

Revelation 1 - Part 1

by Robert F. Adcock

The book of Revelation carries a promise of a blessing for those who read and heed its words, and it emphasizes the importance of being in the Spirit, obeying God's commandments, and maintaining a love for God.

Duration: 42:05

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 11:28, Revelation 1:3, Revelation 4:1

Topics: "Gods Sovereignty", "Biblical Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Revelation and its significance for believers. He highlights the opening verse of Revelation 4, which describes John's experience of receiving a divine message. The preacher emphasizes that this experience is something that all believers can anticipate happening even today. He encourages the congregation to read the book of Revelation, as it provides a renewed confidence in God's sovereignty and control over all things. The preacher also emphasizes the importance of obeying the word of God and finding blessing in doing so.

Transcript

I'd like for us this morning to turn to the book of Revelation, chapter 1. Revelation, chapter 1. How many in the room this morning were around on December the 7th, 1941? How many were here in the world? Well, just about everybody. You know all about it. You know what happened.

I'm thankful that we got that good news about Dick. There were a lot of those things that went out. Friends of mine that were, had parents that were all upset because they'd be notified, missing in action.

And it would turn out that he'd just gone to town and things like that. So we have a lot to be thankful for. The Lord has been very good to us as a people.

The book of Revelation is one of those books that so often somebody gets saved and the first thing he says, I want to read the book of Revelation. The Revelation. Well, it is the Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And it is an important book. And it is a book that carries with it a promise. I don't know of any other book that carries with it this promise.

If you look at the third verse of the first chapter, 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. Want a blessing from God? Read the book of Revelation. You'll have something there that will send some notes of joy into

your heart.

It'll inform you about things not only that have already happened. And we'll look at that in just a moment. But the man that penned these words was John.

And he says this in the 10th verse, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet. Now, that person that is in the Spirit, that person that speaks empowered by the Spirit of God, that person that has enlightenment by the Spirit of God, is indeed a privileged person. You've got to know the Lord before that can happen.

Because the moment we were born again, the very moment that we receive spiritual life, we receive the Spirit of God. He dwells in every believer. And if you do not have the Spirit of God indwelling you at this moment, you don't know the Lord.

This man was in the Spirit. This man was a man that had received a divine call to go out and to be a witness for Jesus Christ in the world. And the Spirit of God spoke to him.

And we have upon the pages of Scripture the things that were revealed to him. And the Word says, if you want a blessing, read this book. It's the last book in our Bible.

One of the things that we discover about this is that this book tells us exactly what to look for in this book. I say all of this as a prelude to what I'm about to say about the seven churches, but it's so necessary that sometimes we know these things. I would encourage you to read the book of Revelation.

It does bring to you a renewed confidence that indeed God knows exactly what he's doing. Everything in the past that was under divine control, and I do believe sovereignly that God controls all things. And then this 19th verse of the first chapter, he says, I write therefore the things which you have seen.

This is what John's mission was, and this is what he was to write. The things which you have seen. We'll discover in just a moment that there were some things that he was witness to.

And the things which are. Some of the things that at that very moment they were present with him. And the things which shall take place after these things.

You've got an outline of the book right there before you. And beginning in that fourth chapter, the fourth chapter opens up. I'm telling you, it's exciting if you know what the first verse means in that fourth chapter, because it tells us that John experienced something that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ at this moment anticipates happening even today.

He received a message, a divine message. And it says, after these things I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven and the first voice which I heard like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me and said, come up here. Wouldn't it be nice if the Lord said this morning, the church has been upon the face of the earth long enough.

You fulfilled your mission. You have faithfully got the word out. You spread the good news.

Time to come home. Come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things. After what John had witnessed in the course of his life, the present conditions as they were at that time in the world, he gets a call and says, I'm going to call you home one day.

John's been long gone. He's been with the Lord for 2,000 years. We're still waiting, aren't we? We're waiting for that call.

It could happen at any time. That's a rapture, the calling away of God's people by the Son of God. And the prospect of that happening today is greater than it's ever been before in the history of mankind.

We're closer to heaven today than we've ever been before. Today. Today.

Could happen today. Eminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is why we encourage people, if you're not saved, get saved today.

I know out of experience that most of us say, well, I'll wait until some more convenient time. There'll be a better time for me to make that decision about receiving Christ. I'm not quite ready yet.

That's a dangerous decision on your part, because if he comes, if he comes, you're left behind. If he comes, you won't go to be with him. You'll be left here upon the face of the earth.

