

**Handout 2: Revelation, Chapter 1 (Talk 2)**  
**David Crabtree, Reformation Fellowship, July 4, 2021**

**I. Introduction**

- A. Question—Why is Revelation so difficult?
1. Part of the bizarreness is cultural distance.
    - a) I think I will be able to help with that somewhat.
    - b) But even without the cultural distance, it is obscure.
  2. God likes to be opaque.
    - a) He has chosen to be withdrawn from our everyday reality.
  3. He likes to put us in a position of taking him on faith.
    - a) He wants us to have plenty of opportunity to turn away from him.
    - b) We have to trust God for absolutely everything.
      - (1) That is one of the main themes of Revelation.
- B. Last week we looked at Daniel 7
1. It provides the basic story line that the book of Revelation develops.
  2. It is the story of
    - a) A world dominated by rebellious, human empire
    - b) God enthroned with control over the entire creation
      - (1) He grants authority to the Messiah to establish God's kingdom on earth.
      - (2) Empire is destroyed.
      - (3) The Messiah establishes an eternal, righteous kingdom.
  3. Let's turn to the text.

**II. Revelation 1:1-3**

*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*

- A. This is a preface to the body of the work.
- B. This is a revelation that comes from Jesus Christ.
1. It originated from God.
    - a) Jesus made this revelation known to John.
      - (1) Via his angel

In the Fourth Gospel the role of taking the things of God and showing them to people is often assigned to Christ: John 1:18; 5:19–23; 12:49; 17:8; cf. Matt 11:27.) (Mounce, p. 41)

2. It is in the form of signs (ἑσήμανεν).
  3. The intended audience is the saints.
- C. The content of the revelation is a description of what things must be.
1. In order to tell the story God wanted to tell, many things had to happen (even some very nasty things).
- D. John's credibility
1. "The word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ"
    - a) This could mean a lot of things.
    - b) Similar wording appears several times in Revelation.
      - (1) This same phrase shows up again in verse 9.
        - (a) There it appears to mean the "Gospel."
      - c) Here the phrase appears to be talking about the vision or the revelation.
        - (1) "The word of God" and "the testimony of Jesus Christ" must be synonymous.
  2. John is faithfully reporting the vision.
    - a) He has retained a trustworthy account of everything he saw and heard.
  3. "Witnessing" is an important concept in Revelation.
- E. This was written with the assumption that it would be presented by a reader to an audience of listeners.
1. It was written to be read.
  2. To receive the contents of this writing is a blessing.
    - a) To the one who reads
    - b) To the ones who hear and keep (take to heart)

### III. Revelation 1:4-6

*John,*

*To the seven churches in the province of Asia:*

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

- A. Revelation is written in the form of a letter.
1. Both the beginning and the ending are in the form of a letter.
- B. The letter is from John to seven churches in western Asia Minor.
1. John wishes them grace and peace from:

- a) God—the eternal one
    - (1) This is important in the book
      - (a) God’s eternity points to the fact that he transcends this reality.
    - (2) A version of this title (*who is, and who was, and who is to come*) is attributed to God five times.
      - (a) A satanic parody is used three times (17:8a, 8b, 11)
        - (i) The idea of a cheap imitation of the divine genuine article keeps showing up in the book.
  - b) The seven spirits (the spirits, angels of the churches)
    - (1) They will be mentioned several times in the book.
  - c) Jesus
    - (1) Faithful witness
      - (a) He is to be emulated in this.
    - (2) First born from the dead
      - (a) This reminds us that he was put to death.
      - (b) This reminds us that we, too, will not be held by death.
    - (3) Ruler of the kings of the earth
      - (a) Which proves that Jesus is more powerful than any earthly leader
    - (4) All three of these aspects of Jesus are important for his servants to keep in mind when faced with persecution.
- C. John completes his introduction to the letter with praise to God.
- 1. Glory and power to Jesus
    - a) He loves us.
    - b) He has freed us from our sins by his blood.
    - c) He has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve God.
  - 2. This is a list of very important things that Jesus has done for us.

