

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“THE UNVEILING” Part 1

Revelation 1:1-3

INTRODUCTION:

Many people are fascinated, even to the point of being obsessed with the future. They seek a variety of ways to know what will take place in the future.

Some people faithfully read their horoscopes in the newspaper or visit astrology.com.

There are others who seek out palm readers or call psychic hotlines advertised on TV.

There are yet others, who delve into futuristic science fiction material.

And of course every year at the beginning of the year we hear doomsday prophecies such as those supposedly made by Nostradamus.

In fact, this year a new book is out called the *Nostradamus Code* in which the author suggests that he has found a secret code in the writings of Nostradamus that predicts World War III will begin this year and last into 2012.

Certainly this fascination with the future has spilled over into the church as many seek to know what the end times will be like.

For instance one of the best selling fiction series of all time is in fact an end times story.

There has always been a fascination with the future and end times events even to the point that some so called prophets have predicted the coming of Christ and the end of the World.

- 1) In the early 1800's many people in America and abroad had come to the conclusion that Christ was due to return sometime in 1843 and 1844.

One of these people was William Miller, a New York farmer who became a Baptist minister.

He took the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14 to mean 2300 years and concluded that Christ would return sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844.

Miller began to spend all his time lecturing and an Adventist periodical called *The Signs of the Times* promoted his teachings.

Thankfully, this date came and went without Christ's return.

A few weeks later Samuel Snow, a follower of Miller restored the hope of the Millerites by suggesting a date of October 22, 1844. But this date also passed without fulfillment.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

- 2) In more recent times, Hal Lindsey in his 1970 bestseller, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, broadly hinted that he believed Christ would return by 1988.

As this time period approached, Lindsey in later writings clearly stated that he believed the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation would occur in the 1980's.

- 3) Others would build off Lindsey's work. Edgar Whisenant published a book entitled *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will be in 1988*.

When this time period passed, he wrote a new book entitled *89 Reasons Why the Rapture Will be in 1989*.

- 4) The date-setters were not finished yet, Harold Camping, president and general manager of Family Radio network, published a book titled *1994*, in which he predicted the Lord's return on September 7, 1994.

There have been numerous lesser-known date-setters over the years and likely will continue to be others.

There have always been and always will be those, who try to discern the future. But we must realize that all of our attempts to discern the future are vain.

There is only One who knows and declares the future: God! (Isaiah 44:7; 45:21) Only God is Omnipotent! Only God is Omnipresent! Only God is Omniscient!

Only in Scripture can truth about the future be found. The Old Testament prophets, particularly Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah provide glimpses of the future.

So did our Lord in His Olivet Discourse, as well as Peter and Paul in their writings. But the book of Revelation provides the most detailed look into the future in all of Scripture.

Over the next two weeks we will take an introductory look into a book that answers these questions:

“What will the end be like?”

“What will take place in the future?”

“How will it all turn out in the end?”

“What is going to happen to me?”

Many people have expressed that this book is quite mysterious and confusing. They say that it is just too difficult to understand. This may be due to the book's subject matter or its use of figurative language. We are going to attempt to clear up some of that confusion by looking at the introduction to the book of Revelation. Turn in your Bibles to Revelation 1:1-8. Let's Read.

By way of introduction, John provides 5 characteristics, which are essential for us to know in order to accurately understand this marvelous book.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Characteristic #1—We must understand the SUBJECT of Revelation.

Verse 1 says, “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place...*”

First, The Subject of Revelation is evident in the Title of the book.

The Greek name of the book is APOCALYPSE, which is translated “*Revelation*” and literally means, “an uncovering,” “a laying bare,” or “to become visible.”

It signifies a disclosure of divine truth, which had previously been concealed. It is used 18 times in the New Testament and always indicates that something has become visible to the eye.

It may best be translated as “an unveiling,” much like an artist unveils a new painting for the first time. The painting had previously been veiled, but is now uncovered for all to see. [Possible Illustration here]

So we see this revelation had previously been veiled or sealed as in the book of **Daniel (12:9)**, but is now revealed for all to see and clearly understand (**Revelation 22:10**).

There is a common misunderstanding as to what exactly is being revealed. Some have suggested that since it is “the Revelation of Jesus Christ” that it is an unveiling of Christ. He is being revealed.

But upon closer examination of the title, Jesus is not the one being revealed, He is functioning in the role of revealer.

There are at least 6 lines of evidence to support the idea of Jesus as revealer rather than as the revelation.