And that'd be very sad. Some people seem to just revel in the thought that what's happening in the world today is all that they want and all that they desire in their lives. And that's sad.

We've been in our Saturday morning men's Bible study, been looking at Romans chapter 12, and one of the verses there, the second verse says, do not be conformed to the ways of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The world that we live in today, and I think it stems from conviction, that the world just does not like the idea of people making such bold claims that they know God and that they know that they're saved. They know that all of their sins are forgiven and they're on their way to heaven.

The world doesn't like for Christians to say that. It sounds as if we're being very presumptuous. How do you know all of that? We know it because the Word of God says that.

That's exactly what the Word of God says. You want to be a possessor of eternal life and have all of your sins forgiven? Trust the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners, and you'll have eternal life. The world doesn't like that.

It's too bold. It's condemning to those that haven't trusted him. So they don't like for us to say that, but the world wants to press us into a mold.

And incidentally, it's been very successful. I have to hasten to say that. The world we live in, this world system that we live in, has been very, very successful in taking Christians and putting them in a mold so that when the world gets through with them, you can't tell the difference today between Christians and non-Christians.

So often they look just alike. They act just the same as those that are in the world. Did you notice at the beginning of what we read, the blessing that can come from reading this book? Hear the words of this prophet.

Heed the things which are written in it, for the time is near. There's a blessing for that. But if you would just look in one verse, and I'll read it for you, you don't have to turn to it.

It's found in Luke 11. Our Lord says, Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it. Observe it.

It becomes all-important to obey. Obedience is better than sacrifice in the mind and eyes of God. You want blessing from God? Do what he tells you to do.

Do what he tells you to do. He likes obedience from his children. He doesn't like for his children to disobey his orders.

He likes to maintain control by the Spirit of God. And you know the thing that sometimes mystifies you? That one with so much power, omnipotent power, allows any one of us just a little speck of dust to transgress and go contrary to his will. Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? One with sovereign power that can do all things allows the very thing that he has created to go contrary to what his will is for that person.

God is not willing that any should perish. God doesn't want to send people to hell. God wants to save souls.

God wants his family complete, those that will trust the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants us to spend eternity with him. Beginning in the second chapter as a fulfillment of what John has just shared with us in this writing in the book of Revelation, we are introduced to the subject of things that were present at that time.

There were seven churches. Probably the Apostle Paul had something to do with the establishment of those churches. I know men that are characterized as being church planters.

They have a way. They have discernment. They go out and they win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And they get established a testimony and a witness for God in many places upon the earth. Missionaries do this. Home missions.

The whole world is a mission field. And that's a wonderful calling. These seven churches that we have for us in chapter 2 and 3 were established by someone that had some vision, had a desire to see people saved by the grace of God, brought into fellowship with God.

You can't seek anything any higher. You can't experience anything in your soul like having that wonderful communion and fellowship with God, the very one that created you and me. To commune with him, to speak with him face to face.

He invites us to come into his presence. That should excite us. It should excite us.

But you know, it doesn't seem like so often that we count that as something that is precious and dear, something that we should value above anything else in this life. Someone that we love dearly, someone that we care for oh so much, we enjoy communion and fellowship with them. Where does God come into the picture? How much true delight do we find in him? Psalm 37, you know, says, delight thyself in the Lord.

He'll give you the desires of your heart. Go to be just filled with sheer delight in your soul that you can go to the Word of God and hear God's voice speak to you. And then you can open your heart and you can speak to him.

Trust you've already done that today. This is the Lord's day. We're in a gathering of people that obviously put some value upon the Word of God and coming together and assembling for the purpose of worship and praise to our God.

It's a wonderful, wonderful privilege. May we put a greater value upon that privilege than just waiting. This is not the only place that you can come and worship God.

Thank God for that. We don't need a building to come and to worship God. May that worship God must worship him in spirit and according to truth.

And I can do that anywhere, anytime, during a day or a night. I can worship my God. I can bow in his presence and I can tell him that I thank him for loving me.

I thank him for saving my soul. These are things that become precious and dear to the hearts of those that trust the Savior. John observed that there were seven churches.

Evidently, he had knowledge of every one of those churches, seven in number. Every one of them is presented in what we have in chapter 2 and 3 as being a church that is distinctively identified by something that God hated or something God disapproved of. He also offers commendation and approval to all the things that they did that was right.

Be sure of this. We always get perfect justice when we deal with God. He will rebuke us.

