

One of my primary convictions as a preacher is that I want to preach through books of the Bible. And I want us to be at church that continues our legacy of expository preaching. I don't wanna skip over the hard passages. And sometimes we're gonna go through books that we might be tempted to ignore. But there is one book that I have always been scared to preach. There's one book that I thought I would probably need to wait about 15 more years before I'm ready to preach it. That is the book of Revelation.

I'm gonna be upfront and honest with you that the book of revelation is a book that I do not completely understand. I remember when I was taking seminary classes at Dallas theological seminary and we had a class on eschatology or the study of the last things. And I remember thinking before the class oh good I'll take this class and then hopefully I'll understand revelation. But the class came and went and I still don't have it all figured out.

So we're gonna attempt to wrestle with this book together. It's gonna be different. It's gonna be a challenge, especially for me personally. And maybe you have been like me that Revelation has been a book that's scary for you and you don't understand it and you don't know what to do with it. Well, part of my hope is that as a church we can just wrestle with it together, and we can try and figure it out. I doubt when we're done that we'll have all of our questions answered, but hopefully we will have a better idea of what this book means and how to understand it.

With all of that being said, we're gonna try and dive into revelation this morning. We are only gonna be in Revelation 1:1-8. I want to set the stage for us as we begin this series. That as we read it and as we wrestle with it, what are we meant to do with it and what is it meant to show us? Because when we have this in mind, it will then help us as we come to places that are harder to understand.

I don't know everything about this book. But there are three things that I know that I know this book is about and how we are meant to read it. Turn in your Bibles to Revelation 1:1-8

## **I. Revelation is meant to point us to Christ (v. 1-2).**

This is one of the most important things that we need to remember about the book of Revelation.

Ultimately, it is meant to point us to Jesus.

It is meant to help you fix your eyes on Jesus Christ.

That is the most important part of the book

In many ways it is no different than any other part of the Bible .

Because all of the scriptures find its fulfillment, most fully in Jesus.

Every single story in the Bible points to Jesus.

Every single commandment or spiritual principle or law or proverb or wisdom doesn't make any sense without Jesus.

And this is especially true when we come to the book of Revelation.

This book is the capstone.

It is the climax of the Bible and the finishing of the story.

So our question when we approach Revelation, and when we read it shouldn't be what is gonna happen in the future.

A better question is to ask how does what is going to happen to Jesus

How does this passage point of Christ?

The book tells us this itself in the first verse.

Verse 1, **"The revelation of Jesus Christ,"**

Just look at that phrase, the revelation of Jesus Christ.

If you wonder, why is the book named Revelation?

It is because it's the first word in the book.

It is about the Revelation

And this word has a ton of meaning.

Part of it in the Greek is that this word is where we get our modern word of apocalypse from.

There's a very real sense in which the book of Revelation is apocalyptic.

It tells us something about the end of the story about where we are all going .

But that is not all because just the word it is not about the apocalypse in the way that we would think about it.

It really more has the idea of revealing .

It is the unveiling or the disclosing or the explanation of the mystery.

The curtain is being pulled back.

The mystery is being revealed.

What is being revealed?

It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

The main thing that Revelation reveals to us that is uncovers for us is Jesus.

It points to Jesus.

It is the revelation of Jesus to John.

And it is not just revealing Jesus this revelation also comes from Jesus.

**"which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place."**

This revelation comes because God has given it to John.

The apostle John, the disciple of Jesus is the one who wrote the book of revelation.

And in many ways he functions and is a prophet of God.

But the book is not from John's prophetic gift.

It is the Revelation about Jesus from Jesus, given to John by Jesus .

You could say that Jesus wrote the book and He gave it to John.

So don't get it twisted and don't get it confused or think this is like John's attempts to explain things or his attempt to explain visions.

This book is about Jesus and this is a book that Jesus has given to us.

**"the things that must soon take place."**

Oh boy, is there a lot of ink that has been spilled over millennia about what is that phrase mean.

Does it mean that this is stuff that's gonna happen in John's day?

Does it mean that it's gonna happen in the future?

Ultimately, I think it means soon in the sense that Jesus has come, and now we are waiting for the end and so this is the next step in the history of the church.

But the important part to me is that even as we read this first verse, our eyes rush to the end.

And we start talking and debating about what this means about the future. Before you know it, we have left Jesus behind and we don't care anymore. Don't do that.

And I'm gonna try your pastor to help us as I'm reading it wrestling with it to not take my eyes off of Jesus either

Because what does it say about us when we take Jesus and we push Him to the side because now we're enamored with something else that looks more exciting.

This book is about Jesus it is the revelation of Jesus

**"He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,"**

And so again, this revelation has been made known by Jesus.

I don't think we need to know exactly which angels it is because it appears to be through throughout the book of revelation, many different angels, and messengers of Jesus.

