

(Revelation) Revelation 1:1-18

by Zac Poonen

The book of Revelation is a call to surrender and obedience to Jesus Christ, and it's meant to make us perfect and complete in Him.

Duration: 1:00:50

Scripture: Revelation 1:4, Revelation 1:6

Topics: "Second Coming", "Bond Servant"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of focusing on the major doctrines presented in Revelation 1:4-7. These verses contain a condensed version of the entire New Testament teaching. The speaker highlights seven key points from these verses, including the fact that the word of God is meant to make believers perfect and is the testimony of Jesus Christ. Additionally, the speaker emphasizes the theme of the second coming of Christ, stating that Jesus will come again and every eye will see Him. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of being a bond servant of God, fully surrendering every aspect of one's life to Him.

Transcript

Today we want to start the study on the book of Revelation. So we turn to the last book of the Bible, Revelation chapter 1. I think Satan hates this book because it's the one book that describes his final destiny and judgment more than any other book in the Bible. And so he doesn't want us to know too much about it.

So he hates it and that's why he allows us to remain ignorant of it and prevents us from taking the study of this book seriously. So let's turn to Revelation chapter 1. The first three verses are an introduction to the whole book. And I want you to notice seven things.

The book of Revelation is full of sevens and I want you to notice seven things in these first three verses which we must bear in mind throughout the study of the book. Because many people approach the study of this book in the wrong way. And if you don't follow the principles laid down in this first paragraph, then you'll study it the wrong way and with the wrong purpose and probably get a wrong understanding.

First of all, it's called the revelation of Jesus Christ. It's not the revelation of John, it was a revelation given to John. It's the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And the first word I want you to notice here is the word revelation. And the word revelation is a word, it's a Greek word called apokalapsis, which means an unveiling. It's like something which is veiled and then the veil is lifted.

That's the meaning of the word revelation. And that's the first thing that we need to bear in mind when we study this book and for that matter all the books of scripture, that we cannot understand it with human cleverness. We read here about dragons and lambs and beasts and creatures and bowls of wrath and trumpets and angels.

We can't use our human understanding to explain it. We need the revelation of God. It says the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Jesus Christ, our Lord, to show to his bondservants.

It must be shown to us. It's hidden otherwise. You can be a PhD, a clever person in the things of the world, but you can't understand this book unless God reveals it.

And basically, if we want revelation from God, we need to fear him and we need to be humble. God gives revelation to those who are humble and those who fear him, those who fear to sin, who want to please him. So that's the first thing we need to bear in mind as we go through the whole book.

Your cleverness and my cleverness is no use. So we need to approach the book in humility, great humility, acknowledging our stupidity when it comes to spiritual things and also with a great reverence for God. And then the second thing I want you to notice there in verse one is it is shown to his bondservants.

It's not shown to everybody. It's not, as I said, not shown to the clever people. It's shown to his bondservant.

Now, the word bondservant means a slave. There's a difference between a slave and a servant. A servant is one who works for wages and one who can expect certain rights.

He can work from nine to five, etc. A slave is one who belongs to his master. And we read in the first verse that this book is going to be explained by God through Jesus Christ only to those who have given themselves, as they say, lock, stock and barrel, completely, totally to God.

Say, Lord, every part of me is yours. My whole life is yours. My future plans are yours.

My money is yours. My time is yours. My home is yours.

Everything I have is yours. Those are the ones who will understand this book the best. We can come to a teaching session and hear about this book.

But it is only to those who have given themselves to God like this who will understand it fully. Thirdly, it says in the first verse, the last part, that he sent, Jesus Christ sent and signified it by his angel to his bondservant John. And that's an important word, signified.

And signified means it was shown through sign and symbols. And so that's something we must bear in mind as we go through this book, that this book is full of signs and symbols which have a spiritual meaning. And we need to understand those symbols and signs if we are to get the meaning of what it is.

The Lord Jesus is trying to say to us, we must bear that in mind, because many things that we see in this book as we go, they are not literal. They are in sign language. And we need the help of the Holy Spirit to

interpret those signs, unlike most of the other parts of the New Testament, which are not in sign language.

Then fourthly, verse two, John, who got this revelation, says, bore witness to the word of God. And so this book we need to bear in mind is the word of God. Very often we don't think, many people anyway, don't think of this as God's word, as much as certain other passages of scripture.

The whole scripture is God's word, but here it is specifically written, this is the word of God. For example, you turn to chapter 19, verse nine. It's repeated there again in the last part of chapter 19, verse nine.

These are the true words of God. Now, you never find a book in the New Testament or in the Bible where this is repeated so much, because people have a doubt about it. Is this the word of God? These are the true words of God, it says.

