

# Revelation - Chapter 1

by David Guzik

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*The book of Revelation reveals Jesus Christ and shows us the Antichrist, God's judgment, and calamity coming upon the earth.*

**Duration:** 55:34

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Revelation 1:1-3

**Topics:** "Bible Prophecy", "Jesus Revelation"

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## Description

In this sermon on the book of Revelation, the speaker emphasizes the importance of studying the Bible both in detail and through a broader lens. He rejects the notion that the book of Revelation is meaningless and asserts that it has a coherent meaning and promise of blessing. The sermon then delves into the introductory verses of Revelation, highlighting the revelation of Jesus Christ and the greeting in verse 4. The speaker also mentions the imagery used in describing Jesus, such as his voice like many waters and his countenance like the sun shining in its strength.

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## Transcript

Good evening, everybody. I'm so happy to be here, I really am. And even though I feel like I wanna spend a long time giving thanks to you and introductions and telling you all about what's been going on with our family and the ministry in Germany and all of that, I'm just gonna put that off.

We've got five Wednesday nights together here. So I can do that later. What I really wanna do now is just jump right into this great book of Revelation.

You ready for that? All right, Father, we pray for your blessing and anointing upon your word. And Lord, we do it with such confidence because as we're gonna read tonight, you've promised to bless us as we're into this word tonight. It's your promise.

So we just say to you now, Lord, make good on your promise and speak to us by your word and through the spirit of God. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, with that, open up your Bibles to the book of Revelation chapter one.

Tonight, we're going to cover chapter one. And as you'll see, our study in the book of Revelation with the five weeks that I'm with you now and into the future, it's really a survey. You can get into this book with much greater depth, but there is a great advantage to taking it at the pace that we're going to take it doing

approximately a chapter a week.

The advantage with this is you get a better, more coherent understanding of the book as a whole. You know, that's the great thing about the Bible, isn't it? There's benefit in studying it very close, very detailed. And then there's also great benefit in sort of pulling back the lens a little bit and doing a little bit more of a survey.

And so the pace we're gonna take through the book of Revelation is pretty fast, but it's good. And you're gonna get that survey picture of it. So let's just jump right into it.

I'm not gonna give any introductory material about the book of Revelation because it provides us its own introductory material beginning now in the first two verses. Are you ready for this? 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, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ to all things that he saw.

I've got good news for you. If you understand these first two verses, it puts you in the right frame of mind to understand the entire book of Revelation. And you'll see what I mean by the time we're done with these two verses.

Notice, first of all, how it begins, the revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, that ancient Greek word that's translated revelation, you know this word. It's the ancient Greek word apocalypsis.

It simply means an unveiling or a revealing. What this is doing is it's revealing or taking the cover off, so to speak, Jesus so that we can see him. Because what does the book of Revelation reveal? It tells you right there in the first few words.

It reveals to us Jesus Christ. Now, this is such a fundamental important principle. It's Jesus's revelation in two ways.

First of all, it's his revelation because it belongs to him. It belongs to Jesus and he's giving it to us, but it's his revelation also in the sense that he is the one being revealed by this book. He's the object revealed.

And from the outset, we are given perhaps the most important truth about the book of Revelation. This book shows us the Antichrist. Are you interested in the Antichrist? I am.

This book shows us God's judgment. It shows us calamity coming upon the earth. It shows us mystery Babylon.

It shows us the number of the beast. It shows us all interesting things that we're gonna get into in the coming weeks. But more than anything, it reveals to us Jesus Christ.

And I'll tell you this, if you come out of this study on the book of Revelation, an expert about the Antichrist, an expert about 666, an expert about mystery Babylon, if you catch all of that, and if you miss Jesus, you've missed the book because it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. So that's the first principle. The second principle, still in the first verse, look at this, which God gave him to show his servants.

He gave it to show it. Now, you might say, well, that's the most obvious thing in the world, but it's not obvious to everybody. Do you understand that many people treat the book of Revelation like it's radioactive, like nobody should be able to touch it or understand it.

We should stay away from this. Don't mess with the book of Revelation or you're interested in the book of Revelation. Oh, you must be crazy.

You must be one of those prophetic weird people or something like that. No, no, can I just say this? And I'm not making this up. He gave it to show it.

He gave it so that we would see it and understand. The book of Revelation was given that it would be shown and not hidden. This is apocalypsis, revelation, not apocrypha, which means hidden.

