

**Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse)**  
**A Sermon Series, Part 1**  
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**From the Holy Spirit**  
**First Sunday of 2021**  
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**Introduction:**

The Book of Revelation was written by a prophet named John between the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. (CE) and the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It is not known whether this John is the same as the author of the Gospel of John and the three epistles of John. Biblical scholars find that possibility to be problematic due to literary and dating inconsistencies, and suggest that a Johannine community led originally by the Apostle John could have produced this book over a period of time between 64 A.D. and 96 A.D., which includes the persecution of Christians under the rule of Nero and the later persecution of Christians under Domitian's reign. (Johnson, Luke T., *The Writings of the New Testament*)

Since this is a spiritual book, the assumptions of scholars who base their views on historical facts and literary genres cannot be allowed to limit the possibility of transcending circumstances enabled by spiritual gifts. On the other hand, we must not be distracted by ventures to decode symbolic references in order to assign them to current situations and individuals. The purpose of this book is to fulfill God's will that God's servants know how future events will unfold, for the purpose of preparing for them for those

events and for the return of Jesus Christ. This is to give us hope for the future and reassurance that God's plan will ultimately result in our eternal safety, security, and blessing. Going through difficulties becomes tolerable when one knows that there is an enduring reward on the other side.

Therefore, the validity of a prophetic book, such as the Book Revelation, cannot be based upon temporal circumstances, probable dates or feasible authorship. True prophetic revelation transcends all of these, because it comes from a timeless, limitless God. The importance of this book for us is its intended result: that we use this "heads-up" to strengthen our faith for the difficult times ahead, so that we will stand firm in our faith when all around us begins to crumble in unbelief.

### **Chapter One (Rev. 1:1-3)**

The Book of Revelation begins by defining itself as "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him..." indicating that God, through Jesus Christ, was the immediate source of John's revelatory visions.

It was the will of God that human beings know what will take place in the future. Coming from God, the revelation has a timeless nature, although the events would take place in time and space. The perspective would not be

held within those parameters, but would overflow the boundaries of our human understanding and historical perspective.

The Book of Revelation is therefore an elevation of the human view to that of God's timeless, limitless perspective. God, through Jesus Christ, invites us to see through his own eyes and to understand humanly perceived events from an infinite perspective. We witness in this book a "behind the scenes" view of the spiritual realm, given familiar names of historical persons and places but symbolizing greater truths than those symbolic references name.

The first verse of Chapter One continues by stating that God gave Jesus Christ this revelation "to show his servants what must soon take place." God wants us, his servants, to know what will *soon* take place. Remember that in God's perspective, a thousand years are as one day (2 Peter 3:8). So, when God says "what will soon take place," "soon" for God is quite different from what we humans consider to be soon.

Nevertheless, God says that it will soon take place, which means for us that it *will* happen while the earth still stands. It will happen in the time of human existence on earth. It may happen in our time, or it could happen in the time of our descendants, but it *will* happen. And, God wants us humans to know *what* will happen.

God gave this revelation first to Jesus. Jesus is our intermediary, whom God honored by first giving the revelation which is meant for us to Jesus, the One who loved us enough to give his life to atone for our sins, thus making eternal life possible for us.

God gave the revelation to Jesus *for us*. God did not want us to be left in the dark about our near-future on earth, nor the ultimate future that God has planned for us in God's eternal kingdom. God wanted us to know the whole story, including the happy ending, wherein we live happily ever after with Him.

God wanted us to be encouraged by knowing that everything would eventually turn out perfectly fine, although we must go through the time of trial and persecution. God did not want us to lose hope, so God revealed our future to us through the One who is responsible for our salvation.

The author of our salvation, Jesus Christ, is one with the Father — one in heart and mind, both wanting the absolute best for those whom they created. Together, the Father and the Eternal Son of God orchestrated and planned the story of our redemption, which now plays out on the stage of life.

They chose a man named John to entrust to him this precious message for us who believe. Jesus sent his angel to John to reveal all that the Father had given him to show to us. This faithful angel came to John as a guide to take John into visions of the future, and to explain to John the mysteries that he saw. This was the will and plan of God, and the work of Jesus Christ through the messenger/angel that he sent to John.

The willingness and obedience of John to participate in this benevolent act of God were also gifts of the Holy Spirit to John. There was blessing in John's experience of these revelations, and we are also blessed when we read about them or hear them read. John testified to all that he saw, and we have become the beneficiaries of his faithful testimony. We enter in to the blessed hope of salvation and eternal life in a cognitive way, because of the testimony that John passed on to us.

"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near." (Rev. 1:3) This third verse of the first chapter of Revelation pronounces a blessing upon us and all others who read and hear and keep the words of this book. Among the blessings are hope and faith which are

both increased by reading it. And, we know that when these are increased, we are empowered and encouraged for our difficult journey.

“The time is near.” Perhaps some of the events of this book have already taken place, and we are very likely in the midst of its story. The end has not yet come, but we have been given in its pages a clear indication of what to expect as we approach the consummation of all things and the final days.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, God gives us insight and understanding that cannot be revealed any other way but by God, the Holy Trinity. Let us begin this adventure in faith, knowing that it is God’s will that we understand this book and that we gain hope and joy in perceiving its meaning for us in our generation.

May the peace and love of God fill you with joy and hope as we open our hearts to the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Amen.