And they pass on the message of Jesus to John.

Verse 2, **"who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw."**

So then, John passes on the message because it's not just for him and himself but for all of us as believers.

And John becomes the witness of the word of God and Jesus.

Again, I want you to see this whole book is about Jesus. It is about God.

It begins by saying this is about Jesus, tells us he may say something about the future, then closes again to say it is about Jesus.

So we need to remember that Jesus is the most important part of Revelation.

I might have to repeat this almost every single week.

This is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

This book is about the Revelation of Jesus.

So we need to make sure that when we read it we're thinking about Jesus.

We need to be sure that we're asking questions about Jesus.

We need to be sure we're trying to understand what it's saying and we're reading it that we're thinking about Jesus.

Because this book is about Jesus.

## **II. Revelation is meant to be obeyed (v. 3).**

That's one of the most convicting parts of the book as well.

Because we can think about Revelation like it is a mystery to be so solved.

We can approach it with our charts, commentaries, books, and newspaper trying to tie everything together and figure out what it all means.

And that's OK.

I don't think that's like a great sin or the worst thing in the world.

But that isn't the attitude Jesus tells us to have about the book.

There are seven blessings, or seven beatitudes that are given in the book of Revelation.

And the first of those is right here in the beginning, so it's probably one of the most important.

It does not say blessed are those who perfectly understand Revelation.

It does not say blessed or to those who have their charts of Revelation.

Blessed are those who rightly interpret the mysteries in the visions of God of revelation.

Ultimately, it's blessed are those who obey it.

Revelation is not meant to be an intellectual exercise for experts.

Revelation is meant to be for every day Christians.

Revelation is meant to be for baby Christians.

Revelation is meant to be for adult Christians.

Revelation is meant for Christians who struggle to understand the Bible.

Revelation is meant for Christians to read into obey.

Verse 3, **"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near."**

First blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy.

There's a scene I like in one of the Pirates of the Caribbean movies with these two goofy characters are in disguise and one is reading the Bible, but he's holding it upside down.

And the other guy says what are you doing? You can't even read.

And the guy responds, "Its the Bible, you get credit for trying."

I always thought it was a funny joke. But Revelation says, its true.

The Revelation verse three tells us you get credit for trying to read the book.

There's a blessing when you read this book aloud.

You don't have to understand all of the words.

There's a blessing for reading it.

One of our habits here as the church is that we read God's word aloud.

Why do we do that? Because it's important.

Because the words of God are more important than my words.

And we should read the book of revelation aloud, because God says, bless those who read it aloud.

You can read it aloud at home and be blessed.

But the idea of reading aloud is primarily tied to the corporate gathering at the church.

One of the markers of the church of God is that when we gather together, we read the word of God.

Reading aloud at home is great, doing it as the church is better.

And we read it aloud.

This was especially important to do in the early days of the church.

Because most people in the church could not read.

Early Christians were mocked because it was mostly the poor and the women and the uneducated. People society looked down upon.

And people didn't have lots of great access to the Bible like we do.

The only time you might hear the book of Revelation is if you want to church and they read it out loud for you.

This did not begin at Pentecost, but back with Moses when he read the law aloud.

And throughout the rest of the OT, they would gather together and read it aloud.

So when we read the words, there is a blessing.

And there is a particular blessing when I read this book a lot.

But it's not just a blessing for the one who reads it.

It's not just a blessing for me because I did that for us today.

It's a blessing for all those who hear it

You have already been blessed and are being blessed now as you hear the words of Revelation and you hear it explained.

There's a blessing from just hearing God's word.

That's part of why so often my benediction at the service is just me reading scripture.

Because there really is a blessing just from hearing God's word read.

There's a particular blessing in hearing the words of Revelation .

So there shouldn't be a book that we were scared of.

It shouldn't be a book that we try to run away from or that we are embarrassed when we don't understand it.

Christianity isn't just about understanding things.

And so even if we go through this entire series of Revelation, and you come on Wednesday nights and you hear twice as much stuff about Revelation and you leave, and you still don't get the book?

You have been blessed from the reading of God's word from the hearing of it.

You don't have to understand it to be blessed you just have to listen.

You just have to listen and have your heart and your ears open to hear the voice in the word of God.

And to be intentional about not letting your ears go on auto pilot or zone out when you don't understand what God is saying .

The last part of this verse is **"blessed are those who keep what is written."**

Keeping means obeying.

It doesn't have to do with listening and interpreting and understanding, but it means you do it.

It means you're paying attention to what Jesus is commanding Christians to be.

Listening to how Jesus commands Christians to behave.

That means doing it and keeping the words.

Revelation is meant to be obeyed.

This can be something that Christian can get confused about.

You might be tempted to think Revelation is just about what God is gonna do in the future.

And maybe it's good to understand it now but man, it's really gonna be helpful when the stuff starts coming true.