It's given to show us, not to hide it. So that's the second principle. Now, the third one, again, this is very important.

You understand this? You understand so much about the book of Revelation. Things which must shortly take place. Now, you might be stumbled about that word shortly.

Don't worry, we're gonna deal with that later, okay? And believe me, I believe the time is short, don't you? I believe that Jesus wants us to live with the great anticipation of his soon coming. And I believe that we have tremendous reason to believe in the world today that Jesus Christ is coming soon. I'm confident of it.

But listen, what I really want you to see in that first phrase is that John was talking about things that were future from his day, right? Do you understand that? When John wrote things which must shortly take place, he's talking about things that from his perspective were future. Now, that is so important to understand because do you believe that there are a lot of people who approach the book of Revelation and they believe that sort of the interpretive key to understanding it is to believe that John was talking about things that already had happened. No, John tells us right here in the very first verse that the dominant theme of the book of Revelation has to do with things that in his day had not yet happened.

They were things that were shortly to take place. Now, please understand this. Not all prophecy is predictive.

Some prophecy just tells you about God and his nature and what God is doing in the world. Not all prophecy is predictive, but this prophetic book clearly is predictive. It deals with things that at the very least from John's day were in the future.

Now, some people would tell us today that we shouldn't be concerned with prophecy. They'd say that it's a frivolous exercise, but listen, if God is concerned enough to talk about prophecy, we should be concerned enough to listen. And I'll agree that there are probably some people who are out of balance in their prophetic interest.

There probably are such people, but listen, to deny that we should have a prophetic interest is to simply ignore the writing of the Bible altogether. It tells us that we should be interested in these things. All right, let's move on here.

Next, he says here, he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant, John. That's at the very end of verse one. This tells you something else about the book of Revelation that it is a book of signs.

Do you see that word there, signified? Do you see what it's made up of? It's signified, right? Well, you know what? It's the same way in the ancient Greek. The word there is the same character. It's signified.

This tells us that the book of Revelation is a book that communicates in signs. Now, this might frustrate you. You might wish that John had given us a detailed political analysis of the last days just in the way that you would read in a newspaper today, but that's not what he did.

He communicated it to us in signs. Now, why? Well, there's very good reasons for that. First of all, John speaks to us about things that happened and things that he saw in heaven.

I'll never forget what the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. It's verse four, if you're interested. He says that Paul saw things or heard things that could only be described with inexpressible words.

In other words, what Paul saw in heaven, he couldn't describe it fully with words. And therefore, John doesn't describe a lot of things with words themselves, but rather with pictures, with signs. And he uses these symbolic images to explain them.

And the signs are also necessary for another reason, because there is tremendous power in symbolic language. You know, it's one thing to call a religious system evil or bad. That's a bad, bad religious system, right? I can say that, right? Or I can say, here is a woman drunk with the blood of the saints.

That speaks to you something, doesn't it? That's a bad, bad religious system. Or to say it's drunk with the blood of the saints. You see the difference there? The signs communicate a power that just a mere description would not have otherwise.

Now, even though the book of Revelation is filled with signs, it is very, very understandable and accessible to people who have at least some understanding of the first 65 books of the Bible. There's really no reason for you to be intimidated by this book. And maybe somebody has tried to make you feel intimidated.

Maybe somebody has tried to scare you away from the book of Revelation. You can't understand it. It's too obscure.

There's too many competing theories. Listen, I want you to throw all of that out of your mind. And I'm the first one to agree that there are certain places in the book of Revelation that we don't understand every detail and maybe this idea or this idea of that.

But in the whole, you can grab a hold of this book. You really can. Do you know why? Because it's deeply rooted in the Old Testament.

The book of Revelation contains more than 500 allusions to the Old Testament. And 278 of the 404 verses in the book of Revelation, that's almost 70% of the verses make some kind of reference back to the Old Testament. If you have a grasp of the Old Testament, you can understand the book of Revelation.

And that's what we're gonna do as we make our way through it. We're gonna connect the Old Testament and what's revealed to us in the New Testament, the first 65 books of the Bible with this glorious 66th book of the Bible. And we're gonna come to an understanding of it.

Okay, so we understand this. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to show to his servants about things which must shortly come to pass, that he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant, John, who bore witness to the word of God. Now, right there, we know two other things.

We know who the human author of this book was, right? Who was it? John. Well, can I ask you a question? Which John? There's a few Johns mentioned in the New Testament, right? Well, listen, by

almost universal agreement, it's understood that this is John, the apostle, who's the same writer of the gospel of John and the books of first, second, and third John. John is the author.

