

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Which God Gave Him

1: 1-3

DIG: What is this revelation? In this case, who is revealed? By whom? To whom? For what purpose? Who is John? Who cannot understand this book? Why? What does the book say about angels? How does the book use the TaNaKh? In what sense is Messiah's return imminent?

REFLECT: In what ways are you a bond-servant to Jesus Christ? How do you feel about receiving a blessing for hearing and taking to heart what is written in this book? What does it mean to you when you take something to heart?

Many people are fascinated, even obsessed with the future. They faithfully read their horoscopes, seek out Tarot card readers, have their palms read, feed on futuristic science fiction books, or call one of the many "psychic hot line" advertisers on TV. Some people sink more deeply into the occult, seeking out mediums (as did King Saul), futilely and sinfully attempting to obtain information about what is to come by consulting the dead on behalf of the living (**Isaiah 8:19**). But all such efforts to tell the future are useless. There is only **One** who knows and decides the future, and that One is **ADONAI** (**Isaiah 44:7, 45:21, 46:9-10**). Only in Scripture can truth about the future be found. The prophets of the TaNaKh and **Christ Himself**, provide glimpses of the future. But, in the entire Bible, the book of **Revelation** provides the most details. It is the capstone of prophecy and details **Jesus'** return and the setting up of **His** eternal Kingdom.⁸

The revelation (1:1a): There are those who are confused by the book of **Revelation**, seeing it as a mysterious book that cannot be understood. Martin Luther said he could "in no way detect that **the Holy Spirit** produced it." But nothing could be further from the truth. Far from *hiding* the truth, the book of **Revelation reveals** the truth. This is the last chapter of **God's** story of salvation. It tells how the story ends. Just as the description of **ADONAI's** creation in the beginning was clear (**Genesis 1:1**), so is **His** record at the end.

The very first Greek word of this book, *apokalupsis*, translated **the revelation**, sets the stage. It appears eighteen times in the New Covenant, when used of a person, the word means *an uncovering of something hidden, the making known of what man could not find out for himself*. It makes plain that the book it introduces is not a book of human wisdom, nor for that matter a discussion of philosophical or theological problems. It is

revelation.⁹ It contains truths that had been hidden, but have now been **made known**. Although it does not directly quote the TaNaKh, 278 of its 404 verses point to truth revealed in it, and makes clear what was merely suggested there.

Concerning Jesus Christ (1:1b): While it is true that the entire Bible is **revelation** about **God (Second Timothy 3:16)**, in a special way the book of **Revelation** is the **revelation** about **Jesus Christ**. And while the book is certainly *from Christ (22:16)*, it is also *concerning Him*. The Gospels are also about **Yeshua** and they present **Him** in His **First Coming** as the **Lamb of God (John 1:29)**; however, the book of **Revelation** presents **Him** as the **Lion of the Tribe of Judah (5:5)** in His **Second Coming**. As we witness the unfolding events leading up to **Messiah's** coming Kingdom, our mental picture of the person of **Jesus** becomes clearer. This is true because **the testimony of Jesus Christ** seen in **verse 2** is itself **the spirit, or inner heart, of prophecy (19:10)**. The person and ministry of **Yeshua** is the blueprint that connects all the pieces of the prophetic puzzle.

Which God gave Him (1:1c): **God the Father** gave this **revelation** to **God the Son** to **show** to His **bond-servants**. He made it known by **sending His angel** to His **servant John**. **Angels** are important in this book and **they** are referred to sixty-seven times. Notice the order, **God the Father** gave His message to **God the Son**, who **made it known** to His **angel**, who gave it to **John**, to give to us. So **Jesus Christ** is the mediator, through which, the **revelation** comes because **God the Father** is the ultimate source.

To show His bond-servants (1:1d): The object of the **revelation** is for believers, who are characterized as His **bond-servants**. The Greek word for **servants** is *doulois* and literally means *slaves (Matthew 22:8; Mark 13:34)*. But the *doulois* was a unique kind of **slave** - one who served out of love and devotion to his or her master. If a **servant** said: **I love my master and my wife and children I do not want to go free, then his master** took him before the judges who met at the gate of the city that had **doorposts**. He was then brought to the **doorpost** and standing up against it, his **ear lobe** was pierced **with an awl**. Then he was a **bond-slave for life (Exodus 21:5-6)**. There was a difference between a **slave** and a **bond-slave**. Circumstances beyond one's control made someone a **slave**. But a **bond-slave** chose to remain a permanent **slave**. In that case his **ear** was to be pierced with a permanent mark, symbolizing his new status.

This is why **the world cannot understand** this book (**First John 2:15-17**). It was not meant for them. It was given from **God the Father** to **God the Son** to **show** to those who willingly serve **Him**. Those who refuse to acknowledge **Jesus** as **Lord** cannot grasp what is being revealed here. **The man without the Spirit**, Paul explains, **does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (First Corinthians**

2:14). But Yeshua said to His apostles: **The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. This is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand (Matthew 13:11 and 13).** Godly truth is hidden from the worldly wise. They find nothing in this book but bewilderment and chaos. To His willing **bond-servants**, however, it is a lighted **path (Psalm 19:105)**, and an unveiling of the prophetic future.

