

Signs of the End - Part 1 Revelation 1:1-3

Open:

Many people think there is some mystery about the book of Revelation. Perhaps they have tried to read it, but could not understand it. Maybe they understood most of it, but not all of it. One thing is for certain, to say the Book of Revelation is an extraordinary book is an understatement.

Preachers and teachers have been perusing this book a long time. It has withstood more poor preaching and teaching than any other book in the Bible. There are probably more charts, sermons, books, pamphlets written on the Book of Revelation than any other book.

Just how deep is the book of Revelation? There are 404 verses in Revelation. In those 404 verses, there are more than 300 symbols, 278 Old Testament references, 222 allusions to the Old Testament, and 24 titles of Christ. This book has more mathematics than the entire Book of Numbers. Revelation speaks of the seven Spirits of God and judgment from the seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls. There are 200 million men in armies. The reader will come across beasts, battles and blood, dragons dictators and damnation. Also, one will find death riding on a horse, and hell following. There will be combined populations of heaven, hell and earth...past, present and future.

Instead of being overwhelmed by the symbols, pictures, allegories and scenarios, the best way to approach Revelation is from an assumption that this book is deep, but does not have to be difficult. There is a way to understand it. The word sea is mentioned 22 times in the book. Revelation may be compared to an ocean.

There are specific verses that reveal the key to this book. An ocean is contained within four land masses. Usually, four continents hold an ocean in a cup. Just as there are four land masses around every ocean, likewise, this ocean of Revelation has four land masses. If one can remember the four land masses-North, South, East and West-then he will have this ocean in his mind and be able to understand what this book is trying to convey.

So picture with me the land masses around the ocean. The Northern land mass represents the Sovereign Person of Revelation. Who is the Sovereign Person? **That person is Jesus Christ.** This book is about the Sovereign Person. It is not just about beasts, blood and gore. It is about the uncovering of Jesus Christ - The Sovereign Person.

The next land mass that holds this ocean is a Simple Purpose. What is the simple purpose? It is expressed in verse 1. The simple purpose is **to show things to His servants.** It is a revelation of Jesus, to show things that are going to happen, and when they start happening, they are going to happen quickly.

The next mass that holds this ocean in place is a Sure Promise. What is the Sure Promise? It is summed up in this expression: **Blessed is he who reads, hears and feeds.**

The last land mass is the crux of the matter. From beneath, this is what holds the ocean: the Structured Plan.

The Structured Plan has three pieces to it.

- 1. The Things Which Are Seen.**
- 2. The Things Which Are.**
- 3. The Things That Will Be Hereafter.**

This completes the picture of that ocean. The continent on top is the Sovereign Person. The continent to the left is the Simple Purpose. The continent on the right is the Sure Promise. The continent underneath that cups the ocean in a Structured Plan.

By understanding the four land masses that surround the Book of Revelation, one can begin to understand what this book offers as you look to understand scripture.

So let's Exploring the Depths this book together.

On the floor of this ocean of Revelation, there are ten points of interest that need to be considered before studying the rest of the book. While navigating this ocean, one needs to remember that this book has 22 references to the sea. For that reason, it is logical to say that "Revelation is like an ocean: deep, but not difficult."

Perhaps the best way to understand this book is to get in a glass-bottomed boat and glide across this ocean of Revelation. As passengers do this, they will see ten sights. They are not going to linger a long time at each site. This is exploring the depths. Without going deep, the boat will just glide over them.

1. Communication

As the glass-bottomed boat glides along, the first thing the passengers see on the bottom of the ocean is a sign which reads, "Communication." When they see this sign, they are reminded that in Revelation, God has a very specific plan for communicating the message of the book. Various levels of communication come into play here. God gave the message of Revelation to Jesus Christ; who then gave this message to an angel. An angel gave it to John; and then John gave it in a letter to the seven churches. The seven churches sent this letter to all the churches in that area. Clearly, this is not just "another letter." This letter comes out of the mind of the Almighty, the Sovereign God - the God who made the heavens and the earth; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God who developed a plan to redeem humankind before the foundation of the world. He is the Creator God, the Covenant God, the Redeemer God, and the Lord God Almighty. This means that the Creator of this great, wide universe wanted men to have insights into the final outcome of things. That is the communication.

2. Inspiration

Revelation is an inspired book. The word inspired mean "God breathed." It means God has breathed life into this book. When one studies Revelation, like any Scripture, he is studying a living book that breathes life. It is a living word. As **Hebrews 4:12** says, "**The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.**" It can perceive one's emotions, thoughts, and intents. When individuals read this living book, its life becomes part of their lives and they are blessed. They are partaking of life; breathing in the breath of God.

When you see this inspiration, you read what is recorded in **Revelation 1:10** where John says, "**I was in the Spirit of the Lord's Day.**" With that statement, John is describing inspiration. To grasp the background of this inspiration, one must picture where John is. He is on an island

called Patmos. It was a desert of volcanic rock out in the Aegean Sea, 70 miles from Ephesus where John had lived. John was about 76 years of age when he was put in prison there by the Emperor Domitian, a ruler who hated the testimony of Jesus that John proclaimed.