And I love what he says there in the end part of verse two, who bore witness to the word of God. You know what I find amazing about that? John knew that this was Holy Scripture. He knew it.

Now, don't you wonder about that sometimes? When they sat down to write the Bible, when they were being inspired by the Holy Spirit to write out the Bible, when Paul wrote the Ephesians or when Peter wrote his epistles or when Luke wrote Acts, did they know they were writing inspired Scripture? Well, I believe the proper answer to that is sometimes they knew it and sometimes they didn't. Here, John definitely knew it because he tells us right up front that he bore witness to the word of God. This was a revelation of God.

So that's a start right there, right? It reveals to us Jesus. It talks about the future. It talks about things that we should understand because God gave it to show it to us.

And it has many signs in it that we can understand. Now, take a look at verse three. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the word of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it for the time is near.

Now, this is remarkable because it follows on John's mention that this was the word of God. And then he does something which should capture our attention. He lets us know that if you read this book, there is a blessing from God for those who read and those who hear this book.

It's a particular, a unique blessing to those who read and notice, keep the message of this book. Again, some people want you to think that only fanatics want to dig deeply into the book of Revelation. But you know what this tells you? This is a book for anybody who wants to be blessed.

Do you wanna be blessed? This book is for you. You don't need to be afraid of it. And I want you to notice something else here in verse three.

John did not say that you have to understand everything in this book in order to be blessed by it. Does it say there in verse three, blessed is he who understands everything in this book? No, he who reads and those who hear the word of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it. If you read it, if you hear it, and if you keep it, God promises a blessing to you.

Now that's great. I need to be blessed. I don't know about you.

And I expect it. I expect God to move through these Wednesday nights in your life as you give attention to the book of Revelation. And you should also anticipate something else.

You should anticipate that the devil does not want you to be blessed, right? You should anticipate that there would be a spiritual enemy or opponent that would keep you from being blessed by what God has to give you through this book. I'll tell you exactly how you should conduct yourself with this study here on Wednesday nights, all right? You should read the scripture portion before you come. That's too late for you for Revelation chapter one, right? But you should come here next week having already read Revelation chapter two.

Secondly, when you come here on Wednesday night, of course, just pay attention. Listen not only to what I say, but listen to what the Holy Spirit would say to you as I speak. Because isn't that important? I'm very aware of this.

I hope you are too, that there's two sermons going on right here. There's the sermon that I'm preaching, right? There's the message that I'm giving from the word of God. And then there's the message that the Holy Spirit is speaking to you as I preach.

Now I'll tell you, one of those sermons is a lot better than the other one. Listen to what the spirit of God tells you. And then when you get home tonight, tomorrow, you read it again.

Read it again. And you'll be surprised at what the spirit brings to your mind, your memory. What he reinforces, this is what I want you to keep.

This is what I want you to focus upon. You stay on that and there will be such a great blessing for you in this book. You will find your life blessed over these next 22 weeks or so as we make our way through this book.

I want you to know this as well, that it says that it's to be kept. This book gives you things to keep, things to do. It's not merely to satisfy our prophetic interest, but to change the way we live.

Now, if I could point out one other interesting thing, at least it's interesting to me in verse three, where it says, blessed is he who reads and blessed are those who hear. He who reads is in the singular, both in the English translation and in the ancient Greek. Those who hear is in the plural, both in the English translation and in the original Greek.

This speaks of one person reading and many people hearing. Now, that's very relevant to the way that they would conduct services in the early church, right? They would just read it at an early church service and that we understand, but it also has the idea, and I don't think I'm paraphrasing far above to just say this, blessed is the pastor who teaches the book of Revelation and blessed is the congregation who hears it, right? And that's what we're here to do, to get just such a blessing. Now, I need to make an important point off of this understanding, that there's a blessing for us here in the book of Revelation.

The point is simply this, that the book of Revelation means something. Is that shocking to you, that it means something? You shouldn't be shocked by that because it does mean something. And there are people who believe that the book of Revelation doesn't really mean anything, that it's just sort of, oh, this thing and that thing, but it has no coherent meaning.

But listen, it is not a book of meaningless nonsense. It has a promise of blessing, not a promise of confusion. Secondly, this book of Revelation deals, as we've read before, with things that are gonna take place in the future or at least in the main, and we'll touch on that a little bit ahead.