- 1) This clearly seems to be the plain statement of Scripture as verse 1 continues: “*which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place...*”

It is Christ who is “showing” or “revealing” something to His bond-servants. Christ gives this revelation to John; just as God the Father gave it to Him.

- 2) Verse 1 also identifies the true subject of the revelation as: “*the things which must soon take place...*”
These imminent events of the future actually function as the main subject matter of this revelation.
- 3) We also see Christ functioning in the role of revealer throughout the book as He opens the seven-sealed scroll (Revelation 5:5-7) and discloses its contents (Revelation 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1).
- 4) It is Jesus who is actually addressing the seven churches in Revelation 2-3.
- 5) We see the term “revelation” used in the same sense in at least two other places in the New Testament.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

In **Galatians 1:12** Paul says, “*For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Paul received revelation from Christ. Once again Christ functioned in the role of revealer.

In **2 Corinthians 12:1**, Paul says, “*Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.*”

Once again Paul is emphasizing revelation that he received from the Lord Jesus. Jesus is once again identified as functioning in the role of revealer.

- 6) Lastly, consistently throughout the Gospel of John, Christ is also seen in the role of revealer of what the Father shows Him. (Cf. John 7:16; also John 3:35; 5:20; 16:15)

Therefore it would not be unusual to see that as the case here in the book of Revelation.

So verse 1 might better read, “*The Revelation by Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place...*”

So what has previously been sealed that is now being unveiled by our Lord in this book?

Second, the Subject of Revelation is evident in the Topic of the book.

The topic of the book is highlighted here in verse 1 as, “*the things, which must soon take place...*” These are future events, in particular those recorded for us in **Revelation 4-22**.

We see a similar statement made in **Revelation 4:1**, “*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you **what must take place after these things.**”*”

This seems to mark off the beginning of the main subject matter, while **Revelation 22:6** seems to be the concluding statement of the main subject.

It says, “*And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants **the things which must soon take place.**”*”

Revelation chapters 1-3 are regarded as introductory and preparatory for Revelation 4:1-22:6, while Revelation 22:7-21 are closing remarks.

This is further supported by the key structural verse of Revelation 1:19. **Revelation 1:19** provides the overall structure or outline of the book of Revelation.

It says, “*Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.*”

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Thus the outline of the book of Revelation is as follows:

Outline of the Book of Revelation from Revelation 1:19		
Chapter	Subject Matter	Scriptural Statement from 1:19
1	The vision of the Glorified Christ	<i>“The things which you have seen”</i>
2-3	The current situation within Christ’s Church	<i>“The things which are”</i>
4-22	Future End Time Events	<i>“The things, which will take place after these things.”</i>

Thus the main subject matter and key theme of the book of Revelation is that of future end-time events, which for the most part has been concealed, but now in the book of Revelation is being unveiled by our Lord.

Very clearly as you read through the book of Revelation, you are given a chronological account of end-time events such as

- The coming antichrist
- The seven year tribulation period and its many catastrophic judgments
- The battle of Armageddon
- The Second Coming of Christ
- Christ’s 1,000 year reign on the earth
- The Great White Throne Judgment &
- The eternal bliss of the New Heaven and New Earth

Certainly this book answers the question that everyone is seeking an answer for: “What is coming in the future?” and “How will it all end?”

But, when will these events take place. Will they be this year, next year or 100 years from now? Exactly what does the phrase, “which must soon take place” mean?

The term “soon” [TACHOS] carries forth the idea of imminence. This is supported by the repeated use of this term throughout the book of Revelation (cf. 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6).

In other words, these events could occur at any time without any warning. These end time events will begin with the rapture of the church (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17). Nothing else has to happen. They are imminent!

Christ can come back for His church at any time and when He does return at the rapture, the timetable for these events will begin.

Paul emphasized the idea of imminence in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** as he anticipated possibly being among those who would be raptured.

Valley Bible Church
3347 West Avenue J
Lancaster, California 93536
www.valleybible.net

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The idea of imminence is emphasized again at the conclusion of this book in **Revelation 22:6, 12, 20** in regards to the return of Christ.

- Do you recognize these end times events as imminent? They could happen at any time.
- Do you anticipate the imminent return of Christ? He can return at any time, rapture the church and begin the timetable of these end time events.
- Do you look forward to our blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior Christ Jesus?
- Are you living your life in light of His return and these future events as Peter says in **2 Peter 3:14** striving, “*to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.*”

Make no mistake about it! Christ will return! These events recorded for us in the book of Revelation will take place! The question is, “What are you going to do about it?”

