

It's About Jesus • Revelation 1:1-8

Read vs 1-3 • Richard the Lion-Hearted

1. In 1189, **King Richard** had just taken the throne of England when he set off to lead the *Third Crusade*.
2. Before departing, he turned the realm over to his brother **John**.
 - a. John was both corrupt & inept.
 - b. His reign is the backdrop for the legend of Robin Hood.
3. Though the Crusade floundered, Richard proved to be a courageous & capable leader & earned the title "Lion-Heart."
4. John liked being king & didn't want Richard back.
 - a. Colossal intrigues slowed Richard's journey for years –
 - b. Time John used to build up England's defenses against her rightful ruler's return.
5. As soon as Richard landed on England's shore, 1 castle after another fell to him.
6. The common people, oppressed by a corrupt system for years, cried out, "The King is coming! The Lion has returned!"
7. This is the message of the Book of Revelation.
 - a. It tells the story of The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the rightful Ruler of Earth – King Jesus
 - b. Who comes to take the throne of Earth that belongs to Him.
 - c. An evil usurper has wrested control of Earth, but his days are numbered.

How We're Doing This

1. Our usual format is to study the same book of the Bible on Weds & Suns.
 - a. Weds we survey study thru from 1 to 5 or more chs.
 - b. On Suns, we take an in-depth look at just a few vs from that same passage = Sermon.
2. As we go thru Revelation on Suns, we're going to morph those 2 methods into 1 & do go v b v thru the entire book.
 - a. So it'll be more like a Bible study than a sermon study.
 - b. But we'll slow down a bit, and go a bit more in depth than we usually do on a Wed.
3. THis next Wed, we'll finish our study in the OT by looking at Malachi.
4. Then the following Wed, we'll start our **Foundations of the Faith** series, which I'm excited about.
5. So Let's dive in . . .

Vs. 1-3

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ,

1. The most important thing to learn about this Book is said right out of the shoot **It's About Jesus!**
 - a. This isn't the Revelation of John.
 - b. It's not the Revelation of End times Events.
 - c. It's the Revealing of Jesus Messiah.
2. The Greek word *revelation* is 'apokalupsis.' It means, **unveiling**.
 - a. A city commissions an artist to do a sculpture of the City Founder.
 - b. The day comes for it to be dedicated in front of City Hall.
 - c. A crowd has gathered; The City Council and Mayor are all there.
 - d. The band plays and the time comes for the huge canvas shroud covering it to be taken away.
 - e. That moment of unveiling is the word **apokalupsis**.
 - f. What as hidden is now revealed for all to see.
3. God is the great Architect & Artist Who is moving all things forward to that great day when the goal of all history is realized in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
4. The Book of Revelation is the story of that Great Day.
5. Keep that in mind over the next weeks as we encounter the many visions & symbols of this book.

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants

6. Many people consider Revelation a closed book.
 - a. They won't study it **because** of the visions & symbols.
 - b. I don't understand this way of thinking but, some are **uncomfortable** with prophecy.
 - 1) They're freaked out by the idea God foretells the future.
 - 2) Their religion centers on being a nice person who lives by the Golden Rule.