#### IV. Revelation 1:7-8

*Look, he is coming with the clouds,  
and every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him;  
and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.  
So shall it be! Amen.*

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

- A. These verses constitute a psalm that is a prelude to the vision.
  - 1. This psalm is focused on how things turn out when Jesus returns.
    - a) It ends very well.
  - 2. The psalm is a composite of two fragments of OT verses with some modification.
  - 3. We will take some time to look at it.

- B. It is not clear who is saying this.
  - 1. It might be just part of John's composition.
- C. This is a composite made up of fragments of two OT verses.
  - 1. The first line is alluding to Daniel 7:14.
    - a) That passage was talking about the one who would come and destroy Empire once and for all.
    - b) But it was talking about someone distinct from God, "the son of man."
      - (1) The Messiah
        - (a) The agent of this destruction
    - c) We looked at this passage last week
  - 2. The next section is from Zechariah 12:10.

*"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."*

- a) The passage in Zechariah is describing the reaction that the Israelites will have in the future when God comes and reveals himself to them.
  - (1) The people of Israel will mourn and recognize that they had mocked and rejected God.
    - (a) The Hebrew word literally means "pierced."
      - (i) This was apparently understood to be a metaphor (because God can't be "pierced?").
      - (ii) The LXX translated it with a Greek word that means "mocked."
- 3. Jesus put these two passages together in Matthew 24:30:

*"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."*

- a) When Jesus returns, all the nations will mourn.
  - (1) Jesus expands it to all nations will mourn, not just Israel.
  - (2) But omits the phrase "who mocked/pierced him."
- 4. John reproduces the same composite that Jesus made, but he goes back to the OT originals and pulls more out than Jesus did.
  - a) Makes it clearer that it is the Messiah who will come back (from Daniel 7).
    - (1) Rather than the people merely looking upon God.
  - b) It is the people who pierced Jesus that will mourn.
    - (1) Rather than following the LXX and saying "mocked," John used a different Greek word that means "pierced."

5. John also changes it to be more expansive.
    - a) Whereas the Zechariah passage seems to be saying that the Israelites would mourn, John changes it to all nations.
  6. How does this change the picture from the picture one gets from Zechariah?
    - a) It will not be God that will be seen by people on earth.
      - (1) It will be the risen Messiah coming in glory.
    - b) It is not God that they “mocked.”
      - (1) It is Jesus whom they literally “pierced.”
    - c) It will not be just the Jews who will come to the realization of what they have done.
      - (1) It will be the whole world.
    - d) And they will be sorry for what they have done.
  7. That is precisely what will happen, you can count on it.
  8. Note these two things:
    - a) John took a statement that is referring to God and has it refer to Jesus.
      - (1) Ryan noticed this in Mark.
      - (2) We will see it several times in Revelation.
    - b) John took a statement that referred to the Jews and extended it to refer to all mankind.
      - (1) We will see this several times.
- D. All of this is done under the oversight of the eternal, sovereign, creator God.
1. The eternal existence of God is the proof of his sovereignty over creation
    - a) A very important theme in the book.
  2. There are four Alpha and Omega-type statements in Revelation.

God: I am the Alpha and the Omega (1:8).

Christ: I am the first and the last (1:17).

God: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (21:6).

Christ: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (22:13).

- a) Notice that Christ takes terms that originally referred to God.
    - (1) We will see this several times.
  - b) Notice how the expression builds.
    - (1) We will see this again.
- E. This psalm constitutes a description of how the day of the Lord ends.
1. We are not left in suspense.
    - a) We see here, at the beginning, how it ends.
  2. The rest of Revelation describes how we get there.

F. After this psalm we get the beginning of the vision.

## V. Revelation 1:9

*I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*

A. Circumstances of John when he received the vision

1. He is writing this from Patmos.
  - a) He was exiled.
    - (1) He was sent there for preaching the Gospel.
2. John is a companion in the persecution that the believers are experiencing.
  - a) He shares these things with all believers.
    - (1) Tribulation
    - (2) Kingdom
    - (3) Patient endurance
      - (a) This is a very important concept in Revelation.