And then when you come to chapter 22, the last page of the Bible, chapter 22, verse 18. I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. Now, although what is written in verse 18 and 19 applies to the whole Bible, it applies specifically and specially to the book of Revelation.

Because when it says, I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, he's not talking about the Bible there, he's talking about the book of Revelation. What does he say? If anyone adds to this book, God will add to him the plagues written in this book. And if anyone takes away something from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city which are written in this book.

Now, there's no book in the Bible about which there is such a solemn, serious warning given as of the book of Revelation. I'm just pointing out those verses to you to show you the importance that God has given to this book. It is God's word.

And if it is God's word and it is scripture, why has it been given to us? I want you to turn to 2 Timothy 3, verse 16 and 17, where it tells us why God has given us scripture. God has given us scripture, it says here, for these reasons. 2 Timothy 3, verse 16, all scriptures inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, complete, equipped for every good work.

What is the ultimate goal with which God has given us the scriptures? Here it is in 2 Timothy 3, verse 17, that we might become perfect and complete, like a complete means like a vessel which is filled up to the brim. God wants to fill us up. Many believers are just a few drops of water at the bottom of the bowl.

God wants to fill us up. And for that, he's given us scripture. And the book of Revelation has also been given with this purpose, not for us to speculate about the future, but to make us perfect.

I want to approach the study of the book of Revelation not to have a lot of information about all the various signs, but primarily what it says in 2 Timothy 3, verse 17, that I might become perfect. I hope that's your goal also, because God says in 2 Timothy 3, verse 16 and 17, that is the reason with which God has given the whole scriptures, that we might become perfect. And if that's your goal, then we can get some profit out of the book of Revelation.

Many people study it to have an understanding of the prophetic timetable and charts for the future. Well, that's not my aim. My aim is to obey what the word of God says, that God's word might make me perfect.

So for that intention, we study it. Then, fifthly, verse 2 of Revelation 1. This book is the testimony of Jesus Christ. As I said, it's not the testimony about the future, but it is the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In other words, throughout the book of Revelation, we are not going to be looking at the future. We're going to be looking at Jesus Christ as the one who controls the future. You see, if you just look at the future, it can be a terrifying thing.

I don't want to look at the future. I want to see Jesus Christ as the one who controls the future. And then there is no terror in the future.

There is a peace and a rest. And so it is a testimony of Jesus Christ. That is the fifth thing we must bear in mind.

There is a beautiful verse in Revelation 19, verse 10, which says that the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. Always true prophecy will testify to Jesus Christ, not to events primarily, but to Jesus Christ who controls those events. And so as we study the book, we want to keep our mind and our eyes set on Jesus Christ, not so much on events.

And when will this happen? When will that happen? When will the other thing happen? Some of these things we don't know, but we can see Jesus Christ a little more clearly as we read this book. Then, sixthly, very important. Verse three, blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it.

This book is given for obedience, not for understanding primarily, but for obedience. Obedience is more important than understanding. Many people look, go into the book of Revelation in order to understand.

That's wrong. There's no blessing. Read verse three very clearly.

It doesn't say blessed is the one who understands what the vials of wrath symbolize, what the trumpet symbolize, and what the beast symbolize. There's no blessing on that. The blessing is on those who keep what's written here.

In other words, there are things written in the book of Revelation, if we have ears to hear and eyes to see, for us to keep. Blessed are those who find those things and keep them. In other words, our aim in studying the book of Revelation must be obedience to God.

And that's put right at the beginning of the book, in the introduction. Blessed is the one who obeys. Now, it's true of the whole scriptures.

Blessed are those who obey any part of scripture, but especially there's a blessing put upon those who obey the things that are written in this book. And that's why it's very important for us to keep that in mind. Lord, I want that blessing.

Don't you want it? Don't you want the blessing of God that comes upon those who obey the things that are written in this book? Yes, even if we don't understand it. Just like the food we eat. The food I eat goes through my digestive system and gets converted into blood, flesh, bones.

I can't explain how. Maybe a doctor can do that. I can't.

But even though I can't explain it, it still gets converted into bones and flesh and blood. Understanding is not necessary. In the same way, when we come to the scriptures, understanding is not the main thing.

Obedience is the main thing. The digestive system must be working. That's the main thing.

Not that we can explain it. There are doctors who can explain the digestive system and their own digestive system is not working. Now, it's no use becoming like that where we study the book of Revelation and we understand it.

We can explain everything, but we don't know how to obey God in our daily life. So it's very important as we come to the word of God, the book of Revelation, the blessing is not on those who understand, but on those who obey. And then seventhly, what is written in the first part of verse three, that is, Blessed is he who reads.

Now, we need to understand that verse clearly, because what that means is blessed is he who reads it aloud. And the reason for that is when this book was written in the first century, you know that there was no such thing as printing in those days. The people who are sitting in the churches in those days didn't have a Bible in their hands like you and I have.