- 3) They don't like talk of miracles & prophetic signs because it sounds too weird.
 - 4) Those people don't study Revelation because it scares them.
 7. But right here, in the very first sentence, we're told this is **for** Jesus' followers.
 - a. This Revelation is about Jesus, it belongs to Jesus, and it's something His Heavenly Father wants Him to show His people.
 - b. This ISN'T a closed book! It's open & something God WANTS us to look at, study, learn.
 8. In revealing Jesus, this book will show us
—things which must shortly take place.
 9. Students of Revelation fall into 4 main camps about **how** to understand it.
 - a. For those who are interested, I've written a short blog article on the CCO site on this.
 - b. We take the **Futurist** view, which understands chs. 6-22 as taking place in the Last Days.
 10. So how do we square that with what John writes here;
 - a. That these things **must shortly take place**?
 - b. It's been nearly 2000 years and they haven't happened yet.
 11. The word '**shortly**' in Greek is *en-tachei*, & means "'quickly / suddenly.'"
 - a. The word speaks of rapid execution once something has begun.
 - b. It does not mean "SOON"; it means "Fast."
 - c. The word is used 7 other times in Revelation & is always translated as "quickly."
 - d. Our word **tachycardia** (racing heart) comes from this Greek word.
 12. John is saying the things he'll go on to describe will be unfolded **rapidly**.
 - a. They aren't going to be spread over hundreds of years.
 - b. Once they start, they'll follow one another in **rapid succession**.
- And He [Jesus] sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,
13. This is an important clue as to HOW Jesus gave John the contents of this book.
 - a. He *signified* it; literally it was SIGN-ified.
 - b. The message was delivered via signs; that is, things John **SAW**.
 14. A sign points to something.
 - a. It isn't the thing itself. It **represents** it & points to a reality beyond itself.
 - b. Think about road signs. You're driving on one of those long stretches of Interstate 5 thru center of CA.
 - 1) You see a sign with a gas pump, burger, drink cup w/straw – and the words 5 miles.
 - 2) You know there's a gas station and food joint up ahead.
 - c. John was given **visions** of future things.
 - 1) They were **signs** of coming events
 - 2) That time in the future when King Jesus returns to Earth and the evil usurper Satan tries to keep Him from landing.
 15. Now, here's the thing – many of the signs John saw are a kind of **scriptural shorthand**.
 - a. If I show you a **cross**, just a simple symbol of 2 crossed wooden beams, you think of the entire Gospel; Jesus, God's Son come as Man, His arrest, trial, crucifixion, death, burial, & resurrection.
 - b. John saw many signs that connected to **his** Bible – **our** OT.
 - c. There are more than 500 allusions to the OT in Revelation.
 - d. **70%** of its 404 vs make reference to it. [278 vs]
 - e. So the key to understanding Revelation is to use the OT as our primer.
 16. So, Jesus sent His message via an angel to the Apostle John.
 - a. We'll learn a bit more about John next week.
- 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.
17. While all Scripture is good for us, this is the **only book of the Bible** that claims a **special blessing** on those who study it.
 18. Note that John **calls** it "prophecy."
 - a. He has no qualm saying it's the inspired **Word of God**,
 - b. And that it **foretells the future**.

19. In the John's day, people didn't have their own bibles.
 - a. When they gathered, their pastor read them portions of Scripture from highly treasured scrolls.
 - b. That's the idea here.
 - c. The pastor was blessed as he read out this book which came to him as a letter for John.
 - d. The people were blessed too as they listened.
 - e. They were all blessed as they fixed what they read & heard in their hearts & minds.
20. You see, the original audience were getting hammered by persecution.
 - a. Generations of Christians since have found the Book to be of great comfort.
 - b. Because it reminds them Jesus is Lord & sovereign over the affairs of Earth.
 - c. The days may be evil, but these days will end in the Great Day when Messiah comes & sets things right.
21. John ends v3 w/ "*the time is near*," renewing the Early Church's expectation that we live in the Last Days.
 - a. To which you sit up & say, "Wait! What? They thought it was the Last Days 2000 yrs ago?"
 - b. Sure, **& it was**. That is, in the NT, the Last Days **BEGAN** w/ the Ascension of Christ.
 - c. This is the **last epoch** of human history before the Kingdom of God comes.
 - d. With Jesus' Death & Resurrection, nothing else **needs** to be accomplished before He comes to take possession of Earth.
 - e. That last 2000 yrs are a long parenthesis in which the lost are being saved by the power & preaching of the Gospel.
 - f. But know this, we aren't walking **toward** the cliff of the Last Days, we're walking **ALONG ITS EDGE**.
 - g. At any moment, Christ could come because the time is near.
 - h. It's not far off. Are you ready?

Vs. 4-8

⁴ John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

1. This was a letter sent to 7 local congregations in the modern nation of Turkey.
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, ⁵and from Jesus Christ
2. John gives them the customary greeting of **grace & peace** = Charis & Shalom.
3. Grace & Peace come from the Eternal Father, the Holy Spirit, & The Son.
4. John has to **bend** the Greek language in which he writes to describe the members of the Trinity.
 - a. Human language falls short of accurately describing the infinite.
 - b. So John has to tweak the grammar to make things fit.
5. He refers to the Holy Spirit as 7 spirits before the Eternal Father's throne.
 - a. In Isaiah 11:2, the prophet listed the **seven-fold work** of Spirit.
 - b. The number 7, of course being the number of **perfection**, of **completion**.
 - c. You see, just as John referred to the Father's *eternality* by saying He is the One Who was, Who is and Who is to come
 - d. He marks the Spirit's *holiness* by the number of perfection.
6. We're going to see the 7 over & over again in Revelation.
7. But it's what John says about Jesus in v5 that spins us up.
⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,
8. Jesus is the *only* human being who's been **faithful** to God from birth to death.
9. The word '**witness**' is the Grk word **martyr**.
 - a. When John wrote this, Christians were being hammered by persecution.
 - b. John had suffered, **personally**.
 - 1) Reliable tradition says he was arrested during the reign of the Emperor Domitian.
 - 2) Domitian wanted to crush the Church, & John was the **last** of the Apostles.
 - 3) So he gave the order to torture, then kill John as a way to scare off other church leaders.
 - 4) They put John in a huge cauldron of boiling oil – but nothing happened.
 - 5) When they lifted him out, there wasn't a mark on him.
 - 6) So, what do you do with a guy like that; someone God is clearly watching out for?
 - 7) They sent him off to a barren rock in the middle of the Med; the prison island of Patmos.

