

**“POSTMARK: PATMOS”  
Revelation 1:1-3**

**It is my prayer for you that these three studies in chapter one of the Book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ, will whet your appetite for a study of the complete book.**

**I have eight sermons on chapters 2 and 3 on my Text Sermon Page on this website.**

The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is:

- It is the climax of the written revelation of God;
- It is the termination point of all Bible prophecy;
- It is the most futuristic book in all the Bible;

The book of Genesis is to the Bible what a foundation is to a house. The book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ is to the Bible what a roof is to a house. And between the two are many rooms filled with treasures from heaven.

To study the first 65 books of the Bible but not the 66<sup>th</sup> is like:

- Taking a journey but stopping short of your destination;
- Walking many miles to get home, but never entering the house;
- Visiting a planetarium and focusing on the furnishings without viewing the sky;
- Reading a book but ignoring the climax.

Admittedly, there are difficult parts to the book. However, we do not discard it because there are some hard passages.

**Illust.** A young man was dining with his pastor. They were eating fish. The young fellow said, “When I read the Bible and come to a difficult passage, if I can’t understand it I am stymied in my reading. I just can’t seem to get past it. What do I do?” The minister said, “When eating fish and you come to a bone what do you do?” He replied, “I eat around the bone.” His pastor said, “Exactly! You don’t throw the fish away because of bones. So it is with Bible reading, just read around tough passages and later come back to them and meditate on them.”

The Book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ admittedly has some “bones” in it. However, there is abundant “meat” that makes for a healthy soul to be found in feeding upon it. Therefore, let us begin at the beginning. **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.”

There are several questions that I will answer in this introductory message. The first is:

**I. WHAT IS THIS BOOK?**

It is obvious that it is of divine origin. But, what is the nature and intent of the book?

**A. It Is A Book That Unveils Jesus Christ.**

The word "revelation" in the Greek is the noun “apocalupsis” which means "an

uncovering or unveiling; a disclosure, an appearing, a making manifest." The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, is therefore the revealing, the manifestation, the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians speaks of them "eagerly awaiting the revelation ("apocalupsis") of our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor.1:7) The word here is the same as that in Rev. 1:1. In 2 Thess. 1:7 he reminds his readers of the time "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed (apokalupsei) from heaven." Peter exhorts his readers to "be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation (apokalupsei) of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 1:13)

With the usage of this word "revelation" clearly established in scripture, what can the book be but a revealing of Jesus Christ? And yet, many have misunderstood and maligned it. Jerome complained about the book containing so many unsolvable riddles; Martin Luther would have banished it from the New Testament altogether. He wanted to know "how any man could possibly keep the commandments of a book which no man has ever been able to understand." Another ancient said, "the book either finds a man mad, or leaves him mad." However, those statements fly into the face of the title of the book. It was written to reveal not to conceal, to magnify Jesus, not to mystify His own!

Here is an interesting side note: You know what the Apocrypha is don't you? They are the spurious books that have been inserted between the O.T. and the N.T. in some Bibles. The word "apocrypha" in Greek means "something that is concealed, not set forth, not authentic"; while the word "apocalypse" means "something revealed, unveiled, disclosed, manifested or shown." Interesting isn't it?

Let us remember that this book is first and foremost the Revelation of Jesus Christ, not only the revelation of future events! In this book John does write of worship in heaven and warfare on earth. This book also describes the conflict between the throne of the Lamb in heaven (22:1) and the throne of Satan on earth (2:13). But in all the scenes and behind all the scenes is our Savior. Do not miss Him!

An inquiring mind is a good thing to have when we come to study scripture. But many inquisitive minds are more interested in:

- the warfare on earth than the worship in heaven!
- The victims on earth than the victors in heaven!
- The judgments on earth than the Judge in heaven!
- The Anti-Christ than the Almighty Christ!
- The future than the One who controls the future!

Again, this book is first and foremost The Revelation of Jesus Christ, not just the revelation of future events! What is this book? It is a book that reveals – not conceals! It reveals Jesus Christ! In addition,

## **B. It Is A Book That Unfolds Future Events.**

It is a book of prophecy. Other N.T. books contain prophetic passages, but this is the only book of prophecy in the N.T.

Note particularly v. 3 - "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this *prophecy* ...."

Rev. 22:10 "And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the *prophecy* of this book, for the time is at hand." and Rev.22:18-19 "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this *prophecy*, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

I have seen literally dozens of books elaborating, speculating and commenting on future events and with many of them, all the attention seems to be on what's happening not on Who makes it happen! While this is a book of prophecy it is prophecy in which Jesus Christ is the central figure throughout, He orchestrates prophetic events.

### **C. It Is A Book That Underscores Worship.**

The word "worship" is found in the book some 20 times! In the opening scene the first human response that we see is John falling at Christ's feet in worship. (1:17)

Eugene Peterson, in his Introduction to the book writes: "As we read through the book we find ourselves enlisted as participants in a multidimensional act of Christian worship. John of Patmos, a pastor of the late first century, has worship on his mind, is preeminently concerned with worship. The vision, which is The Revelation, comes to him while he is at worship on a certain Sunday on the Mediterranean island of Patmos ..... Worship shapes the human community in response to the living God. If worship is neglected or perverted, our communities fall into chaos or under tyranny. Our times are not propitious for worship. The times never are. The world is hostile to worship. The Devil hates worship. As The Revelation makes clear, worship must be carried out under conditions decidedly uncongenial to it. Some Christians even get killed because they worship." (examples: Rev.11:16-17; 15:3-4; 16:5-6)

The believer who seriously studies this book will be brought to bow in worship as scene after scene of judgment unfolds.