He will rebuke us. He will chasten you if you're a child of God. He will chasten you.

But you know the reason he chastens us is because he loves us. He loves us so much that he wants to see us develop spiritually into something that would be for the glory of God. That's his purpose.

He doesn't delight in chastening one of us, just as he doesn't will that anyone would perish in their sins. He delights to see one of us born again into his family. He delights to see us grow in grace and knowledge of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In each one of these churches, fellowships of believers, all of these churches were in the area of Asia Minor, as we would describe it today if you looked on a map. You could still find some of these places that are mentioned. They still exist today.

The churches themselves, you may only be able to find where it was located. Little more, gone. It starts out the first one in the first verse of chapter 2. It says, The angel of the church of Ephesus write to the angel of the church.

It means the guardian. Someone that was in charge. Someone that had a loving care in their heart for God's people.

This is what he had to say about this church and approval. Here they were. They had an opportunity to let their light shine.

We have no doubt that the gospel of Jesus Christ had been proclaimed in all of that area surrounding the church at Ephesus. But with the approval, there's something that is said that has followed this church down through the ages. God tells the whole story.

God does not tell part of the story. And I can tell you this morning that God doesn't just look at a little bit of our life. He looks at all of our life.

The good and the bad. And God is honest in dealing with us. So often we're dishonest in dealing with each other.

We won't tell each other exactly how we feel. Sometimes we withhold even truth because that person may be offended by what I say. That's a sad picture.

That's a sad picture. For this church at Ephesus, something that had happened in their group with all of the things that he says that commends them, he says this. I have something against you.

You have left your first love. You have left your first love. What does that mean? You've left your first love.

I've heard people say this in talking about this, and what they had to say was not very accurate. They said, you know, it says that they lost their first love. Usually if you lose something, you lose track of it and you have no knowledge of having lost it.

They didn't lose their first love. They left it. They left it.

I'm telling you, brothers and sisters in Christ, it's serious business to forget that God loves you. It all started out with God loving us and giving his Son for us. That's where it started, wasn't it? It captivated your soul to think that someone that created all things had all power, was omniscient and omnipresent.

He loved you and he gave himself for you in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You like that. How long were you enamored by the thought that God loves me? Did it take a deep root in your heart and soul? I'm thinking that perhaps at the very outset that the church at Ephesus certainly, they were excited about being saved.

They loved the whole concept of being saved. But something happened. We didn't lose it.

You could say it was certainly a misfortune that something happened, no fault of theirs, and it just got lost. But they just left it. They departed from that.

Something else must have come up that they thought was more important than focusing their attention upon the love of God. Love is the greatest of all gifts. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

This Bible, this book, Christianity, is all about L-O-V-E, the love of God. And that should permeate our souls. And only the Spirit of God can generate in you the pure love of God for God and for your fellow man.

You can like somebody. You can have, indeed, a strong attachment for somebody. Peter fell into that trap in talking to the Lord.

He kind of avoided that question when the Lord said, Do you love me, Peter? Do you really love me? You know, the best he could come up with, because he was embarrassed. He was the man that, you know, had even said he didn't know the Lord. He was squirming.

He was thinking about, Man, do you really love me? The best he could come up with is, Lord, I really do have a strong attachment for you. I really like you. I admire you.

I appreciate you. Peter, do you really love me? And I think we, each one of us, could ask ourselves this question. Do you really love the Lord? Do you really love God? He loves you.

We don't have, none of us in this room would question that for a moment. God loves me. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, loved me so much He died for me.

Do we love God? Well, I'll tell you something that will be an embarrassment to every one of us. He says, If you love me, you keep my commandments. If you love me, you do what I tell you to do.

It's the solid proof that we really love God when we obey God. You know, God sets a standard for a child, a disobedient child, an unruly child, someone that just can't be brought under control. Do you love your mom and daddy? You love them? You don't obey what they ask you to do? If you really respected them, if you really respected that authority and recognized that they have discernment in what they do that you may not like, they do it for your best interest.

If you understood those things as a child, you would never disobey your parents. And I'm telling us this morning, me and everyone sitting in this room, if you really love God and you respect His authority, you respect His word, and you respect His discernment in what He asked you to do, you'll do it. You'll do it.

And thereby, you will prove that you really love God. I love you, Lord. I know that you will never lead me astray when the Word of God says, don't let this old world press you into that mold.

I was promising myself I wouldn't say anything about this, but right at this season of the year, and my wife just went out and bought another Christmas tree. And she knows I don't care much for that kind of thing, but I do it for her. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with the Christmas tree.