At his age by modern-day thinking, John should have been out golfing or fishing. But instead, he was loaded on an ugly prison ship, and sent into exile. From age 76 until he was 86-ten years-he was in prison on Patmos, where he slaved in the mines. The work was so strenuous many workers never lived to get off the island. When John was 86 years old, Domitian died. That is the only reason John was released from his imprisonment. It is believed that somewhere near the end of his incarceration, he received this revelation.

There is much inspiration to be found here. John said, "I was on Patmos." Did he say, "It was the worst time of my life"? No. Did he say, "I was depressed"? No. Did he say, "I felt like giving up"? NO. Did he say, "I felt like I was closed in by my circumstances"? NO. Did he say, "I was mad at God for letting me 86 years old, and not having a vacation, but being stuck in this stinking, volcanic island prison by some horrendous killer of Christians"? No. Absolutely not. This is what he said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). Then John heard a voice behind him, and when he turned around, he saw it was the Son of Man.

Believers are never too far from God for Jesus to make an appearance. Jesus can step into any circumstance. What really matters is their attitude in the midst of their circumstances. John could have said, "I am filled with bitterness; I am mad at God; God has not heard my prayer; and I do not deserve this." But what he said was, "I was in the Spirit on Sunday morning. Even though I could not go to church, the church could come to me. Wherever I am, I can be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." That is inspiration.

3. Designation

By designation is meant the person chosen to be the writer of this book. His name was John. When John first became a disciple of Jesus, some scholars think he was only 17 years old. He had been a disciple of John the Baptist.

Over the course of his life, John changed radically in his relationship with Christ. Early in his life, he and James, his brother, had their mother ask Jesus to give them a throne when He came into His kingdom. Their conversation may have gone something like this: "Mother would you go talk to Jesus for us?" To which she may have replied, "Well, honey, I will do anything I can. Mommy loves her boys." And so she approached Jesus on their behalf (see Mark 10:35-45).

John grew through his relationship with Jesus Christ. When he was a young disciple - 19 or 20 years old - he wanted a throne. When he was 86 years old, He considered himself the bond slave of Jesus Christ. He did not want a throne; he wanted to serve Him who paid the price for his sins and gave everything He had for him. That is what relationship will do.

Early in John's relationship to Christ, he had been vindictive. He and his brother, James, went into a Samaritan city to preach the gospel, and the city rejected them. They went back to Jesus, and said, in effect, "We know what they need! They need the fire of God to fall on them!" (see Luke 9.) But what is John's attitude later in life? Scholars say that he wrote 1, 2, and 3 John after he wrote Revelation. These three books represent John as being an apostle of love. What a difference time spent with the Lord will make for an individual. After spending 66 years

knowing and growing with Christ, John moved from “We’ll call down fire on the” to the theme of these three epistles - love.

When John was younger, he leaned on Jesus’ breast at the Last Supper (John 13:23). He felt so “buddy-buddy” about Jesus that he put his head on His shoulder. But 66 years later, he had a totally different attitude. When he saw Jesus as recorded Revelation Chapter 1, he did not address him as, “Old buddy, old pal.” He said: **“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead” (Revelation 1:17)**. And Jesus laid His right hand on him and said, in effect, “Get up, John. I am He that was dead and am alive forevermore. I have the keys of hell and of death. I have a message for you to preach, John. It is the message that not only changed your life; it is the message that will change this world. It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.” That is the the designation.

4. Consummation

The Book of Revelation reveals so many things that would not be known otherwise. Without Revelation, what would one know about the church of the Lord Jesus Christ? He would know there is a church, but he would not know what happens to the church. What would one know about the Tribulation? The Old Testament speaks about the Day of the Lord. In Matthew 24 and 25, Jesus talks about a time of great tribulation. But those prophecies are almost disjointed; no pattern emerges. But with John comes a tying together and record of the consummation of these things.

Revelation points out that an Antichrist or evil one, will rise up. The Book of Daniel speaks about him, but one does not really begin to identify how that is going to happen until he gets into the Book of Revelation.

Revelation hardly records the origination of anything; but it reveals the consummation.

In Genesis, **one reads of a Creator**, but in Revelation, **he finds a Redeemer**.

In Genesis, **one sees a serpent**, but in Revelation, **he encounters a Sovereign Lord**.

In Genesis, **one discovers guilt**, but in Revelation, **he learns of grace**.

In Genesis, **one faces lies**, but in Revelation, **he hears the ultimate truth**.

In Genesis, **one sees Satan’s origin**, but in Revelation, **he reads Satan’s obituary**.

In Genesis, **one learns about the first Adam**, but in Revelation **his attention turns to the second Adam and His bride**.

In Genesis, **one learns of sin’s curse**, but in Revelation, **his thoughts turn toward Christ the Lamb who took away the curse**.