- 8) At least there he couldn't keep preaching!
 - c. Maybe not, but they couldn't keep God from giving John some awesome sermon material!
 - d. It was there in his isolation on Patmos John had the visions that comprise this book.
10. John reminds his readers. Some of whom would face martyrdom, that they are followers of Jesus & He was faithful to death; because death isn't the end for those who believe in Christ.
11. It's just a difficult doorway into Eternal Life.
12. Jesus is also . . .

the firstborn from the dead,

 - a. Rom 8:29 says Jesus is *the firstborn among many brethren*.
 - b. The firstborn was the heir of the family name & property.
 - c. It ***came to be*** a TITLE for the favored son.
 - d. Jesus was the First to be resurrected; but He's also the *Pre-eminent One*.
 - e. THE Firstborn was a title the ancient rabbis used for the Messiah.
13. He is . . .

the ruler over the kings of the earth.

 - a. This is another title the rabbis used for the Messiah.
 - b. They expected Him to replace the kingdoms of the World & w/the Kingdom of God.
14. Before the Book is finished, John will present Jesus asserting dominion over Earth.
15. But know this, while we await the day when Jesus rules visibly over the World, know that even now He is King of kings.
 - a. He do not see Him, but He still reigns.
 - b. Evil is allowed to its day, but that day is coming to an end.
 - c. And the devil cannot keep Jesus from coming again.
16. at the end of v5, John gives a quick word of praise.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

What can wash away our sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
 What can make us whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
 Oh, precious is the flow, that makes us white as snow.
 No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus.
17. As glorious as forgiveness is, that's not the end of what Jesus has done; it's just the beginning
- ⁶ [He] has made us kings and priests to His God and Father,
18. Jesus has turned us from sinning rebel scum into a ***royal priesthood***.
19. Hear me! You are not what evolution says – just a freak mistake of random chance.
 - a. The fortuitous collision of molecules that produced life; Grown up germs.
 - b. You were in the heart & mind of God when He spoke and the universe sprang into being.
 - c. YOU! Not just “you” in the generic sense as an unknown member of the human race.
 - 1) Not a number in a vast & uncaring system.
 - 2) You! As a distinct person with a unique name & an amazing plan to know God and be individually loved by Him.
 - d. Though sin & satan hijacked you, God sent Jesus to rescue you & restore you to the original plan.
 - e. That plan is to make you part of His family; His daughter, His son.
 - 1) A Joint-heir with Jesus.
 - 2) To come as close into God's heart & plan as a created being can be.
20. The only titles that fit such privilege are the labels of royalty & holy service.
21. Christian-Please note: John doesn't say Jesus will make us kings & priests; He HAS made us such.
 - a. It's the aorist tense; simple completed action in the past.
 - b. If you're born again, you **ARE** a king/queen & a priest/priestess. ARE – now!
 - c. That is WHO YOU ARE in Christ.
 - d. So, are you ***ruling*** over life, or is life ruling over you? Are you ***victim*** of your circumstances, or ***victor*** over them?
 - 1) That's a decision you & you alone make.
 - 2) You ***chose*** your identity, no one can put it on you.
 - e. In Christ, you're a priest. You have direct access into the Holy of holies.

- 1) You don't need to go thru someone else.
- 2) When Jesus died the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom.
- 3) A few decades later the temple itself was destroyed & the priests of Israel were scattered.
- 4) Their service is no longer needed because in Christ we are ALL priests blessed with the right to come boldly before the throne of Grace.

f. You have every bit as much right to the things of God as I or the guy in St. Peter's in Rome who wears a big hat.

to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, [**Look & pay attention**] 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.

22. When Jesus comes again, **every eye** will see Him.

- a. His 2nd Coming won't be like the 1st when He snuck in under the radar.
- b. When He comes again, no one will miss Him.

23. John says those who pierced Him will see Him.

- a. We just learned about this in our study in Zech 12 a couple weeks ago.
- b. In v10, Zechariah speaks of the day when the Spirit of God opens the eyes of the Jews to realize Jesus IS their Messiah.
- c. They will see the marks of His crucifixion; the evidence of their rejection, & will lament w/great weeping.