Now, verse four brings us into a greeting here for this book. Look right here, verse four. 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 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

And we'll stop right now for there in the middle of verse five. Okay, first, who's the letter to? Well, the letter is to the seven churches, which are in Asia. And we're gonna go over that in greater depth, but don't think

for a minute that just because this introduction is that it's to seven specific churches that we're in a specific part of the world, that it's not also a letter to you.

Oh, no, this letter is to you and I'll deal with that more next week. But whose letter from? In a beautiful way, John tells you, this letter is from the triune God. It's from the father, it's from the spirit, and it's from the son of God.

This letter is from, first of all, from God, the father, him who was, excuse me, who is and who was and who is to come. It's from the Holy Spirit, the seven spirits who are before the throne. We'll deal with that image later because it's mentioned again in Revelation chapters two and three.

And then finally, it's from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth. You know what I like about this? This gives you a great example of how the Trinity is in the New Testament. Do you understand? There is no formal explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament.

Are you aware of that? Instead, what is it? It's woven into the warp and woof of the New Testament. It's all over the place. It's very easy for John to say, this is coming to you from the father, the spirit and the son.

He doesn't have to give a detailed theological explanation of the Trinity. It's right here for us to understand. It's woven throughout the fabric of the New Testament.

But I like how he did it. First, he mentioned the father, then he mentioned the spirit, then he mentioned the son and now picking it up in the middle of verse five, we're gonna see how he talks more about Jesus. Let's see.

To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and who has made us kings and priests to his God and a father to him be glory and dominion forever and ever, amen. Oh, I want to spend a long time on this verse and a half, but I'm not going to. But can I just point out a few things? First of all, notice what it says in the middle of verse five, to him who loved us.

Now, I'm aware that some of your Bible translations may say loves us in the present tense. I prefer the translation that's here in my New King James Version that says him who loved us, because to me, there's something very powerful about putting it in the past tense, to him who loved us, because whenever the Bible puts it in that way, it draws your attention back to the fact that Jesus Christ demonstrated his love for us on the cross. I think this is so important because there are many Christian lives who are not secure in knowing the love of Jesus in their life right now.

And do you know why? Because they're constantly looking to the present circumstances of their life to see whether or not Jesus loves them. So what does that say? Well, look, when things are going good, Jesus loves me, isn't it great? When things are going bad, oh, Jesus must not love me anymore. You look to the present circumstances of your life, but listen, take it out of the present tense.

Look to the past. Jesus demonstrated his love for you once and for all at the cross, and he can give you no greater demonstration than what he did at the cross. Now he can give you new demonstrations, he can give you fresh demonstrations, and he does over and over again, right? But he can never give you a greater one.

I want you to think about that. Not only does he love you in the present tense, but he loved you in the past tense. And that is settled forever as a fact of history.

And then what did he do? He washed you from your sins in his own blood. Now that's beautiful, isn't it? You know, a priest in the Old Testament would never wash somebody from their sins in his own blood. Could you imagine saying that to the high priest? Okay, now sacrifice yourself.

No way, he would say, but Jesus did it. He washed us from our sins in his own blood, but notice the order. He loved you first, and then he washed you.

You thought that he would only love you once he washed you, right? Nope, he loved you just as you were, dirty as all get out. But then he loved you, and then he washed you, and then, I can hardly believe it, he's made us kings and priests to his God and Father. That's the status that Jesus gives to those whom he loved at the cross, and those who are washed in his own blood.

It would have been enough just to love us and cleanse us, but Jesus says, no, it's not enough. I've got to make them kings and priests. He makes us his royalty.

He makes us his special servants, that's priests. Isn't that glorious? Do you understand something? This is something greater than Adam ever had in the Garden of Eden. Oh, Adam was innocent.

Adam did not have the stain of sin before the fall, but listen, he's never described as a king and a priest. We're given more in Jesus Christ than we ever lost in Adam. He's made us kings and priests unto our God.

So no wonder he says there at the end of verse six, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever, amen. He can't stop praising Jesus when he thinks all of what Jesus has done for us. And then, having thought about Jesus in this way, what does John immediately do in verse eight? Well, he thinks about the return of Jesus, and so he says, behold, he's coming with the 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.

Do you understand what this is? Look at that first word there in verse seven. What is it? Behold. You know what that means.

Look here, check it out. Fix your eyes upon this. Look at the fact that Jesus is coming again.