Or you know, I really need to understand it and know just in case Jesus comes back in my lifetime so I know how I am to behave and how I am to and then I'll be ready because you know I prepared ahead of time.

The book of Revelation is not like a final exam.

This isn't a bunch of study notes that we need to know and have down in case we have to take the test.

You are taking a test and you're taking a test today and you'll take a test tomorrow and you'll take a test the day after that and you'll keep taking a test every day until Jesus returns or until you die and go be with him.

And so the obedience that this book calls for is not for someone else way off in the future, maybe.



This book calls for your obedience now.

This book called for John's obedience.

This book called for the obedience of the churches in the seven cities.

This book called for the obedience of the early church.

This book called for the obedience of every Christian from when Jesus gave this revelation until the end.

All of us are to hear the words of this book and to keep it.

So as we are reading, and we are studying as we are wrestling with Revelation, our question shouldn't always be what is this mean?

One of our questions me should be what do I have to do?

What is Jesus asking me to do based on this passage?

Does my life need to change because of what I have read?

This is one of my firm convictions about studying scriptures, especially about Revelation.

God's word is not meant to just be read and interpreted when we learn more interesting facts.

It is meant to be obeyed .

It is meant to change our lives.

You haven't really understood the Bible or understood what the Bible was asking you to do until you've first given your life to Jesus and embraced faith and become a Christian, but then continue to apply it to your life and to continue a lot to allow it to change you, as you were being conformed into the image of Jesus.

Let me try and say that another way.

Reading about the Revelation of Jesus should make you want to be more like Jesus .

Hearing the words of Jesus should make you want to listen to the words of Jesus.

Listening to the words of Jesus should make you want to do the words of Jesus.

My main question for you when we've concluded our study however, long from now, will not be if you have understood Revelation, but if you have kept Revelation.

There are some people who are really big experts at Revelation. It's their favorite part of the Bible or it's their pet hobby. And so maybe they have all of it figured out and they have all their charts and can tell you what it all means and how they have it all understood.

That is not the goal of this book. And you could do all of that. And you could do all of that even better you could understand this book deeper and more than me and you could even get every single or interpretation exactly correct so that when it is also fulfilled with Jesus comes, he would tell you wow you are the one who got it! You understood it 100% no one else has done that. But if you do all of that, and you never obey it, then you have missed the point

The point of the book of Revelation is to obey it. And somebody who is obeying and listening and being transformed to becoming more like Jesus because they have read it, even if they don't understand a thing about it yet sit and will be more blessed in the person with all their charts.

We're getting ready to have a baby. If Brianna tells me, "Our daughter will need a diaper changed soon." And then leaves her with me. Then when she comes back, I say hey don't worry, I understand everything there is to understand about changing diapers now. I went and I took a class on changing diapers, and I got trained by the greatest guru who understands there is to understand about diapers.

I actually went back and read several text books and I understand the whole history of diapers now I can tell you everything about from the very first diapers that were used and how we've evolved to now.

I can tell you all about the benefits of cloth diaper versus disposable diapering.

I've actually written some books and I've started a podcast on diapers. I've become the greatest expert on diapers that there is in the entire world.

She would say "that's great, but did you change the diaper?"

Some of us, that's how we approach Revelation

We do everything other than changing the diaper

I don't care if you understand Revelation or not, I care if you obey it.

### **III. Revelation is meant to give us hope (v. 4-8).**

It really is meant to give us hope.

Reading this book should not make you worry about the future or worry about the trajectory of the world.

Reading this book should fill you with hope.

It should calm our fears.

Because ultimate to me with the book is revealing is that everything's gonna be ok.

It reveals how Jesus will bring peace and justice.

And this is what John is trying to say in his greetings with these next few verses.

Verse 4, **"John to the seven churches that are in Asia:"**

Again, this is something we need to remember this book was written to churches.

This is not just an apocalyptic memoir.

Though this book can be hard to understand, we might not always understand the kind of genre or book that it is.

It is a letter written to churches and was similar to the letters that Paul writes to churches.

It is meant to be given to the church.

And there are seven churches in Asia that are particularly mentioned.

We will look at each church as we get further into the book.

But this wasn't meant to just go to those churches and no one else.

Just like the book of Philippians wasn't just meant to go to the church of Philip. It was also meant for all the churches.

The seven churches, although they are particularly addressed stand in for all of us.

And part of what Jon hopes for is that these churches and us will find hope

**"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,"**

He gets a little bit of the standard greetings of grace and peace extended to you.

I love the name of God that he uses.

Because it's a little unique to Revelation.

The God who is and who was and who is to come.

It's a Trinitarian kind of name. But also is very similar to the way that God introduces Himself to Moses in the burning bush.

That says I am the I am.

Who I am or I am.

God is the one who was who is and who is to come.

God is the past He is the present and He is the future .