24. At the 2nd Coming, it won't be just the Jews who are sad.

- a. The entire world will mourn, but for a different reason.
- b. They'll be bummed because they'll realize too late they picked the wrong side; the losers.
- c. They threw in their lot with the antichrist & realize they will go down with him now that Jesus has come to take what belongs to Him.

25. We end w/v8 // Jesus says

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."**

26. Alpha & Omega are the 1st & last ltrs of the Grk alphabet.

- a. Jesus says, "I'm the A & Z; & every other ltr in btwn."

27. Jesus is the beginning & end. He's the **origin, reason, & goal** of all created things.

28. Then Jesus takes the same designation for Himself that's ascribed the Father in v4

- a. He is the one Who is, Who was, and Who is to come = The Eternal One;
- b. Which of course, as God, He is.

29. Finally, Jesus is **the Almighty!**

- a. Used 9 times in Revelation for Jesus it's the word **"Pantokrator."**
- b. The one w/all strength. The one who's grip can't fail.

CONCLUSION

1. That's a good place for us to end today.

2. John is going to lay out some hard stuff in the chs to come.

- a. At times it'll seem like things are spinning horribly out of control.
- b. It'll be worse than any movie Hollywood's made.

3. So Jesus reminds us things are **not** out of control. He's **in control**.

4. He's the Almighty, & has His hand on the wheel of history.

5. He's the First & Last.

- a. When the beginning began, He was *there* & when the End arrives, it won't be His end.
- b. He's Eternal; not bound **by** or limited **to** time.

6. He knows the end from the beginning & has **all** that's needed to accomplish **all** His perfect plan.

7. Let's end there; w/the reminder no matter how dark & desperate things may get in this world, Jesus is still in control.

8. A father needed to finish a project for work but his little girl kept asking him all kinds of questions.

- a. Needing about 20 minutes to complete his report, he grabbed a magazine, cut out a map of the world that was in it, then cut it up into a couple dozen pieces to make a kind of jigsaw puzzle.

- b. He thought that would keep her busy for at least a half hour.
 - c. Just 10 mins later she said, “All done daddy.”
 - d. He was amazed and asked her how she was able to complete it so quickly.
 - e. She said, “Well, I found a picture of Jesus on the other side and knew when I had him in the right place, the whole world would be right.”
9. The Book of Revelation is the Story of Jesus taking His rightful place in the affairs of Earth.
10. What about your life? Is it a mess?
11. Put the Almighty take His place on the throne of your heart.

In the Message/Study/Sermon given at Calvary Chapel Oxnard on Sunday November 20, 2014, I mentioned the, “four main camps about how to understand it” and that I would put up a blog post briefly summarizing them. Here it is . . .

Those four main methods of interpreting the Book of Revelation are the Preterist, Historicist, Idealist, and Futurist interpretive methodologies.

Futurist

The Futurist view understands the Book of Revelation as being a prophecy of events regarding the End Times, and that most of the book has yet to be fulfilled. The Futurist view understands that in the Bible, prophecy speaks of *patterns* and that there may be several iterations of a prophecy’s fulfillment in history. But these intervening iterations point to a grand climax in which the prophecy finds its culmination. Think of the earlier iterations as *foreshocks* that harbingers the main quake. The Futurist view understands the majority of Revelation taking place in the Last Days, just prior to the Return of Christ; thus the label ‘*futurist*.’

Futurists understand the Millennial reign of Christ described in ch. 20 as *literal*, and that the Second Coming is *before* the thousand years commences. This is called the “Premillennial” position.

Futurists also believe *before* Jesus comes again, there will be a seven-year period of Tribulation in which terrible calamities befall Earth in a literal fulfillment of the judgments described in Revelation. [Futurists differ on the meaning and timing of the Rapture.]

Calvary Chapel holds to a Futurist understanding of Revelation, as do a good number of Modern Evangelical churches and groups.

Idealist

The Idealist view is *amillennial*, meaning they believe there is no literal 1000 years in which Christ rules on Earth. Idealists understand the Millennium as referring to *a very long time*, and that the visions and symbols of Revelation only refer to the timeless struggle between the forces of good and evil which will go on indefinitely till the end of time.

Since the visions of Revelation aren’t to be understood as being fulfilled in real historical events, either past or future, they’re fulfilled however different Idealist interpreters choose to understand them. This makes the idealist position a grab bag and this has been the great problem of idealist commentators; each has come up with his or her own meaning for the symbols and visions. If these things are meant to be understood in a *purely spiritual sense*, what’s the code for unlocking them. No idealist has come up with the answer to that, so their attempts to understand the book have been short lived.