It's a command to look. He moves from praising Jesus to describing his return, and he wants us with the eye of anticipation and faith to behold Jesus returning in glory to the earth. This is what Jesus told us to do, right? To believe that Jesus was coming soon? And now John tells us, draw your attention to this, that Jesus is coming with the clouds.

You know what the clouds means? It means two things. First of all, it's very literal. When Jesus ascended up into heaven, we know this from the end of the gospel of Luke, when he ascended up into heaven, he ascended into the clouds, and an angel came along and he said this to the disciples, hey, don't worry about Jesus.

Just as he went up to the earth, he's gonna come back to the earth. There's gonna be clouds in the sky when Jesus comes back. Now, if you see, and it's one of those beautiful Santa Barbara days without a cloud in the sky, don't you worry.

Jesus can still come back, because you don't know, there may be some nice white fluffy clouds right over Jerusalem at that very moment, okay? So first of all, there's gonna be literal clouds when Jesus returns. But here's the other idea. Clouds are also used to describe the people of God coming with Jesus.

Now, this is what's great about that. The association of clouds in the Old Testament, it's associated with the Shekinah glory of God. I can hardly take this in.

We are God's glory. We around him at the return of Jesus, we have that association of being his crown, his reward, his glory. It's when Jesus comes back to the earth with us, faithfully returning with him as a conquering general to take over this planet, we come with him as of a mighty cloud of glory.

We are his trophy. We are his reward. So he's going to come with the clouds and notice what it says.

Every eye will see him, even they who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him. Everybody will see the glory of the risen, exalted, returning Jesus come back to this earth. Now, after those first seven verses, which is sort of John's introduction to the book, now we have something different in verse eight.

Do you see it? Now, I don't know if you have one of those red letter additions of the Bible. Do you have that? Not everybody does. A red letter edition of the Bible, most of them will have right here, these words in red.

Now listen, there's a good and a bad thing about a red letter edition. It's fine to call attention to the words of Jesus, right? That's good. But look, let's not kid ourselves.

The words of Jesus are not any more inspired than any other words in the Bible, right? All equally inspired. But if you'll notice, if you have a red letter edition, what does it show you? These words are in red. Jesus is speaking to us now.

And he says, 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. John's finished with his introduction.

Now Jesus is making his introduction. And after all, it's his revelation, isn't it? He has the right to introduce himself. And so he introduces himself with two titles that basically mean the same thing.

I'm the alpha and the omega. Alpha was the first letter of the ancient Greek alphabet, omega the last. It's like saying I'm the A to Z. And then something very similar, he says, I'm the beginning and the end.

Now listen, if Jesus is the A and the Z, if he's the beginning and the end, then he owns everything in between, right? He's Lord over everything. And this is wonderful. This means that Jesus is in control of everything.

Who is and who was and who is to come the almighty. I love that word, almighty. It's the ancient Greek word pantokrator.

And what it means literally is the one who has his hand on everything. That's Jesus, the almighty. He's in control.

He is in control of history. Look, you look around at our world today and it seems like the world is just spiraling out of control, right? If you didn't believe that Jesus had control of things right now, that he was

the almighty with his hand on everything, wouldn't you despair? Wouldn't you believe that the world is just spiraling out of control, but it's not? The one who's the beginning and the end owns everything in between. And he is guiding history towards his desired fulfillment, a fulfillment of glory.

And you could say to this new earth that he's gonna come and establish in this world. He directs all of human history and even our individual lives. He's the almighty.

That word almighty, ancient Greek word pantokrator, it's used 10 times in the New Testament. Nine of the 10 times are right here in the book of Revelation. This is a book all about Jesus and his sovereignty and the fact that he's almighty over the earth.

Now, verse nine. I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. John introducing, okay, I was on Patmos.

Why was John on Patmos? Well, Patmos was used as a prison island by the Roman government. It was sort of an Alcatraz of the Roman world. It was a prison without walls.

You got a dangerous criminal, put them on Patmos and you wouldn't have to worry about it. There were also marble quarries on the island of Patmos and many of the prisoners were forced laborers in the marble quarries. John was probably there because he was persecuted.

He was arrested. Now there's Christian legend or tradition or you could say history. It's a little hard to know exactly how accurate these things are, but there's Christian stories, let's say, from the early church that John was on Patmos because they tried to martyr him, but he wouldn't die.

And so they sent him to the island of Patmos and that's where he received this revelation. Now that's probably the true story, but you should be open to another possibility. It's possible that John was on the island of Patmos as a missionary.