## VI. Revelation 1:10-11

*On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."*

A. Instructions given to John

1. It happened on the Lord's day.
  - a) By the fourth century the "Lord's day" was regularly used to refer to Sunday.
    - (1) We don't know if this association was so strong in first century.
  - b) Some have argued that John was saying it happened on Easter.
    - (1) Christians marked Sunday because Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday.
    - (2) But there is no evidence that "Lord's day" was ever used to mean "Easter."
  - c) Whether it was Sunday or Easter, I think there was an intended association between the vision and the resurrection of Christ.
    - (a) The central figure in Revelation is the **risen** Christ.
    - (b) It is the story of the Messiah and his activity after the ascension.
2. He was in the spirit.
  - a) To go somewhere in his mind, but not physically
    - (1) I don't think he physically left his room.

B. A voice behind him

1. Like a trumpet

- a) Loud voices are voices that speak with the authority of God.
    - (1) Sometimes likened to other loud things
    - (2) Often disembodied
  - b) Why a trumpet?
    - (1) Does it imply a warning? Judgment? Going to war?
- C. Voice commanded him to write what he sees in a book.
- 1. Then send it to the seven churches
  - 2. This is the book of Revelation.

## VII. Revelation 1:12-16

*I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.*

- A. John turned to see who was speaking to him.
  - 1. He turned to **see** the voice.
    - a) Similar wording occurs in Exodus 20:18:

*And all the people perceived the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they trembled, and stood afar off.*  
(American Standard Version)

- b) Daniel 7:11 (LXX)

*I was then watching the noise of the great words, which the horn kept speaking,*

- c) Deuteronomy 4:12 (LXX)

*You heard the sound of words but you did not notice a likeness, only a voice.*

- d) I have not found any other passages where a sound was seen.
    - (1) There may be nothing of significance here.
    - (2) But it is curious.
  - e) A guess
    - (1) At Sinai there was a voice that was so real and so impersonated, that the people could "see" it, although there was no form.
- 2. He sees seven lampstands.
    - a) Apparently located in the holy place of the temple
      - (1) As far as we know, neither the temple nor the tabernacle ever had 7 lampstands.

- (2) So the vision is playing with the symbolism.
- b) Generally, the lampstands are understood to stand for the people of Israel or key representatives of the people of Israel.
  - (1) Here, as we are told later, it stands for the churches.
    - (a) Another case of an OT image being repurposed to be more universal.
- 3. John sees the one who was speaking.
  - a) Most of the imagery matches imagery in Daniel.
    - (1) Some of it appears to come from Daniel 7.
    - (2) But the man in Revelation 1:13 most closely resembles the man in the vision in Daniel 10.
      - (a) The man in Daniel 10 is a divine messenger in a vision sent to tell Daniel what will happen to the Jews in the future.

*I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. 6 His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. (Daniel 10:5-6)*

- (b) This man in Daniel 10 was described as follows:
  - (i) Linen robe
  - (ii) Gold belt
  - (iii) Body looked like yellow jasper
  - (iv) Face like lightning
  - (v) Eyes like blazing torches
  - (vi) Arms and legs like polished bronze
  - (vii) Voice like sound of a large crowd
- (c) In Revelation we have a very similar description
  - (i) Robe (presumably linen)
  - (ii) Golden sash
  - (iii) White hair
  - (iv) Eyes like blazing fire
  - (v) Feet like bronze
  - (vi) Voice like rushing waters
  - (vii) Right hand held seven stars
  - (viii) Double edged sword came out of mouth
  - (ix) Face like the sun shining
- (d) Differences
  - (i) Daniel lists color of body, while John gives color of hair (3<sup>rd</sup> feature).
  - (ii) Daniel lists face next (4<sup>th</sup> feature), while John leaves it to last.
  - (iii) Daniel has nothing corresponding to the seven stars in right hand and the two-edged sword in mouth.