Characteristic #2—We must understand the SCRIBE of Revelation.

The Scribe of Revelation is highlighted for us in the first two verses of the book.

It says in **Revelation 1:1-2**, “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, (2) who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.*”

There are three facets to the authorship of this book that must be recognized.

First, we must recognize the Heavenly Avenue of Revelation.

Exactly how did the book of Revelation come to us today? How was it given to us? It is important that we keep in focus the true source of this writing.

It did not originate with John but came through a five-fold sequence of transmission.

The true source of the book of Revelation is God. All Scripture has God as its source through the superintending work of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Peter 1:19-21). It is God’s Word!

He is the One who gave us this prophecy. It originated with Him.
But, notice the other agents in the chain of revelation outlined in verse 1.

- God the Father revealed it to Christ.
- Christ in turn revealed it either directly to John or through an angel to John.
- And it was John’s responsibility to transmit the data to Christ’s bond-servants.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Notice that there are instances in the book where Christ used angels to give this revelation to John.

For example one of the seven bowl angels comes to show John the judgment of the great harlot in **Revelation 17:1**.

It says, “*Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters....”*”

One of the seven bowl angels also shows John the bride, the wife of the Lamb in **Revelation 21:9**.

However, there are also times that Christ skipped using an angel as an agent of Revelation and directly revealed material to John.

We see this in the writing of the seven letters to the seven churches in **Revelation 2-3**. And we see this again when the fifth seal is broken in **Revelation 6:9-17**.

Whatever the case the steps of revelation are clear.

It originated with God the Father, was given to Jesus Christ, communicated it by His angel to His bond servant John, who in turn penned the book of Revelation in order to show Christ’s bond-servants what must soon take place.

Who are Christ’s bond-servants? The term literally means, “slaves.” However, it was a special type of slave. A bond-servant was one who served out of love and devotion to His master.

This is a specific reference to believers in Christ. We are on the receiving end of this chain of Revelation.

It was meant for us so that we would know what was coming to pass. It was meant for us so that we would be prepared for what was to come. It was meant for us so that we would live our lives accordingly.

We must not only recognize the Heavenly Avenue of this Revelation, but:

Second, we must recognize the Human Author of Revelation.

I have already mentioned the human author in the chain of Revelation. The Apostle John was the human author of the book of Revelation.

There are some in our day who have attempted to assign authorship of Revelation to someone other than the Apostle John.

However, the evidence weighs heavily in John’s favor.

FIRST, John’s authorship is attested to by the direct statement of Scripture.

Revelation 1:1 identifies the human author as Christ’s bond-servant John.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Revelation 1:4 identifies John as the author of this letter to the seven churches of Asia Minor.

Revelation 1:9 again identifies the human author as John who is suffering persecution on the Island of Patmos.

And lastly toward the close of the letter in **Revelation 22:8**, John is again identified as an eyewitness of the content of the book and is encouraged not to seal up the prophecy of the book.

SECOND, John's authorship is attested to by the historical record.

According to historians, John served as the leader of the church in Ephesus, having moved there shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem.

It was from Ephesus that John wrote his Gospel and epistles. During the reign of Domitian, John was exiled to the Island of Patmos (a barren Island in the Aegean Sea about 70 miles southwest of Ephesus).

It was during his imprisonment on the Island of Patmos about AD 95, when John received and penned the book of Revelation.

This tradition of authorship is clearly testified to by the early church fathers: Justin Martyr; Irenaeus; Clement of Alexandria; and Tertullian.

THIRD, John's authorship is attested to by linguistic similarities to his other writings.

- Only in John's writings, is Christ referred to as the *Word* [LOGOS].

We are all probably familiar with **John 1:1**, "*In the beginning was the **Word** and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God.*"

But, how about **Revelation 19:13**, "*He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The **Word** of God.*"

- There is also similarity in the imagery used in Revelation.

This includes the imagery of: the lamb; the water of life; he that overcomes; keeping the commandments; an invitation to the one who is thirsty; and a sharp contrast between good and evil.

Third, we must recognize the Honest Audience of Revelation.

John not only indicates that he, himself is the human author of Revelation, but he also identifies himself as an eyewitness to what he wrote.

He says in verse 2, "*who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.*"

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Notice that His eyewitness testimony is three-fold:

FIRST, he testified to the Word of God.