Now, don't get me wrong, but when I pick up my morning paper and just page after page, nothing but merchants advertising, advertising, advertising, more and more and more stuff. Can't afford all that stuff. People try to.

It tempts people. It lures them into a trap. Credit cards.

Get it now and pay later. Oh, Lord have mercy. Boy, you talk about something that will excite the soul.

You wait until you read some of those bills that start coming in after the holidays are over. The world does want us to succumb to satisfying our desires for what's in the world right now. Brethren, you'd better wean yourself away from that, because it will have some impact upon how much you love God.

God should be first. God knows the Apostle Paul wrote and wrote so much about putting Jesus Christ first in your life. Let him have the preeminent place.

I can see right now I'm not going to be able to go through what God liked and disliked about all of these churches, but let me say this. This one about the church at Ephesus. You didn't lose your first love, brother.

You just left it. You know, I have to sadly say this because I've known it and I've seen it happen. And so often we have to sadly confess that sometimes it's happened in our own lives.

We were cold and heart and for some reason we were no longer enamored by the thought that God loves me. And that wasn't the most exciting thing in your life. Something else had taken the place of it.

That's the saddest day in any one of our lives. When something else in this world takes the preeminence over the fact that God loves you, we're in trouble. We're in trouble.

To go back and reflect upon any time that's ever happened to any one of us causes me to bow my head and say, I'm ashamed. That should have never happened. He should be first.

First in everything that we think or do. Because what you think is what you really are. What you have in your mind and in your heart, that's what you really are.

And God knows about it, brother and sister. He knows all about us. These are lives of ours that are an open book to him.

If you ever lied to God, I mean talking to him and you told him a lie. Brother told me one time, he said, I was guilty of that until one day I got such a shock. Because I always told God I loved him.

I always told God I loved him. But I wasn't an obedient child and I didn't do all he told me to do. And he said, I got on my knees and I purposed to straighten my life out.

Praise God, I think he did. I'm not going to touch on all of these churches, seven of them in number. But these are the things that the Apostle John had observed in seven churches that are found in the book of Revelation.

The last of these churches is the church at Laodicea. I want to read for you what he says about the church at Laodicea. You see, each one of these churches represents a period in time.

What happened in those churches is represented historically in some period of time between that day that John wrote and this present day. I ask you to read it for yourself. I ask you to study it for yourself.

You will discover everything that has already happened in a church is happening today. Everything that is characteristic of these churches that God disapproved of is happening in the church today. Don't say the church lost its first love.

Left it, brother. Left it. Left it.

Something else was more important. If you get to the church at Laodicea, listen to what he says about the church at Laodicea. In the third chapter beginning at the fourteenth verse, and unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things sayeth the army and the faithful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that thou were cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

Some people tell me that really like certain things cold or hot. If you want to nauseate me, give me a glass of tepid water when I'm thirsty. I don't like it.

Nauseous. I don't like it. Some people can drink coffee out of the pot.

I want my coffee hot. I don't want it lukewarm. You know, this is a consideration of conditions as they existed at Laodicea that I don't think we'd have any trouble for a moment asking ourselves this morning, am I really cold? And when I say cold, I've just lost all contact with God.

I don't have any time for God. There was a time when I felt very comfortable in focusing my attention upon spiritual things, but right now I'm just cold. I'm not moved in any way by any thoughts about God.

On the other hand, you've heard this expression, that man, that woman is on fire for God. That means that they're very enthused about the things of God. Wide awake, alert, ready to praise and thank God at any moment.

You see the two extremes. The church at Ephesus was said to be lukewarm. Well, we're not cold, but then we're not hot.

You may not like the idea where you say, at least they are not at any one of the extremes, but they're just riding right down the middle of the road. One foot in the road on the left side, one foot over on the other side. Walking the line.

They call it the gray area. God doesn't like that. Seems to disapprove of that completely.

You know, it may stem from the fact that they have convinced themselves, I will take care of my own business. They are so conceited and believe that they can handle the destiny of their own little lives. And I'll do what I want to, and I'll do it the way I want to do it.

Now, they're talking to God when they say that. Don't tell me what to do. I'm not going to become fanatical about being a Christian.

I'm not going around talking about Jesus all the time. I know a fellow that tells me every time I hear somebody mention the name of Jesus in a public place, he said, I feel very uncomfortable. And he professes to be a Christian.