What must soon take place (1:1e): The Greek word for **soon** is *tachos*, which can mean **soon** or quickly (**Luke 18:8; Romans 16:20**). The context determines which one is used. The context here would indicate that the word does not convey the speed with which **the Messiah** acts when **He** comes, but *the nearness* of **His coming**. In prophetic literature, the future is always pictured as just beyond us. There is this idea of *imminence* all throughout the TaNaKh and B'rit Chadashah, an insistence, really, on *the nearness* of the end. But it has been over twenty centuries since these words were written! How do we explain this paradox? We need to realize that the incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection-ascension, on the one hand, and the **Second Coming**, on the other hand, are really one divine event. They are only held apart by the mercy of **the Messiah**, who desires to give mankind every opportunity **to come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9)**. Therefore, when we think of *imminence* in this way, we can see that the **Second Coming** is *always* just beyond us because the incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection-ascension has already taken place. This is an essential part of our faith. Ever since the birth of **Christ**, the believers have been living in the last days. **And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His Coming (First John 2:28).**

He made it known by sending His angel (1:1f): The English phrase: **He made it known**, is from the Greek verb *esemanen*, meaning *to make known by signs or symbols*, but it also includes *communication by words*.¹⁰ In the book of **Revelation**, we have both *words* and *symbols*. It is the only book in the Bible that is made known to its human author by **His angel**. Later, **Yeshua** would reaffirm this by announcing: **I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches (22:16a).** **Angels** were just as active in giving the book of **Revelation** to **John**, as they were in giving the Torah to **Moses (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2)**. Therefore, they are highly visible in the book. They appear in every **Chapter** except **4** and **13**. In fact, the words **angel** or **angels** appear seventy-one times in **Revelation**, more than any other book in the Bible. Therefore, this book tells us a great deal about the ministry of **angles**.

To His servant John (1:1g), who testifies to everything he saw - that is, the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (2:1): The writer of the revelation identifies himself as **John**, and the uniform testimony of early Church was that this was,

indeed, **John** the apostle. Some claim that it was some other **John**, largely because the vocabulary of **Revelation** seemed different from the vocabulary of the Gospel and epistles of **John**. There can be no doubt, however, that **the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23)** wrote **the revelation** as well as **the Word of God** and **the testimony** about **Jesus Christ** in the book of **John**.

John was always careful to emphasize that **he** wrote only what **he** had **seen and heard**. But he really got an eye full. In his concluding remarks of his Gospel he said: **This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true (John 21:24)**. In writing about the amazing events of the crucifixion, **John** wrote about himself, **"The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe"** (John 19:35). The opening words of his first epistle again stressed that **he** had **seen and heard**, and touched the very **One** of whom **he** was writing, concluding with him saying: **We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard (First John 1:3)**. Although **John** saw forty-four different visions in **the revelation**, **he** wanted us to know that **he** was only writing what **he** had **seen and heard**. Nothing more. To us, **Revelation** is a prophecy. To **John** it was actual history, recorded just as he observed it.¹¹

Blessed is the one who reads the very words of this book of prophecy (3:1a): In the first century, not everyone had a Bible and when they got together for worship they usually had someone read the Scriptures out loud after the pattern of the synagogue. **John** is saying this one would be **blessed** just for reading it. This is the first of seven blessings in the book of **Revelation (1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14)**. This first blessing parallels **Luke 11:28. Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it**. It is very significant that right at the outset of this book of **Revelation** that we have this appeal to action. **John** calls for a moral response. This is quite different than most apocalyptic literature. This is the only book of the Bible that promises a blessing to **the one who reads the words of this prophecy**.

The book of **Revelation** is bracketed by promises of blessing, just as the beatitudes are in **Matthew 5:3** and **11**. Thus, the promise of blessing here in **1:3** is bracketed by **22:14**, where **Yeshua** proclaims: **Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city**.

And blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it (3:1b): It is clear that you cannot keep what you don't own, neither could you be **blessed** by it. Therefore, this amazing promise assumes that those who read **the revelation** or hear it will be able to understand it and apply it to their lives with the help of **the Holy Spirit**. This can only be true if **the words of this prophecy** are to be taken literally, if possible.

But these words are not only to be read or heard, they need to be taken to heart. There are many blessings of **God** that are unconditional, and believers are entitled to them simply by the fact that they follow **Christ**. However, other blessings of **ADONAI** are conditional, and the blessing here is one of them. Studying prophecy gives one a love and longing for **Christ's** return. Those believers who love and look for **His** return will be given a special crown (**First Thessalonians 2:19**). But believers sometimes rob themselves of blessings available to them because they fail to take **YHVH's** conditional aspects seriously. While blessings are available for the study of **God's** Word in general, a special blessing is available through the study and application of this particular book. The believer, after reading and listening to what the book of **Revelation** is teaching, should also be watching for these things to come to pass and be on the alert for the fulfillment of these things. The same admonition to watch was given in the Olivet Discourse when **Jesus** said: **Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him (Mattityahu 24:42-44).**

Because the time is near (3:1c): This phrase restates the truth taught earlier in the **first verse**. The events described in this book are imminent. The Greek word here for **time**, does not translate *chronos*, which refers to time on a clock or calendar, but *kairos*, which refers to *a decisive time, that is, the time of the end* (**Daniel 8:17; 11:35 and 40, 12:4 and 9**). So, because of the context of the book, this **time** obviously refers to the **Second Coming of Christ (Luke 12:35-40)**. Despite the skepticism of scoffers, who demand: **Where is the coming He promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation (Second Peter 3:4), Jesus the Messiah will return. And His return is near.**¹² **If He came today, would you be ready? Or would you be left behind?**

When the hope of **Yeshua's** return is in your heart, you will feel what **John** felt when he wrote: **How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be as He is. Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (First John 3:1-3)**. When the hope of **Christ's** return, which is what the book of **Revelation** is all about, is fixed on you, literally *resting on you*, it becomes a part of your life. You are looking for **Jesus** to appear. You believe it. It is in your heart. With all your problems and the world's problems, you anticipate it and you are **blessed** spiritually. Amen.