Maybe he was there to minister to the prisoners and to the other people there. That's probably not true, but it's a possibility. Whatever the case, he was on the island of Patmos, as he says, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

And then he says, verse 10, I was in the spirit on the Lord's day. And I heard behind me a loud voice as of a trumpet saying, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. And what you see, write it in a book and send it to the seven churches, which are in Asia, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

And you're gonna become very familiar with those names over the next two weeks. But what I want you to see is John starts out in verse 10 by saying that he was in the spirit on the Lord's day. When he says in the spirit, it seems to be more than just the idea that he's walking in the spirit as a believer should be walking in the spirit.

The idea is that he's having some kind of out of body experience. And I don't mean that in an occultic way that some people take it today, but in some way he's carried out of his physical body and he's in a spiritual experience that seems to have him almost beside himself, if you wanna use that term. And this happened on the Lord's day, which seems to be Sunday, the reference that he's making to.

Now, why would that be Sunday? Well, it's interesting. Among the pagans of the Roman empire, they called the first day of every month, Emperor's day, Caesar's day, because it was special in honor of Caesar. It may very well be that the Christians decided that the first day of every week would be called the Lord's day in honor of the Lord and his resurrection on that day.

Now, this is not the same term used for the day of the Lord. When he says that, he doesn't mean the day of the Lord. We're gonna talk about the day of the Lord.

That's gonna come soon enough. But here he's talking about the Lord's day. But I really like what it says going on there in verse 10 at the end.

It says that he heard behind him a loud voice as of a trumpet. Now you can picture this in your mind, right? John is there, he's carried up into heaven, he's in the spirit, he's in some kind of spiritual experience. And behind him, he hears a voice as loud and clear as a trumpet blast.

And he looks around behind him and what does he see? He sees Jesus. And he hears this voice, the voice is telling him what you see right in the book. He wheels around, look at verse 12.

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned, I saw, not Jesus, first he says, I saw seven golden lampstands. Now that must have been a disappointment, right? Then he says, and in the midst of the seven lampstands, one like the son of man clothed with the garment down to his feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

It had been some 60 years since John saw Jesus with his own eyes. Can you imagine what this was like for him? He turns around and he sees something and he knows it's something special and it's Jesus, it's Jesus, Jesus, I haven't seen you for 60 years. But suddenly Jesus doesn't look like Jesus used to look, right? He looks different.

Now he knows it's Jesus. He says very clearly one like the son of man and he's in the midst of what? Of seven golden lampstands. Now what's a lampstand? Well, a lampstand is not a candelabra, right? It's not a menorah, it's not a lamp itself.

It's like talking about a music stand. What does a music stand do? It holds the music. What does the lampstand do? It holds the lamp, right? Now, if you think about that and we're gonna see the lampstands are beautiful representations of the church because the church isn't the light.

The church holds the light where it can be displayed, where it can be seen. But the light comes from God, the church just displays it. And that's exactly what John saw.

He saw seven golden lampstands, these sort of platforms or pillars where the lamps could be set upon so that their light could fill the whole room. And in the midst of that, what does he see? He sees Jesus walking in the midst of the lampstands. And it's beautiful.

He sees Jesus and the first thing he notices about him, it's very interesting, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. He's got a long garment on. Now you know what the significance of that was? A long garment in that culture was a sign of dignity and importance because a long garment meant you didn't have to do any work, right? If you're wearing a long garment, you're not ready to do work.

You don't see somebody out in a wedding dress mowing the lawn, right? It's just not gonna happen. They're wearing the long garment, people wait upon them that day, it's how it's set up. In that culture, long garment, this is a person of importance and dignity.

And then around him, what's it say? It says, clothed with the garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. He has a golden band around his chest, a big golden belt. You know what I find significant about that? In the Old Testament, it says that the high priest was to wear something around his chest, a sash, something around his chest that had a golden thread in it.

One thread for the high priest. What does Jesus wear? All gold. The whole thing is gold.

So much greater than the high priest of the Old Testament. And there he is. He's like a priest walking in the midst of the lampstands.

Can you see that? Here's Jesus, here's the lampstands all around and there he is. Now those lampstands represent what? Represent, as we're gonna find out, the churches, right? Isn't that a beautiful picture? Do you understand what the priest would do in the Old Testament? The priest would go into the temple every day and tend the lamps that were on the lampstands. You see, because they had to keep those lamps burning.