There was, it wasn't even printed. There was one copy that John had written and sent to these churches. And there was one man up there who would gather the people together in the weekly meeting and read it aloud and teach people what was written in that letter.

In other words, the seventh thing it says here is we must share with others what we receive from this book. That is the meaning of blessed is he who reads aloud because there are others who don't know about what's written here. In our case, it is not just a question of reading aloud, but of telling others what we have learned.

Many Christians are like the dead sea. They receive, but they don't give out. And so they die spiritually.

You see, it's like if you keep on receiving and you don't give out, you die. What we receive, we need to give out. Now, if we keep these seven things in mind as we study the book, I believe we can be protected from a lot of unprofitable bypass and side lanes, which we don't want to take.

We want to keep on the central track of what God wants us to get through this book. Even if we don't understand certain symbols, that won't make us lose marks at the judgment seat of Christ. But we want to major on what God is majoring on.

Those are the things we live. We considered here. Let me just list them quickly.

First of all, it is a revelation, an unveiling. We need the revelation of the Holy Spirit if we are to understand this book. Secondly, it is shown to those who are born slaves of Jesus Christ, those who have given themselves completely to the Lord.

Thirdly, it is shown through signs and symbols that we need to understand. They don't mean literally what they say. Fourthly, this is the word of God, and therefore it is meant to make me perfect.

Fifthly, it is the testimony of Jesus Christ, not about the future or about events. Sixthly, it is meant for obedience in my personal life. And seventhly, it is meant for me to share with other people what I have received from God through this book.

Now, I wonder if we have read through the book of Revelation and notice these seven things in the first paragraph. And if we study carefully, we can see these things. Then we can approach the book with a correct approach.

Now we move on to verses four to six. John to the seven churches that are in Asia. Grace to you and peace.

Now, he says here from three persons. First of all, grace to you and peace from him who is, that is, eternally present. Who was eternal past and who is to come eternal future.

That is referring to God Almighty, the father who ever existed from eternity past to eternity future. And secondly, from the second person of the Trinity, from sorry, from the third person of the Trinity, from the seven spirits who are before his throne. This doesn't mean that there are seven different Holy Spirits.

Remember the word signified. When you come across a difficult passage in Revelation, remember the word signified. It is sign language.

It is not literal. Seven spirits means seven fold Holy Spirit. The spirit of perfection for seven is the number of perfection in the scriptures.

The seven fold Holy Spirit who is before the throne of God and five from the second person of the Trinity, that is Jesus Christ, the son of God, the faithful witness, the first born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. The first born of the dead means that Jesus Christ was the first person to have come back from the grave permanently. There were people like Lazarus and Jairus's daughter who came back from death, but then they died again.

But Jesus Christ was the first person who came back from the dead, never to die again. That's the meaning of the first born from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. It's very important for us to see that it's the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Remember this book. We need to see as we go through the book of Revelation and see about the Antichrist and see about many things that are going to happen in the coming days that we see right at the beginning that the one who rules the kingdoms of the earth is Jesus Christ, our Lord, that he's got all authority in heaven and earth in his hands. And it says here to him who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood.

And he has made us to be a kingdom priest to his God and father to him, be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Now, in those three verses, we have a tremendous concise summation of New Testament doctrine. First of all, of the Trinity, there we have Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which is a New Testament doctrine.

Second, about the love of Christ for us, middle of verse five to him who loves us. That's one of the great themes of the New Testament. God loves us.

It's not loved us in the past tense, but present tense. Notice loves us is present tense and released us from our sins is past tense. He loves us forever.

That's a great theme of the New Testament, and we need to remember that. And another great theme of the New Testament is this released us from our sin. One of the greatest themes of the New Testament is

that Jesus Christ has come to not only forgive us.

Notice the word there is in some translations is translated as washed up, but the correct translation is loosed us from our sin. The first promise in the New Testament is Matthew 12:1, where the angel told Joseph, thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall not forgive his people their sin, but save his people from their sin. And it's the same thing that we find in the first page of the last book of the Bible.

The first page of the last book of the Bible, Bible in the first page of the first book of the New Testament to be loosed from our sin is the great theme of the New Testament. We praise Jesus Christ who has released us from our sin out by his blood, by his death on the cross, by his shedding his blood. That's another great theme of the New Testament.

What the blood of Jesus Christ has accomplished for us. Now, the reason why I'm saying that is to see how the book of Revelation begins with some of these prominent themes that the New Testament teaches and that should be found in any New Testament church. What the blood of Jesus Christ does for us to loose us from our sin.

Another prominent theme of the New Testament is what we just considered in the middle of verse five, that Jesus Christ has got all authority in heaven and earth, that he is the ruler of the kings of the earth. It's one of the great themes of the New Testament that Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord.