I feel very uncomfortable when people are talking about Jesus. Listen, if this world doesn't get the message about Jesus, they're lost and they're going to hell. Would to God that the fires of enthusiasm for obeying and doing the will of God would light up every one of our souls.

And we'd be a witness for him wherever we go. You want God to spew you out of his mouth? Can't do anything with you. You're not cold, you're not hot.

It's like you just parked over to the side of the road and said, leave me alone. Nothing else is going to happen. This is what the church had to say, according to John.

You say I'm rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. And no, it's not, that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.

And anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent.

That's good counsel. That's good counsel. Man would be a fool not to obey a message like that, wouldn't he? But you know, those messages are delivered regularly to a lot of God's people, and they don't pay attention to it.

I'm still going to do it the way I want to do it. And that's a sad response to what God has in store for every one of us. Behold, and this is a verse that I think will just knock us all for a loop.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. Verse 20. Any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him, and he with me.

Do you know that person that saved your soul, died upon a cross for your sin? He wants fellowship with you. He wants to talk with you and me. And he wants us to listen to what he has to say to us.

And so often we won't let him do it. I want to come in and have a little fellowship with you, my child. I'm busy, Lord.

I'm busy. Don't you know I'm busy? Don't you know life today is stressful? Don't you know that I have all of these things that I've got to do? All these things that are binding upon me, the responsibility that I've taken for my family and for all the other things that are a part of my life. I haven't got time, Lord.

Do you know that's the picture we've got here? It may be on the level, there may be whole congregations of people of God today that are gathered, thousands of them, and they ain't got no time for fellowship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They're busy. It may be with church activities.

It may be all those things that they've become responsible for. But I'm busy. Don't bother me.

He wants to fellowship with you and me. He wants to commune with you and me. I'll tell you one thing we do here at Northgate Chapel that I love.

I commune with my God every Sunday morning around the table. And I remember that He died upon a cross for my sins. His body was broken and His precious blood was shed.

And I don't know about you. I ain't got no excuse for not being here. I don't know what your excuse is.

I don't know what your excuse is. Has He knocked on your door? That I'd like to have a little fellowship and communion with you. I'm busy, Lord.

I'm busy. I'm busy. This church at Laodicea, it's a pitiful picture, isn't it? I think it's so typical of conditions as they exist in the world today.

That's the reason I wanted to get to it. He's knocking. I want to come in and fellowship with you.

Lord, we know you, but we're too busy. Will you just go park it somewhere and let us get on with the business at hand? I ask you, is there anything in your life more important than fellowship and communion with God? With the Son of God who loves you and died for you? Is there anything in your life that you value more than that and thinks more important than that? If it is, you're wrong, brother, sister, and you need to get it straightened out. And may that happen to us.

I know this is the year when stressful things are happening, and there's so many things that are binding upon us. But listen, cut loose from it and let the Lord Jesus Christ enjoy some communion and fellowship with you, regardless of what this world does. This world doesn't give a whip about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and what he did upon the cross.

But we should. We should. It should be first.

From the time you get up in the morning until you put your head up on the pillow at night, communion and fellowship with our God. Our Heavenly Father, I thank thee again this morning that we could look at the Word of God. We're promised a blessing from reading the Scriptures.

This one book, the book of Revelation. Grant, we pray thee, that every one of us in this room will take very seriously what the Spirit of God has said to us, reminding us that you were first place in our lives. And Lord Jesus, oh Lord Jesus, I thank you for wanting to fellowship in communion with us.

I'm so thankful that you are knocking upon each of our hearts door today. Some of us may have gotten so cold that we don't even hear you knocking. But Lord, I'm so thankful that you keep knocking.

May we respond and open the door and say, Lord, come in. Fellowship and communion with thee is more important than anything in this life. We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Amen. John has a closing word. Number 239.

This is a familiar hymn that I was thinking as Robert was speaking in his introductory thoughts. I once had a coworker who hit me with the line, how do I know that what you say is true? Or how do and why is it my thoughts just as good as what your thoughts are as far as, you know, what's going to happen and salvation and that kind of thing. I have my opinion, you have yours.

And whether or not you have your own thoughts, it doesn't change anything. Jesus is coming again. And when you say, well, I don't care whether he's coming or not, you will at that time.

So for the Christian, this song is something that's an assurance. We're looking forward to that time for someone who doesn't know Christ. They're thinking, well, I hope it's not true, because then I've been living a lie.

Let's stand and sing just the first verse. Jesus is coming again.

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