In Genesis, **one reads of the Creation**, but in Revelation, **he hears of the new creation**.

In Genesis, **one observes Paradise lost**, but in Revelation, **Paradise is regained**.

In Genesis, **one reads about prophecy**, but in Revelation, **prophecy is fulfilled**.

In Genesis, **one learns of death for all**, but in Revelation, **he sees the path that leads to eternal life for the righteous**.

In Genesis, **one hears of forbidden fruit**, but in Revelation, **he finds healing fruit**.

In Genesis, **one sees a garden**, but in Revelation, **he discovers a city that has come down out of heaven from God and is populated by the saints**.

5. Oblation

The Lamb of God is mentioned 29 times in Revelation. John mentions several benefits derived from His sacrifice.

- Christ has redeemed men to God by His blood (5:9).

- The robes of the saints are made white by the blood of the Lamb (7:14).
- Believers overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb (12:11).
- Christians have access to the Tree of Life through His blood (22:14).

Through the shedding of His blood, He paid the price for the redemption of mankind.

6. Numeration

Revelation is a book of significant and symbolic numbers. The divine use of numbers speaks to the order, symmetry, and exactness of God. He sovereignly uses numbers in the Bible to underscore His prophecies and principles.

One is the number of unity and speaks of God.

Two is the number of witness and speaks of confirmation.

Three is the number of God's signature and speaks of trinity (tri-unity).

Four is the number of earth and speaks of creation.

Five is the number of completeness and speaks of grace.

Six is the number of man and speaks of incompleteness without God.

Seven is the number of God and speaks of perfection.

Eight is the number of new beginnings and speaks of salvation.

Nine is the number of fullness and speaks of blessing.

Ten is the number of human government and speaks of complete power.

Twelve is the number of divine government and speak of divine order.

Forty is the number of earthly testing and trial and speaks of divine involvement. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter 15.

7. Affirmation

There are seven beautiful beatitudes of affirmation in Revelation.

- Blessed is he who reads, hears, and keeps (1:3).
- Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (14:13).
- Blessed is he who watches for the Lord's coming (16:15).
- Blessed are those called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:9).
- Blessed is he who has part in the first Resurrection (20:6).
- Blessed is he who keeps the words of this book (22:7).
- Blessed are those who do His commandments (22:14).

8. Termination

Revelation is the conclusion of life's difficulties. The book brings closure that cannot be found elsewhere. The Lord God Omnipotent, in His sovereign will decree that the Book of Revelation be placed at the end of the Bible because He wanted to make known the rest of the story. He wanted it to be known that there will be no more curse, no more pain, and no more problems. All the things that have troubles humanity through the years will be gone; sorrow, crying, sickness death, irreverence lies temptation, and the devil. This means there will be no more wars, storms, floods, earthquakes, scandals, disappointments abuse, funerals, and no more cemeteries.

9. Celebration

Believers are headed to the celebration of the eternities; to the time when all the martyrs' blood is going to be vindicated; to the time of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and to the time when faithful followers will hear Him say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

This will be the celebration that will eclipse all celebrations! The Old Testament saints will be there: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Noah, Elijah, Elisha, and others. The talk will not be about the good old days; it will be about the Lord of Glory. New Testament saints, the Tribulation saints, the 144,000 witnesses, the two witnesses, and believers of the church age will all be there. They will come together — past, present, and future - and become at that point the bride of Christ! In all the history of the world, there has never been celebration like that celebration.

10. Satisfaction

The apostle Paul described the final destination for believers in these words: “No one’s ever seen or heard anything like this never so much as imagined anything quite like it - what God has arranged for those who love him.” (1Corinthians 2:9 TM).

What kind of place will this be? It will be a place where every step is going to be a triumph, every meal is going to be a banquet, every day is going to be a jubilee, every moment is going to be an ecstasy, every covering is going to be a coronation, and every relationship is going to be a reunion. This will be a place where the light of heaven is the face of Jesus, the harmony of heaven is the word Jesus, the hope of heaven is the future of Jesus, and the duration of heaven is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Revelation is about Jesus. The sights and the sounds of that city are about Jesus!

Close:

So what does it all mean? It means that the Book of Revelation is not foggy, fuzzy nor too theologically deep. Even though there are a number of interpretations of Revelation, it is a clear book, and one does not have to try to dive to the bottom in order to find that Revelation presents the termination for all man’s difficulties.

According to revelation 21 and 22, there will be no more sorrow, no more tears, no more night and no more pain. There will be no more need for high, the Lamb will be the light. there will be no more cancer, no more AIDS, no more hear disease, no more high blood pressure or medication. There will be no more storms, no more funerals, no more sadness, no more depression, no more anger. There will be no more abuse and above all there will be no more devil.

When Jesus comes again, He is going to wrap everything up and present to His people a new heaven and a new earth! And that is the end of all man’s difficulties! For this, all believers, should give Him praise, Glory and Honor!