He's got total authority. And another great theme is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the firstborn of the dead. Throughout the New Testament, we find this testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

And verse four, two of God's great gifts for us are grace and peace. You don't find these words much in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, there's so many places where it speaks about grace. Grace means, in simple words, God's help available to me according to my needs.

Is my need forgiveness? God forgives me. Is my need victory? God gives me victory. Is my need strength? Strength.

That's grace. Is my need encouragement? Encouragement. That's the meaning of grace.

Grace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And peace, that's another great gift of God, peace of heart and mind. And then verse six, another great theme of the New Testament is this, that not only is Jesus Christ the ruler of the kings of the earth, he has made us to be kings on this earth.

Not physical kings ruling over a physical kingdom, but spiritual kings ruling over, listen carefully, ruling over the lusts and passions that I find in my body. What a tremendous thing it is to be a king over anger, to be a king over lust, to be a king over bitterness, to be a king over covetousness, to rule these things so that they do not rule me. The world is full of slaves, full of slaves, slaves to lust and passion.

But Jesus has loosed us and made us king, not only kings, but priests. Every believer, listen to this, this is a predominant teaching of the New Testament. There is no such thing as a special category of people being priests.

That is a completely wrong teaching. It's a tradition of man which you must throw into the garbage bin. What does it say here? We have been made priests.

1 Peter chapter 2 teaches the same thing. Jesus Christ has made everyone a priest. In the Old Testament, it was different.

Certain people were priests, but not in the New Testament. In the New Testament, every believer is a priest. By priest, we don't mean that we have to wear a special dress.

No, that was in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the priest wears a special dress inside. You know what dress that is? It's a garment of holiness.

Worship the Lord, it says, in the beauty of holiness. Not in the beauty of some white or purple shirt, but in the beauty of holiness. That's the true priest of the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, the priest used to sacrifice on the altar. In the New Testament, we as priests sacrifice inwardly. We sacrifice our lusts on the altar so that we can please God.

We sacrifice ourselves so that we can please God. So, Jesus Christ has made us kings and priests to God our Father. That's another great theme of the New Testament, in the middle of verse 6. God our Father, to His God and Father, who is also our God and Father.

In the Old Testament, they did not know God as Father. And then finally, verse 6, to Him, that is to Jesus Christ, be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Another great theme of the New Testament, that all the glory must go to Jesus Christ.

So, we can say in verses 4, 5, and 6, we have almost the entire New Testament in condensed form. It's fantastic how the book of Revelation begins with that, endorsing everything that's gone before in the New Testament. You can just read verse 4, 5, and 6 and get every major doctrine of the New Testament in those three verses.

And John the Apostle, there you see the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Condensing it all down in three verses. The entire teaching of the New Testament.

Wonderful. So, we can see how much more lays in this book. One more thing.

Verse 7, another great theme of the New Testament. I should have said verses 4 to 7, not, sorry, not verses 4 to 6. Verses 4 to 7, we have the entire teaching of the New Testament. This is one of the great themes of the New Testament, the second coming of Christ.

Jesus Christ is coming again. One of the great themes of the New Testament. He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him.

Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth will moan over Him, even so. Amen. So, from verse 4 to 7, we get a condensed version of the entire New Testament teaching.

Every important teaching of the New Testament is there in verses 4 to 7, and any New Testament assembly, any New Testament church must always major on these doctrines that are presented in verses 4 to 7. These are the major doctrines. There are many other things mentioned in the New Testament, but they are not as major, like speaking in tongues, for example. That's not mentioned here.

It's a good thing. We praise God for it, but it's not one of the major things that we have to major on. It's not here.

But these are the major doctrines in the New Testament. And then we move on to verse 8. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, who was, who is to come, the Almighty. There again, right at the beginning of the book of Revelation, we have this vision given to us that God is Almighty.

We need to see that very clearly. The One who is in control of all these events is the Almighty God. Notice the emphasis there.

I am the Alpha and the Omega. And the Alpha and the Omega are two Greek words, the equivalent of which in English would be A and Z. That means I am the beginning and I am the ending. I am the first and I am the last.

I was there when nothing existed, and I'll be there when everything is completed. God is saying, I'm in control of the whole thing. I see the end from the beginning.

There's nothing that's going to happen next year that's going to take me by surprise, says the Lord. There's nothing that's going to happen 2000 years from now that's going to take me by surprise. He tells John that so that we see very clearly right at the beginning, this emphasis on the Lord God Almighty being in control.

Now, you may think that that's not a very important thing. We all know about it. Yes, we all know about it in theory.

But when we get into a panic in some situation in our home or in office, that is an indication that I don't believe in the Almighty, in the Almighty power of God. That's why I get into a panic. That's why I get anxious.