They had to put new oil in the lamps. They had to trim the wick. They had to make sure they were burning clean.

He took care of the lamps. And that's exactly what Jesus does. He's walking in the midst of his church, making sure that those lamps are burning bright.

He's taking care of his church. He's loving them. He's guarding them.

He's right there in the midst of it, just as much as the priest in the Old Testament would take care of those lamps. But now, starting at verse 14, he begins to describe Jesus in even greater detail. He says, his head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow.

His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. He has in his right hand seven stars.

Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. Do you get the feel of this from John? Do you get the feel that what he sees is so overwhelming that all he can do is use some different images to describe it? For example, his head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes like a flame of fire.

His eyes were so full of life, and so piercing through any kind of deception or deceit that right there you could see it like a flame of fire. His feet are like fine brass. They've been purified in the fire, and they're strong because brass was the strongest metal known to the ancient world.

And his voice was like the sound of many waters, like a great waterfall. Have you ever been by a great waterfall? You ever been in Niagara Falls or another huge waterfall? The sound is deafening, isn't it? That's what John heard. And then it says, he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

Now listen, I need to tell you something. In verses 19 and 20, we're told what those seven stars are. Does anybody wanna guess? The seven stars represent those churches, right? The churches are in his hand as the seven stars, but what is the face of Jesus like? Like the sun shining in its strength.

No, that's exactly the proportion it should be. How much brighter does the sun shine than the stars? Well, when the sun's out, you can't even see the stars, can you, right? And isn't this how it should be? Sometimes in the church, we put so much focus on the church or the leaders in the church that we sort of eclipse Jesus, don't we? Instead, what do we need to do? We need to let the sun shine in its strength, and we need to let the sun eclipse out the stars. And the stars are there.

Oh, don't worry, they're right there in the right hand of Jesus. But listen, it's the glory of the sun that shines forth in its strength. That's how great his countenance was.

Now, this is the only physical description given to us of Jesus in the Bible. We have to admit it's symbolic, right? John's doing the best he can in a heavenly situation. But in our modern pictures of Jesus, we prefer to think of him as he was, not as he is.

And this is how Jesus is right now. Now, how awesome is this sight? Look at verse 17. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.

Now, please remember, this was John who had seen Jesus face to face for more than three years. And when he saw the glorified Jesus, he collapsed in a heap as if he was dead. But right there in verse 17, he laid his right hand on me saying to me, do not be afraid.

I am the first and the last. I am he who lives and was dead. And behold, I'm alive evermore.

Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and death. Now, listen, there he is, collapsed as a heap, as if he were dead at the feet of Jesus.

Can I say that that's not a bad place to be? It's better to be as if you were dead at the feet of Jesus than to be alive anywhere else. Because what does Jesus do with him? He puts his right hand on him and he raises him up. I wonder if that wasn't the change for John.

I know I'm just speculating on this, but I think that the glorified Jesus was such a remarkable sight for John that he didn't connect it so much with the Jesus that he knew by his prior vision. But when he felt the touch of Jesus, he said, oh, I recognize that touch. That's the touch of my savior.

That's the touch of my Lord. And he was raised up and he could say, yes, it is you, Jesus, the one that I knew from your earthly ministry. So now we're ending the chapter here, verses 19 and 20.

Write these things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which will take place after this, the mystery of the seven stars which you saw on my right hand and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches. Now, John is commanded again for the second time in this chapter to write. I think there's something interesting there.

John had to be commanded to write. You know, this was an amazing spiritual experience that he had, right? If John were today to have an experience like this or someone like John, nobody would have to tell him to write. He would immediately go out and try to make a book deal, right? And sell as many copies of

my heavenly visit as possible.

I get the feeling from this that John wouldn't have wrote this unless Jesus commanded him to. And this tells me something. Listen, there are spiritual experiences that you have and that I have that we should just keep to ourselves.

You know, you don't have to tell everybody about everything. But in this case, John was commanded to write and he was commanded to write three things. Now notice this carefully.

It's right there in verse 19. Number one, he was to write the things which you have seen. This vision of the glorious heavenly Jesus, write that.

So he did. Secondly, the things which are, and that's gonna concern the material in chapters two and three, the things about the seven churches that were right there existing in John's day. And then part three here in verse 17, the things which will take place after this.

This means that Jesus wanted John to write about the things that would happen after those seven churches, the things of the last days. Now, this is great. Jesus gave John a very handy three-part structure for the book of Revelation.