That last part is our hope.

Our hope is that he is the God who will come.

Revelations the story of His coming .

The Trinitarian nature of this continues and describing and from the seven spirits who are before His throne.

Really probably a better translation would be the sevenfold spirit before the throne.

This is an a reference to seven different angels or several different spiritual beings that are around God this is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

The number seven often in the Bible is symbolic of fullness or complete. This is especially true in the book of a Revelation where seven continually comes up.

There are seven beatitudes there are seven churches. There are seven bowls and seven trumpets, and there's the sevenfold spirit. Really means that the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5, **"and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth."**

In typical Trinitarian fashion, you have to mention God, the Holy Spirit in Jesus.

And so He mentions Jesus, who is the faithful witness, the first born of the dead.

Jesus is not only the first born of all creation, but also of the dead.

Our hope is that Jesus was not the first one resurrected into a glorious body who death can no longer touch.

Our hope is that Jesus was just the first and that there will be many more after him.

Our hope is that one day all of us when Jesus comes will join him in resurrection

And our hope is that Jesus is the rulers of Kings on earth.

Many who will rage or complain or try to fight, but ultimately Jesus is the king .

**"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood <sup>6</sup> and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."**

We are continued to be reminded of the gospel.

That our hope is not just what has happened or will happen away in the future, but that our hope isn't what Jesus has done.

Our hope is in the fact that we are loved by Christ.

Hope is the fact that when we sing Jesus loves you to our children.

We are reminding ourselves that Jesus does still love us now.

A reminder that Jesus has freed us from our sins by the blood that He shed on the cross.

Jesus' death means that there is forgiveness for our sins that we can have eternal life and also that we have been set free .

No longer has to have power over us.

No longer do we need to remain stuck in our sins.

Jesus broke the power of sin, and Jesus broke the power of death.

And our hope is that Jesus has made us into a kingdom and now we are priests.

I mentioned this last week, my overview of the Bible the whole story of the Bible is the story of God kingdom coming.

Part of our blessed hope is the idea that Jesus has established us as his kingdom.

Jesus saves us in the gospel and then He puts us to work.

He ordains us as priests of the kingdom.

We are sent into the world to proclaim the resurrection and forgiveness of sins.

That anyone who has faith and believes in Jesus can find salvation.

That is our hope.

Verse 7, **"Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen."**

Verse seven is where we really see.

The fullness of revelation is about our hope.

It has behold he is coming.

Jesus is coming

He is coming.

And this coming is our hope.

He will come in the clouds right across the sky, and all of us will see Him.

The book of revelation is about the hope that Jesus will come.

We just have to wait he's coming.

We are like an army surrounded by enemies. You just have to hold on a little longer because the reinforcements are coming and once they get here it's gonna be OK.

We are surrounded by sin and death and suffering and sickness, but Jesus is coming.

We hosted an exchange student from Germany for a year and if you got to meet her and get to know her and she was wonderful. We had a lot of wonderful conversations sometimes late into the night about faith in the Bible in Jesus.

And I remember one night she asked me "Why do you talk so much about Christ's return?"

I thought about that a lot because I don't think I talk about it that much.

My answer is that it gives us hope.

Gives us hope in the world.

Gives us hope in the darkness that he is coming.

His return is our hope.

When He comes everyone is gonna see him everyone.

He will be seen even by those who try to kill him.

Jesus is not just coming for his followers and for believers those who trusted him who excited he's coming and everyone's gonna get to see

There is an old Johnny Cash song that says one day the man's gonna come around.

This is why John says there will be some who will wail on account of him.

There are those who in Jesus returns will weep and mash their teeth because now they have to pay for their sense.

Weep because now they will have to answer for the great wickedness and their violence and their evil done on the Earth.

Who will wail because they have been tyrants and now the king is coming.

And this judgment is still our hope

Some people talk about the judgment of the coming of God and they try to ignore the wailing because they're embarrassed by it.  
Listen to the wicked have to pay for their sins.  
Evil has to be punished. Pedophiles must be dealt with, and repent murderers must see justice.  
Supremely wicked who have never repented don't get all free.  
That one day, all of those things all of that pain all of that suffering all of the justice that we have longed for and never seen on this side of eternity will come.

That is our hope

Verse 8, **"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."**

But our hope is not just in the justice Christ will bring.

Our hope is that He will bring new life.

Sin and death will be no more.

And all who have followed Jesus.

All who have left behind their nets, and given everything to be a part of the kingdom will live forever with Him.

He will wipe every tear from our eye.

That is our hope.

And Revelation will remind us that even at the end of the world, there is hope.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. Revelation is meant to point to Jesus, to be obeyed, and to give us hope. If we miss any of these things, then we don't understand the point of the book. Because it comes back again and again to this place. If we forget Jesus and the gospel, then we will never get the book right.