And that's why it's very important for me to be firmly rooted. I believe the most important requirement for believers to face the days that are coming in the world in the future is to know that our God reigns above, that Jesus Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth, that our God is almighty, that he is not only the alpha, he's the omega, he's the beginning and the end. He sees everything right on till the end.

There's nothing which he does not know. He knows everything. When you come to the end of the book of Revelation in chapter 19, chapter 22, verse 13, he says the same thing there.

Chapter 22, verse 13, I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. We can say that the book of Revelation is put in brackets between these two statements at the beginning and at the end of the book. What is that? I am the almighty God, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

And within those two brackets, you have the whole book of Revelation. If we don't see it as within those two brackets, then we can get into a lot of panic in the days to come. I don't mean just when we study the book, but when we see things happening in the world around us.

And so God begins with the revelation of himself. Then we move on to verse 9, where John says, I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus. Here we read that John calls himself your brother.

Very important for us to see that. Though he was the last of the 12 apostles now left, all the other 11 had died. This book of Revelation was written about 60 or 65 years after Jesus Christ had risen up and gone

up to heaven.

And the apostle John was the only remaining one of the 12 apostles left. And if ever there was a man on earth who deserved to have some other title than brother, it was John. He could have called himself the reverend father, something or the other, or a pastor or a pope or something like that.

But he isn't. What is he? What is this great man of God who walked with Jesus for three and a half years and who is now walked with Jesus in the Holy Spirit for 65 years? What does he call himself at the end of this height of sanctity that he's reached? What does he call himself? Your brother. Blessed are we if we can remain there.

Just plain ordinary brother till the end of our earthly life. Nothing more than that. I, John, your brother, not your pastor or your pope or anything, your brother, just a brother, ordinary brother.

Jesus Christ is the only one who deserves to be called a head, who is different, who is someone greater lifted up. We are just ordinary brother and sister. I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus.

Yes, that's another thing. We are sharers together in the tribulation and suffering and endurance which is needed to be a disciple of Jesus. Everyone who wants to be a disciple of Jesus will have to go the way of tribulation and persecution and opposition because we stand for righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world.

We stand for uprightness in the midst of a crooked world. We stand for the truth of God in the midst of a world that worships and follows the devil. So there's going to be opposition.

There's going to be persecution. And John didn't get this vision when he was sitting in an easy chair in some air-conditioned hotel. He was persecuted.

Do you know where he got this vision? When he was exiled to the island called Patmos, the last part of verse 9, he was exiled there, being persecuted by the Romans, exiled because he preached the whole counsel of God. It says there, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, because he stood up for the testimony of Jesus, he was persecuted. And in the midst of his suffering, he got revelation.

And that's how God gives us revelation too. In the midst of our own suffering and trial, God gives us revelation on his word so that that word which strengthens us in the midst of our tribulation, we can use to strengthen other brothers and sisters when they are going through tribulation too. So we can't understand the book of Revelation properly unless we are willing to be disciples of Jesus, unless we are willing to stand up for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ and be willing to face the opposition and the persecution that may come as a result of our standing true to the word of God in the midst of a crooked world.

Right. Verse 10, I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet. And we know that that was the voice of the Lord Jesus speaking to the apostle John.

I want you to notice here what he said. I was in the spirit. The Lord's day refers to the first day of the week.

What we know as Sunday, the day that Jesus Christ rose up from the dead, the early disciples called it the Lord's day. The Jews used to have a Sabbath day, but the disciples had the Lord's day, which was to

celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead the first day of the week. And if you ask me which day the early Christians celebrated, it was only the first day of the week.

They had no Christmas, no Good Friday, no Easter, nothing else. Just the first day of the week, 52 times a year. They celebrated that because it was the day that Jesus Christ conquered death and the grave and Satan.

And so on the Lord's day, he says, I was in the spirit. It doesn't mean he was not in the spirit on other days. He's just referring to the fact in the Lord's day.

I was in the spirit and I heard the Lord's voice. Now, the thing I want you to notice here is this privilege is available for us, too. If I seek to live my life in the Holy Spirit, sensitive to sin, keeping a good conscience.

Walking in humility before God's faith and keep myself filled with the Holy Spirit. I can hear God's voice. Something like a radio that's tuned to the right frequency.

You know very well now we live in the age of radios. We can understand this. Do you know that right now in this room there are lots of voices? You know that.

Lots of voices. There's music going on in this room. There's voices.

There are voices from communist countries and capitalist countries and everything is in the air. We can't hear any of them because we don't have a radio set tuned to the frequency that will catch the voices that are in this room at this particular time. If you have the radio set tuned to the frequency, you could catch a lot of voices that are in this room.