- b) Who is this person that John hears?
  - (1) He is dressed like a priest.
    - (a) This is debatable.
  - (2) It is the same divine messenger Daniel saw in Daniel 10.
  - (3) There are some similarities between this person and the Messiah in Daniel 7.
    - (a) Son of man
  - (4) He has some of the features of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7.
    - (a) White clothes
    - (b) Lots of fire
  - (5) “Son of man” in Daniel 7, divine messenger in Daniel 10, and the man speaking to John are all representations of the Messiah.
  - (6) It becomes clear later in this passage that John is looking at the Messiah.
- c) What does the symbolism indicate?
  - (1) Robe, gold sash, bare feet (assumed)—priest
  - (2) White hair (wisdom?), fiery eyes, thunderous voice, bronze feet (strength)—divinity
  - (3) Stars in hand—Lord of the saints
    - (a) A symbol of all God’s people
    - (b) We have images of Emperor Domitian with seven stars
  - (4) Sword in mouth—power and authority to judge
    - (a) More later
  - (5) Glowing face—divine glory
    - (a) Moses at Sinai, transfiguration
- d) What is the sword about?
  - (1) Two-edge sword coming out of his mouth
    - (a) A symbol of effective action and power
      - (i) Often power exercised in judgment
    - (b) This image appears twice in Isaiah (11:4 and 49:2).
      - (i) Both in reference to the Messiah
      - (ii) In Isaiah 49, the Messiah is the “effective agent” of YHWH:

1 Listen to me, you islands;  
 hear this, you distant nations:  
 Before I was born the LORD called me;  
 from my birth he has made mention of my name.

Is. 49:2 **He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,  
 in the shadow of his hand he hid me;  
 he made me into a polished arrow  
 and concealed me in his quiver.**

Is. 49:3 He said to me, “You are my servant,  
 Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.”

Is. 49:4 But I said, “I have labored to no purpose;  
 I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing.  
 Yet what is due me is in the LORD’S hand,

*and my reward is with my God.”*

*Is. 49:5*      *And now the LORD says—  
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant  
to bring Jacob back to him  
and gather Israel to himself,  
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD  
and my God has been my strength—*

6      *he says:  
“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant  
to restore the tribes of Jacob  
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.  
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,  
that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”*

- (2) Messiah was made from the beginning to have a mouth like a sharpened sword.
- (a) To bring the people of Israel back to God
  - (b) To bring salvation to the ends of the earth

### **VIII. Revelation 1:17-20**

*When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

*Rev. 1:19*      *“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

- A. Upon seeing Jesus, John fell at his feet like dead.
  - 1. The standard response when faced with such majesty
- B. Jesus placed his right hand on John.
  - 1. Jesus is the first and the last; the living one.
    - a) Eternal
    - b) Source of life
    - c) These are God-like traits that are being attributed to Jesus.
  - 2. The one who was but then died, then rose from the dead and entered into eternity.
    - a) This is the first time we know for certain that this is Jesus.
      - (1) He rose from death never to die again.
  - 3. He is the one who has authority over death and Hades.

- a) The one who dispenses eternal punishment
- C. Write what you see.
  - 1. What you see will explain:
    - a) What is
    - b) What is about to be
- D. First symbols explained:
  - 1. The seven stars are the seven angels.
  - 2. The seven lampstands are the seven churches.

## **IX. Conclusion**

- A. This is the risen Messiah in the capacity of high priest.
  - 1. This is the first appearance of Jesus since his ascension.
  - 2. He is doing what the high priest does.
    - a) He is tending to the lamps.
    - b) He appears to be in the holy place of the temple.
      - (1) That is where the menorah was located.
    - c) He is dressed as a priest.
      - (1) But he is dressed as a common priest.
      - (2) We know that Jesus is the high priest.
  - 3. This has to be on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).
    - a) Only on Yom Kippur does the high priest go into the holy place dressed in typical priest clothing.
  - 4. Why would this be significant?
    - a) What is Yom Kippur about?
      - (1) After the incident with the golden calf, Moses went before God to make atonement for the people of Israel.
      - (2) As high priest Jesus will go before God to ask him to have mercy on each believer.
    - b) The eternal destiny of each believer depends on him.
      - (1) Like Moses at Mount Sinai
  - 5. He is the right person to critique believers.
    - a) He knows them well.
    - b) He cares about them.
    - c) He is their mediator before God.