The phrase, “the Word of God” denotes any declaration, revelation or truth coming from God. This is an idiomatic phrase for prophetic communication from God.

By making this statement, John is testifying that what he writes in the book of Revelation is not his own words, but it is the very Word of God.

SECOND, he testified to the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The testimony of Jesus Christ is the testimony borne by Jesus Christ. It is understood as the testimony given by Jesus Christ as the revealer.

It likely refers to the frequent statements made by Christ to John throughout the book.

THIRD, he testified even to all, that he saw.

“All that he saw” is what John is testifying to. John personally witnessed in a series of visions “*the things which must soon take place.*”

He was privileged to receive this information from the Lord and he personally recorded all that he saw; nothing more and nothing less.

He is simply acting as an agent in the transmission of this revelation of end time events and he was an honest audience to what he has recorded. He can testify that he personally witnessed the information that he is passing on.

The verse may best be translated, “*John, who bore witness to the Word from God, that is the testimony given by Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.*”

We can rest in the confidence that the book of Revelation is indeed the very Word of God. Therefore we must read it, study it and apply it to our lives.

And that leads us to the third characteristic of John’s introduction:

Characteristic #3—We must understand the Special Blessing of Revelation.

A feature that distinguishes this prophecy from other apocalyptic writings of the time is the blessing pronounced in Revelation 1:3.

It says, “*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*”

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

There are four aspects of this blessing that are noteworthy.

First, notice that this special blessing is Recognized as a beatitude.

John draws upon Jesus' earlier practice in **Matthew 5:3-12** of promising special blessing to the reader, to those who hear and to those who heed the things in this book.

This is actually the first of seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation. The others occur in Revelation 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; & 22:14.

It might be best to call this the beatitude of Bible study.

Second, notice that this special blessing Requires obedience.

The verse at first glance seems to say that the one who reads, those who hear and those who heed the things in the book will all be blessed.

The grammatical construction is such that "*he who reads and those who hear*" are in fact, the same ones as "*those who heed the things written in it.*"

In other words, simply reading or hearing the book is not a blessing without obedience.

To inherit the promised blessing, every individual in the group had to combine obedience with reading and hearing.

In addition, this obedience was to be a continual or habitual action as signified by the present tense in the Greek. This obedience to the Word of God as recorded in the book of Revelation is to be the habit of one's life.

In fact, there are frequent exhortations in the book of Revelation toward repentance, faith, endurance, obedience and the like.

This is a call to be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only as James teaches in **James 1:22**. We are not to be a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer of the Word.

Hence this beatitude in **Revelation 1:3** echoes the beatitude in **James 1:25**.

"But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does."

Third, notice that this special blessing Recalls the practice of the early church.

This verse actually reflects the early Jewish custom of reading aloud the Scripture in the services of the synagogue.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

One party would read and the rest of the group would listen. We see this take place in the New Testament as Jesus reads a passage from Isaiah in the Synagogue at Nazareth. (Cf. **Luke 4:16-20**)

This same custom was carried over into the services of the early church.

This was likely due to the expense of writing materials and the scarcity of copies of the Biblical books.

Public reading was the only means that most Christians had in becoming familiar with the Word of God.

An individual would therefore read aloud for the benefit of the rest of those assembled.

It behooved the listeners to pay close attention, a habit in which they were all well trained.

A good memory was vital not only for the sake of retaining the information, but obedience depended on remembering what was read.

How privileged we are to possess our many copies of God's Word. How blessed we would be if we could only put it into action in our lives.

Lastly, notice this special blessing Relates its purpose.

The conjunction “for” introduces the reason for the blessing. The reason for the blessing is that “*the time is near.*”

The time spoken of here is a reference to the period of end time events “*the things which must soon take place.*”

As already mentioned, these end time events are imminent. They could take place at any time.

Nothing else has to happen before Christ comes back for His church and these end time events begin to unfold.

This should motivate us to “*heed the things written in this book.*” This should drive us toward obedience to God's Word.

This is a call for believers to be ready for Christ's return. It echoes our Lord's teaching in **Luke 12:35-40**,

“(35) Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. (36) Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.

(37) Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

(38) Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. (39) But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. (40) You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

CONCLUSION:

We don't have to wonder about the future. God has revealed His future plans and has promised that His return will be imminent.

Once Christ returns the end times events recorded for us in the book of Revelation will unfold. These things will begin with the return of Christ for His church.

The question is: Are you ready for the future? Are you ready for Christ's return? What in your life needs to change, so that you are ready when Christ returns?