It's exactly the same with the voice of the Lord. We can sit in a meeting and hear nothing. Just like we sit here and we don't hear any of this that's going on in this because we're not tuned to the right frequency.

Now, if John were writing in 20th century, he'd write something like this. I was tuned on to the right frequency. I was in the Holy Spirit.

I kept my conscience clean and I heard the voice that came through on that frequency. Now, the thing is, just like there can be voices here which you need to be tuned to the right frequency to pick up, God can be speaking and we can spend days and days and days and never hear what God wants to say to us. It's a greatest tragedy that believers live in, that God is speaking and they're not listening because their radio sets are not tuned.

They are tuned on to the world. That's why their mind is set on the things of earth. How can I make more money? How can I defend myself against that fellow who said some false story against me? How can I get my own back on that person? How can I get my share of the family property? All types of things.

No wonder they don't hear God's voice. They say, God doesn't speak to me. He's speaking all right.

The thing is, we are not tuned to the right frequency. John says, I was in the spirit and I heard a voice. If he was not in the spirit, he would not have heard that voice.

And brother, sister, I'm absolutely convinced there are many, many things God has wanted to say to us, which we have not heard because we have not kept ourselves in the spirit with our minds set on the things that are above. And I want to exhort you and challenge you, particularly as we approach the end of the

age and the coming of Jesus Christ is so near, keep yourself in the Holy Spirit. Keep sensitive to sin, walk in humility before the face of God.

And he heard a voice like the sound of a trumpet, which said, verse 11, write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches. Here is a message I'm giving you, which you have to give to others. Sometimes God speaks to us and it's a message not only for ourselves, but it's a message which has to be written down to be given to others.

I just want to say this, that sometimes when God speaks to you, don't think it's a sin to write it down. John had to write it down, otherwise he might have forgotten it. I do that.

When God specifically speaks something, it's good to write what God has spoken to me. Sometimes God may give me something to share with others. This was for others.

Write and then pass it on to the others. I just mentioned that in passing, that sometimes when God speaks, it's good to write it down. And send it to the seven churches to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamon, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

And I just want to tell you something. I looked this up in an atlas where these seven churches were located. They are called in verse four, the seven churches that are in Asia.

Now, the Asia of the first century is not the Asia of the 20th century. Today, Asia is a continent. In those days, Asia was just a small part of what is today Turkey.

And if you look at a map, you find that all these seven places are in western Turkey. Just close to the Mediterranean Sea. And that part was called Asia Minor.

And the distance from Ephesus to Smyrna was only 50 miles. Smyrna to Pergamon, another 50. Pergamon to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, all within 50 miles of each other.

It was a small area within about a radius of 75 miles. And the thing I want you to notice here is, it is not called the church in Asia Minor. Then it would have become a denomination.

There is no such thing as a denomination in the New Testament. A denomination is the work of man. You see that even in the book of Revelation.

That even though it's like having a church in Bangalore and another one in Mysore. But that's a separate church. Another one in Kolar Goldfields, and that's a separate church.

Another one in Jalarpet, and that's a separate church. And there is no such thing as a denomination holding all this together. Otherwise, all that Jesus needed said was, John, just send this letter to the bishop in charge of all these seven churches, and he'll distribute it.

No, there is no bishop in charge of the seven churches. Each church is an independent church. There's one church in Ephesus, 50 miles away.

There's a church in Smyrna, that's another church. Sometimes people use the phrase, the church in India. How in the world can there be a church in India? I want to tell you, that phrase is never found in the New Testament.

There can be churches in India, but no such thing as a church in India. There can be, in God's eyes, there is no such thing as the church of South India. Man may produce it, but God is not interested in that type of thing.

It's the church in Bangalore, or the church in KGF. We need to see that here in verse 11. The entire New Testament doctrine is here in Revelation chapter 1. Different churches in different places, and no denomination.

Right, now we move on to verse 12 and 13. John heard this voice, and he turned to see the voice that spoke to him. And when he turned, notice this very carefully, every sentence is important.

When he turned and looked, he did not see Jesus Christ. What did he see? Verse 12, what did he see? Seven golden lampstands. Now, that is explained for us in verse 20, the middle of that verse.

The last part of verse 20, the seven lampstands are the seven churches. So, when John turned around to see the voice that spoke to him, he doesn't see Jesus Christ, he sees the seven churches. And verse 13, in the middle of the churches, the Son of Man.

In other words, what Jesus is telling John is, I want to reveal myself to the world, not directly, but through the churches. That's the message there. That when people turn around to see me, where should they see me? In the church.

In the local body of believers, people should be able to see Jesus Christ in the middle. That's the meaning of verse 13. In the middle of the churches, one like unto the Son of Man.