## **II. WHO WROTE THIS BOOK?**

The short, incomplete answer is: John wrote the book. However, some explanation is needed.

### **A. A Clarification.**

The author and the writer are not the same person. The writer is not the author! Neither is the author the writer! You may say, that statement does not clarify, it confuses! Read then Rev 1:1-2 - "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." It was:

- Given from God,
- spoken by Christ,
- shown by an angel,
- finally recorded by John.

### B. A Confirmation.

We have here:

- *The Divine Author* - “which God gave” – v.1

- *A Human Writer* - “John”; (“John” passages: 1:1; 1:4; 1:9; 21:2; 22:8). John, who wrote 4 previous books in the New Testament (His Gospel and I, II, III John) John, son of Zebedee, brother of James the elder. Note further, John was:

- i. A servant – v. 1
- ii. A witness – v. 2
- iii. A writer – v. 4
- iv. A brother – v. 9
- v. A fellow sufferer – v.9
- vi. A worshipper – v. 17

- *An Angelic Tour Guide* - Notice the word “signified” in v. 1 = The Greek word translated here as “signified” means “to mark out or to show.” We are to understand that the angel “marked out or showed” John certain things as though they had already happened.

Seiss, in *The Apocalypse: Exposition of the Book of Revelation* writes, “The things signified were matters of contemplation by means of the eyes, can denote nothing else than an actual picturing of those scenes - a making of them to pass before the view the same as if they were really transpiring .....making to pass in review before him what was only afterward to take place in fact. How this was done, I cannot say: but as the devil could take Jesus to a high mountain, and show him at one view "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matt 4:8), I am sure that it falls sufficiently within the sphere of angelic natures thus to picture things to man.”

### C. A Conclusion.

To sum this up: In Revelation chapters 1-3 John is recording principally what he saw of Jesus and what Jesus said to him. In chapters 4-22 John records what he was shown by others, what he actually witnessed. No angel dictated this book to John. Who penned the book? John, who wrote what he saw, felt, heard, etc. Who was the authority behind it? God. Therefore we dare not ignore it, neglect it or treat it lightly.

## III. WHERE WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN?

Ordinarily we would not be concerned with where the average book that we read was Written, but this is no average book! The place of its writing is important because it was no average place and the experience that John had was no average experience. So where was John when he penned these words?

Verse 9 tells us: “I, John .... was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ..” Patmos is a small, rocky, barren

island in the Aegean Sea. It is about 30 miles in circumference, 10 miles long and 6 miles wide. It was an ancient Alcatraz type of place, a prison island.

John had been exiled there by Domitian (A.D.69-79) the Roman Emperor. What was his crime? His Christian witness to the Word of God and Jesus Christ. (Compare v. 2 with v. 9)

Application: II Tim. 3:12 - "All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And John 16:33 - "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Was John grouchy? Pouting? Feeling sorry for himself? Angry? No! He was:

- Shut away from humans but not shut out by God;
- Cast out by earthlings he was caught up into the heavenlies;
- Forgotten by men- remembered by God;
- Rejected by men he was received by God;
- Prevented from traveling the earth but privileged to travel into the future;
- Shut out by earthly Rulers he was received by the heavenly Ruler!
- Forbidden to preach to a few hundred people – he would preach to millions in the future through his testimony in this book!! What a story – what a book!

#### IV. WHAT IS PURPOSE OF THE BOOK?

There is at least a three-fold purpose that is clearly discernable in this book:

##### A. To Exalt The Revealed One.

The title reveals the main purpose of the book: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." This is the only book in Bible that has the book's title in the opening words! I have already touched upon the meaning of the word "Revelation" - "Apokaluposis" = the unveiling; but these additional references will confirm this truth: Rev. 4-8-11; 5:9-14; 7:9-12. The Revealed One is exalted in these passages. This book is not meant to mystify but to magnify The Lord Jesus Christ!!

##### B. To Educate The Redeemed Ones.

The redeemed are servants of the Lord and this book was written: "to show His servants things which must shortly come to pass." (v.1) We do not need fortune tellers to know the future. We can know the broad outlines of the future and some of the details, if we know the Word of God.

*Outline:* Right here is a good place to look at the outline of the book which God has already given it to us in verse 19: "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this." Here is God's outline:

1. "The things which you have seen" – Chapter 1
2. "The things which are" – the Churches - Chapters 2-3
3. "The things which will take place after this" - Chapters 4-22

This book was not given to entertain us; it was given to enlighten, establish and to

edify us.

**C. To Encourage The Ready Ones.**

“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.” (1:3)

The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is a book of encouragement for those Who are ready for the coming of the Lord. The 7 churches in Asia Minor, to whom the Lord Jesus addresses His letters, were going through tough times. They needed the encouragement that knowing the Lord Jesus would be returning and judging His enemies would give them. This book will be an encouragement to all who long to see the Lord; who long to see Satan and evil put down; who long for heaven and home!

**CONCLUSION**

I conclude by underscoring that phrase in v.3 again: “The time is near.” What time? The time for the climactic events in this book to take place. Paul reminds us that “our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11); And James warns us with these words: “Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” (James 5:9) The question now is: “Are you one of the ready ones”?

**Illust.** During football season the Monday night football event is introduced with these words: “Are you ready for some football?” I get excited about football on television! But there is an event which is imminent that is more stimulating and sublime than any event earth has ever seen since the incarnation of Jesus Christ and that is our Savior’s second coming! And that time is near! Again, are you ready?

“Coming again, coming again;  
May be morning, may be noon,  
May be evening, may be soon –  
Jesus is coming again!”

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