Idealism is the position taken by Roman Catholicism and some liberal main-line Protestant denominations.

Historicist

This was the favored position of many of the Reformers and has almost passed from the scene. It holds that the Book of Revelation covered the *entire scope of history* from the Resurrection of Christ to His Second Coming. As history unfolds, historicist interpreters assign various events of history to the visions and symbols of Revelation. But as time progresses, they keep [or I should say kept, because it’s not much used today] re-interpreting and re-applying. The historicist view died the death of a thousand interpretations.

Historicism was the interpretive methodology used many Protestant denominations from the 17th through early 20th centuries. When liberalism took hold of some of them, they moved over to the Idealist position.

Preterist

The Preterist position is akin to the Historicist but differs in one crucial point; it sees most of Revelation as being fulfilled in a rather short period of history, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 68-70 AD by the armies of the Roman Generals Vespasian and his son, Titus.

The Preterist view had almost passed from the scene until recently when it received new impetus from several *Christian Reconstructionists*.

Preterism comes from the Latin word meaning “what is past” and, as I just said, understands most of Revelation as being fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Preterism is *postmillennial*, meaning they don’t believe in a literal 1000 year reign of Christ. For preterists, the Millennium is just the Bible’s way of saying a long period in which the Church becomes increasingly more influential, and will eventually win, not only the *people* of earth to faith in Christ, but will *redeem the institutions* of the Earth, install the Law of God in the Laws of Man, and once the world has been Christianized, then, Jesus will come again to congratulate a victorious Church.

The important thing to remember about Preterists is that they believe all but the last couple chapters of Revelation were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in 70 AD.

Analysis

Because Preterism has experienced a resurgence due to the work of a few well-known Bible teachers, a brief analysis of the position is advised. I say that because inherent in the Preterist position is a dangerous doctrine called *Replacement Theology*. This doctrine advocates the idea God is *finished* with the geo-political entity known as Israel and that all His promises given to the Jews and Israel have been transferred over to the Church, which is the *New Israel*. In other words, the Church has *replaced* Israel. Calvary Chapel categorically rejects Replacement Theology and sees it as a dangerous position.

The foundational premise for Preterism is found in passages of the New Testament that seem to indicate a “near” fulfillment of End Times prophecy. A good example is Revelation 1:1.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place.

Preterists are vociferous in their demand this phrase is to be understood as a definitive time marker. Preterists maintain when John writes, “*things which must shortly take place*” he meant those things had to take place *within a short time* from his writing.

That is certainly *one way* to understand the text, but it isn’t the *necessary* or *only way* to interpret what John is saying. In truth, as we read on into the content of the Revelation, we come to the conclusion it’s NOT the way he meant to be understood. The word ‘shortly’ in Greek is *en tachei*, which means “quickly or suddenly coming to pass,” indicating *rapidity of execution* after the beginning takes place. The idea is not that the event may occur *soon*, but that when it does, it will be *sudden*.”

John Walvoord, one of the premier interpreters of the Book of Revelation notes that the similar word *tachys* is used 7 times in Revelation and is translated as “*quickly*.” We get our word tachycardia (racing heart) and tachometer from this Greek word. The idea is something that is *rapid*.

When John writes, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place,” he is saying the things he will go on to describe will unfold in *rapid succession*. They won’t be spread over hundreds of years; they aren’t to be understood by the idealist or historicist interpretations. On the contrary, they refer to real events that will take place in the future; and when they start, they will follow one on the other in rapid succession. So, this means either the Preterist or Futurist interpretations are correct.

What clinches it for the Futurist view is the *date* for the Book of Revelation. If the Preterist is right, and the book of Revelation was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans, John must have written it before 70AD. Yet we know John received his visions on the island of Patmos, where early church history tells us he had been banished by the Emperor Domitian. That wasn’t till long *after* 70 AD. When Domitian died in 96 AD, John was allowed to return from exile and lived the rest of his days in Ephesus. So the preterist view of Revelation is refuted by the historical evidence of the timing of John’s imprisonment on Patmos.

One further comment . . .

A concern the modern futurist position stands in danger of is when certain of its leaders say *this new technology* or *that new peace treaty* is THE fulfillment of this or that prophecy. When they do that, they make the same error as the Historicists who read endless events as THE fulfillment of prophecy, and ended up dying the death of a thousand interpretive cuts. The Futurist position has *already* come under fire for assigning the title “Antichrist” to several people, from Popes to diplomats, and from giving dates for Jesus’ return.

While we ought to *expect* a literal fulfillment of prophecy in world events, we must be careful about making dogmatic “this is that” statements.