Blessed are we, if our local church is like that, that people can come to this local church and find Jesus Christ in the middle of that church. Not a whole lot of quarreling, fighting believers, but Jesus Christ, manifesting himself through weak people like you and me. That's the message there.

He turned around to see Jesus, and he doesn't see Jesus, he sees the church, and Jesus, seven churches, and Jesus in the middle of the seven churches. And now, notice here, the description of Jesus Christ. Now, this is not how Jesus Christ looks physically.

And for that matter, Jesus does not look like all these paintings that you see with the long hair and... You know, when I pray, I don't think of Jesus like that, like you see in all these pictures, because I'll get a big surprise when he comes again, and he won't look like that at all. I don't have any picture before my eyes when I pray to Jesus Christ, because I don't know what he looks like. I pray in faith.

I don't have any picture of God. I don't have any idols, physically or in my life. When I pray to God or Jesus Christ, and I deliberately eliminate all these pictures of Jesus because they can lead me astray.

No, we don't know what he looks like. 1 Peter 1, Peter says, Whom having not seen, you love. Wonderful.

That we haven't seen him, but we love him. So here is a description in sign language of Jesus Christ. First of all, he's clothed in a robe reaching to the feet.

He's called a son of man, emphasizing the fact that he came in our flesh. Clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, which was the dress of the high priest in the Old Testament. And Jesus Christ is the one high priest.

We've seen in verse 6, We are all priests, but we've got one high priest. And that is Jesus Christ clothed in this garment, symbolizing that he's a high priest praying for us. Second, he's got a belt girded across his breast with a golden girdle, means a big, thick sash around his upper part of his body.

And that symbolizes, according to Isaiah, just take the reference chapter 11, verse 5, it says that his girdle is faithfulness and righteousness. Righteousness and faithfulness are his belt. That's what it symbolizes, that he is righteous and he is faithful to his promises.

Isaiah 11, 5. Verse 14, his head and his hair were white like wool. This is a reference. If you're taking notes, you can take down Daniel chapter 7, verse 9, Daniel 7, verse 9, where God Almighty is pictured as one who comes with white hair like wool.

And that white hair like wool symbolizes two things. One is age and the other is wisdom. Age symbolizing that he is eternal and wisdom.

You know, we speak of white hair and gray hair is wisdom. White as wool, perfect in wisdom. His hair were white like wool.

He is eternal in his days and perfect in wisdom like snow. The last part of verse 14, his eyes. His eyes are like a flame of fire.

We read in Hebrews 4, verse 13, that everything is naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Hebrews 4, 13. His eyes like a flame of fire means his eyes can see through all our hypocrisy, all the humbug, all the religious whitewash, all the pious language.

His eyes are like a flame of fire, penetrating this veneer of religion that so many people have, penetrating right through to the heart as people come and call themselves Christians and seek to call themselves by his name. His eyes like a flame of fire see through the hollowness and the emptiness of everything, burns up all that and sees right through. That's the meaning of his eyes like a flame of fire.

Verse 15, his feet like burnished bronze. In the Old Testament tabernacle, we read that the altar of sacrifice was made of bronze. The altar of sacrifice is the place where the animals were slain and it's a picture of Calvary's cross and bronze throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament is a picture of God's judgment.

And his feet were like burnished bronze. Remember the word signified, sign language signifying that that judgment fell on Jesus Christ and particularly the feet because it says through the feet he crushed the serpent's head. Genesis 3 15, thou shalt, the seed of the woman will crush the seed of the serpent with his feet and so the feet are particularly mentioned because they were pierced on Calvary's cross, the bronze symbolizing God's judgment by which the judgment crushed Satan as well.

And then his voice like the sound of many waters and many waters, John chapter 7 verse 37 and 38 symbolize the Holy Spirit. There is sign language here but when we compare with other portions of scripture, we understand the sign that the words of Jesus are words in the power of the Holy Spirit like many waters. In his right hand, he held seven stars.

What are these seven stars? That's explained for us in the middle of verse 20. The seven stars are the angels or messengers of the seven churches. There's one Greek word which can be translated angel or messenger.

There are no two separate words. It can be angel, it can be messenger and here it means messenger. We'll come to that in our next study but it teaches that each church has got one messenger.

God usually gives at least one messenger to each church, one who proclaims his word and the wonderful thing we see here is that these messengers are held by Jesus Christ in his right hand and that is why the word of God says that we must give respect and regard to those whom God appoints as his messengers not because of what they are, they're ordinary human beings but because they are held by Jesus Christ in his right hand. Now it's true that he holds all believers. No one can pluck them out of my hand, Jesus says.

My father is greater than I, John 10, 28 and 29. No one can pluck them out of his hand but in a special way. He holds his messengers in his right hand because his messengers are the special targets of Satan and therefore they have a special protection from Jesus Christ the head and the one who has sent them as his messengers and then out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.

