God on His throne
      - Rev 8: 2 "And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets."
- And so the other major view is that John is bringing a greeting from the Father, who sits on His throne
  - And from His messengers, His angels who stand before His throne.
    - And these are what John means when he says "the seven spirits before His throne"

Now, like I said, there are issues with each view.

- It would be odd to have angels tucked between the Father and the Son in a greeting of grace and peace
  - And so, while I may lean a particular direction personally, I believe there are good arguments for both and against both
    - And so I'll leave it to you to decide and know that when we go home we will know for certain. Amen?

So...we have the message of the Book of Revelation given to the Saints from God the Father,

- from the Seven Spirits before His throne and
  - the last person from whom the message of Revelation is given is in verse 5
    - "5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen"
- I love that Jesus is presented in His past, present and future ministries
  - Faithful witness looks to Jesus' past. Witness is martyr.
    - Jesus came and was faithful to accomplish His witness on the Cross for the human race.

- Firstborn is a word of preeminence.
  - It means Jesus rose from the dead as the first and preeminent Person to never die again.
    - It means others will follow and rise as a result of His resurrection. We live presently in the power of His resurrection as we await His return.
- And in the future the Lord Jesus will be the literal ruler over the kings of the earth.
  - It's what this book describes as soon coming upon the earth.

And of course, not only does is He described in His past, present and future ministries,

- But the special emphasis here is what Jesus has already accomplished for believers,
  - because He "loves us" or better "keeps on loving us,"
    - and "has washed us from our sins" (the aorist tense in Greek, once for all) by His own blood.

You know, we rightfully tell people, *Jesus loves you*

- But it would be more meaningful to say, *Jesus **loved** you!*
  - He loved you while you were yet a sinner and He proved His love on the Cross by dying for you.
    - That is why we can say, *Jesus **loves** you.*
      - His love does not depend upon your behavior and it can never change.
- He washed us from our sins in His own blood.
  - This <washed> can be translated *loosed or freed* and is better understood that way.
    - This may not be something we fully comprehend at first.
      - See, in the OT, the temple priest applied the blood of bulls and goats to temporarily loose you from your sins.
        - But these were temporary. It had to be applied each year or more
- But Jesus placed Himself as the sacrificial Lamb and used His own blood to loose us once-for-all from sin.
  - We are declared righteous by His activity on the Cross

Want a good definition of what it means to be a Christian?

- You were and always will be loved by Jesus and are loosed from the **penalty and power** of your sins.
  - One day soon, either through death or at the Rapture, we will be loosed from the **presence** of sin.
    - And what a day that will be

I wish we had more time. There's so much here, but let me finish with the **7th** thing we want to notice in the opening verses of Revelation:

- When He comes, everyone will see it!
  - 7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End,*" says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."
    - When Jesus returns, every eye will see Him – even the Jewish nation, that has rejected their Messiah –
      - Will see Jesus return
        - And they will look upon Him whom they have pierced
- This is the promise and prophecy of Zechariah 12:10
  - "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn"
    - Every eye will see Him. It will not be an invisible coming back like the JW's think has already happened
      - But it will be a spectacle for all spectacles

And so there we have it. The opening of John's letter to the churches.

- This is a book about Jesus, His coming again and the events preceding that event
- And God Almighty Himself has entrusted this message to His saints – To you and to me
  - To read, to listen and the preserve
- John tells us too, that when the first event that's shown to us in here commences
  - The following will follow in rapid order

- And so we need to be watchful because He promises His return is immanent – it could happen at any moment
  - And when He returns – every eye will see it.
    - It will be an event like no other
  - And don't forget, there is also a great blessing for the believer who reads and keeps this book
    - No other book in the Bible promises this

Next week: a description of the glorified Jesus