The things which you have seen, that's Revelation chapter one. The things which are, that's Revelation chapters two and three, and the things which will happen or take place after this, that's Revelation chapters four through 22. There they are.

And a reminder, John, the seven stars were the seven angels of the churches, which we'll discuss next week. And the seven lampstands are the churches themselves. Now, look, we close with this idea.

John had a pretty spectacular vision. Wouldn't you agree? When you read this, isn't there something inside of you that says, oh Lord, I wish I could have a spectacular vision like that. I wish I could hear the son of God speak like a mighty trumpet and like a great waterfall.

I wish I could see those eyes like a flame of fire. I wish I could fall as dead at his feet and have him touch me in his loving way and raise me up. There's something in you that says, I want that, right? Well, here's what I have to tell you.

Number one, don't worry, you'll get it. Absolutely, you're gonna see this. You will see it.

You're gonna get to heaven. I'm assuming you're born again. You're gonna get to heaven and you will see this.

But secondly, you can know the very same Jesus that John saw. You see, you can know his purity because this is a pure Jesus. You can know his eternal wisdom.

You can know the searching judgment that lies behind those eyes that are a flame of fire. You can know his victory that comes as if it was refined from those feet in the fetus brass, refined from the fire. You can know his authority.

You can know his majesty. Each of these aspects of his nature is ours to know intimately. You can know it.

And here's one thing I have to leave you with. When did John have this vision? When he was essentially being persecuted on the island of Patmos. Oh, Lord, I wanna see this heavenly Jesus, but don't send me to Patmos.

Wasn't it just like that for Stephen, right? This first martyr of the church. Do you remember when he was being stoned? What did he see? He had a heavenly vision of Jesus where he saw him standing at the right. Oh, Lord, I want Stephen's vision.

I just don't want his martyrdom, right? Don't be surprised if God uses the most pressing and trying circumstances of your life to reveal himself to you more gloriously than you've ever known him before. It was true for Stephen, it was true for John, and often it's true in our lives. Now, what practical application can we make of this? Well, we can worship him, right? Isn't that a great practical application? Shouldn't we worship this great God? And so let's do that right now.

You know that the worship team's gonna come up. You know that we're gonna be ready now to worship God. I want you to think about the glory of Jesus ascended into heaven, and here he is to speak to you and to minister to your needs.

Let's connect with him right now. I'm gonna close with prayer, and then we're gonna worship Jesus. And you know, the prayer team's up here, they're around.

If you wanna talk to them, please do. If you've got any questions about the text that we've gone over tonight, I'll stay here as long as you want, and I'll answer the questions, because I love doing that. I love talking about the Bible.

But let's pray together right now, shall we? Father, we're so grateful. We're so grateful that this book reveals to us Jesus, and we've seen it so powerfully and clearly here tonight. And so Lord, we say, reveal yourself to us.

And Lord, it's okay. It's okay for you to reveal yourself to us in the pressing circumstances of our life. And I wanna pray especially tonight, Lord, for those who just feel that they're under the gun, Lord, they're under extremely pressing circumstances.

Lord Jesus, won't you come and be the difference for them tonight? Won't you come, Jesus, and please reveal yourself to them? Lord, I know that it happens as we see your word, but there's a work that your spirit has to do in and through the word. Lord, we pray that it would be perfected among us right now. As much as we need to, we will see Jesus.

We will see him more clearly than ever before. Jesus, come and meet with us now. We offer to you the worship that you deserve as the one who loved us and washed us from our sin.

In Jesus' name, amen. Let's all stand together. ■ And all who are thirsty ■ All who are weak ■ Come to the fountain ■ Dip your heart in the stream of life ■ Let the pain and the sorrow ■ Be washed away ■ In the waves of his mercy ■ As a deep cry now to thee ■ We sing, come Lord Jesus, come ■ Come Lord Jesus, come ■ And all who are thirsty ■ All who are weak ■ Come to the fountain ■ Dip your heart in the stream of life ■ Let the pain and the sorrow ■ Be washed away ■ In the waves of his mercy ■ As a deep cry now to thee ■ We sing, come Lord Jesus, come ■ Come Lord Jesus, come ■ We sing, come Lord Jesus, come ■ Hey, God bless you guys.

So the prayer team is still up here. If you have anything on your heart or anything on your mind that you wanna pray for, and if you wanna talk to Dave, take advantage of that. It's an awesome opportunity.

God bless you, have a good evening. ■ Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey ■

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