Hebrews 4 verse 12, the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. So the sign and symbol here is that what comes out from Jesus mouth is the word of God. We noticed in verse 15 that his voice is like many waters symbolizing the Holy Spirit but what comes forth is the word of God.

So combining the two we see that what comes forth from Jesus is the word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. John 6 verse 63, the words I speak to you are spirit and life. It's the Holy Spirit and the word of God that come forth from Jesus mouth and his face like the sun shining in his strength.

We read that when Jesus Christ went up to the mount of transfiguration with the other disciples in Matthew 17 verse 2, they got a revelation there and Jesus' face shone like the sun in all his strength. The meaning of this is 1 Timothy 6 verse 16, it says, God dwells, 1 Timothy 6 verse 16, God dwells in a light which no human being can approach and just like you cannot look at the sun directly with your naked eye when it is in its noonday brightness, in the same way God dwells in light which is a million times greater than that light of the sun symbolized by the face of Jesus Christ like the sun shining in his strength. There is total purity there.

We know that the sun is a ball of fire. You can't have germs and bacteria there in the sun. They get burned up in no time and so it is.

There is no sin like the book of Habakkuk says, God is of purer eyes than to look upon sin. This is the one whom John saw and quite naturally when John saw him like this, listen to this, verse 17, when I saw him, I fell at his feet as a dead man. Notice, this is the same John who at the last supper was leaning upon Jesus' breast, walked so close with him, but now when he sees the same Jesus Christ in all his risen glory, this man who has walked with God for 65 years, falls at his feet like a dead man and worships Jesus Christ.

And this is the mark of all those who are drawing closer and closer to God in their life. The closer we get to God, the closer, the more intimately we know Jesus Christ, the more we fall at his feet and worship him. John the apostle did not have any unholy familiarity with Jesus Christ.

He didn't walk up to Jesus and put his arms around him and say, hey, we walk together on earth, you know, like some people think that to go close to God means to be very familiar with him, like with some ordinary human being. No, John walked with God so closely and he fell at his feet as a dead man. Those who have an undue familiarity with God are the people who don't know God at all.

John knew God and he fell at his feet like a dead man. He saw the glory of God. Isaiah, when he saw the glory of God, he said, oh, wretched man that I am.

And dear brothers and sisters, we constantly need that revelation of Jesus Christ, where we fall at his feet and we see why did he fall at his feet like a dead man? Because he saw how unlike Christ he himself was. Why is it you find so many believers so full of eyes to find fault with everybody else, criticizing this person, accusing that person, backbiting against this person? I'll tell you why. Here's the answer.

They do not live before the face of Jesus Christ. If they lived before the face of Jesus Christ, they would fall down like dead people. They would have no time to criticize anybody else.

They would be judging themselves. Whenever we judge others and criticize others, remember this incident. And you can be sure you're not living before the face of Jesus Christ at that particular moment.

If you were like John, you would fall on your face like a dead man. And when we fall like that, it says here in verse 17, Jesus laid his right hand upon him and that right hand symbolizes power. Jesus laid his right hand upon John and said, Get up, I give you power, don't be afraid.

Those are beautiful words that Jesus often spoke to his disciples. Don't be afraid and follow me. These were the two phrases Jesus used most frequently.

Don't be afraid, follow me. Don't be afraid, follow me. And I like to listen to that voice of Jesus coming through to us in 1984.

Don't be afraid, follow me. Don't be afraid. I am the first and the last.

He is almighty God himself. I am the living one. I was dead, but I'm not dead now.

I am alive forevermore. And now I have the keys of death. Once upon a time, Satan had the keys of death, according to Hebrews 2, 14 and 15.

Satan had the keys of death, but Jesus died and rose again and took those keys from Satan. Today, Jesus Christ has the keys of death. That means when a true disciple of Jesus Christ dies is determined by Jesus himself.

For a true disciple of Jesus Christ, death comes only when Jesus opens the door. Remember this. Lord, I'm your disciple.

You've got the keys of death. That's why I'm not afraid of death anymore. That was the encouraging message John got from Jesus Christ.

You're being persecuted, John, by all these worldly people. You've been sent to the Isle of Patmos, but don't be afraid. I've got the keys and nobody can kill you till I open the door.

I have the keys of death and of the place where people go after they die, called Hades. There we have again the picture of resurrection, the one who has died and who has conquered death. I think it's good for us to close here today with that vision of Jesus Christ.

Triumphant, victorious, so that we can hear his voice saying, don't be afraid as we begin to go through this book. Fear has absolutely no place in the heart of a disciple who has seen the glory of Jesus Christ. That's

the predominant thing that comes through to us, not only in the New Testament, but especially in the book of Revelation.

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