

## "WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN" (Revelation Chapter 1:1-3)

Read the following verses and notes. Discuss the questions among your group. May be copied and used for Bible study purposes. Not to be sold.

**Read Revelation 1:1-3 (NIV)**

### **\*\*What Scholars Say\*\***

**Revelation 1:1 (NIV)**

**The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,**

#### **THE OPENING WORDS**

**Rev.1:1.** The opening words, **The revelation of Jesus Christ**, indicate the subject of the entire book. The word "revelation" is a translation of the Greek *apokalypsis*, meaning "an unveiling" or "a disclosure." The phrase **revelation of Jesus Christ** can mean (1) by or from Jesus Christ, (2) about Jesus Christ or (3) both. The revelation was given to John to communicate to others, His servants, and it prophesies what must soon take place, rather than relating a historic presentation as in the four Gospels. The word "**soon**" (*en tachei*; cf. 2:16; 22:7,12,20) means that the action will be sudden when it comes, not necessarily that it will occur immediately. Once the end-time events begin, they will occur in rapid succession (cf. Luke 18:8; Acts 12:7; 22:18; 25:4; Rom 16:20). The words, **He made it known**, are from the Greek verb *esemanen*, meaning "to make known by signs or symbols," but the verb also includes communication by words.

**By sending His angel:** the word "angel" in Hebrew and Greek means "messenger" and is used both of earthly and heavenly messengers. Here His angel is a heavenly messenger, but there is no clear indication as to what particular angel it is. Jesus, in Rev. 22:16 says, "I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches."

The reference to **John as a servant** (*doulos*, which normally means "slave") is the term used by Paul, James, Peter, and Jude (cf. Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1) in speaking of their positions as God's servants. According to tradition, John, the author, was the only one of Jesus' original twelve disciples who was not killed for the faith. He also wrote the Gospel of John and the letters of 1, 2, and 3 John. When he wrote Revelation, John was in exile on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, sent there by the Romans for his witness about Jesus Christ.

1. What did John call his writing? (1:1)
2. What is this book about? (1:1)
3. For whose benefit did God intend the book of Revelation? (1:1)

4. What did God want us to learn from the book of Revelation? (1:1)
5. How did God deliver this revelation? (1:1)
6. To whom did God deliver this revelation? (1:1)

### **Revelation 1:2-3 (NIV)**

**[2] who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. [3] Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.**

**Rev. 1:2.** John faithfully described what **he saw as the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ**. This book is written not just in words but also in pictures **everything he saw**. The message is communicated in symbols and images. What John saw was a communication from and about - Jesus Christ Himself.

**Rev. 1:3.** The introductory comments concludes with a **blessing** on each individual who **reads** the book as well as on those who **hear** it and **take to heart what is written** in it. The implication is that a reader will read this message aloud to an audience (See Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). Not only is there a blessing for the reader and the hearers, but there is also a blessing for those who respond in obedience (Matt. 21:28-31). It is most important to observe that the book was primarily intended to give a practical lesson to those who read and heed its contents. A person can be blessed just by reading Revelation or cursed for tampering with it (Rev. 22:18-19). But the great blessing comes when a person obeys it (Matt. 12:48-50).

John concluded his opening comments with, **the time is near**. The word "time" (*kairos*) refers to a period of time, that is, the time of the end (Dan 8:17; 11:35,40; 12:4,9). John is urging his readers to be ready at all times for the Last Judgment and the establishment of God's Kingdom. We do not know when these events will occur, but we must always be prepared. They will happen quickly, and there will be no second chance to change sides. (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-51).

1. How much of the revelation he received did John report? (1:2)
2. What sources did John say were the basis of his revelation? (1:2)
3. Why did God give us the book of Revelation? (1:1-3)
4. What did John urge his readers to do? Why? (1:3)
5. How did John show urgency in what he wrote? (1:3)
6. Read the last paragraph on this page beginning with "John concluded his opening comments with ... " then explain and expound on Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-51.  
(Man at park – Acts 24:24-25)

**\*\*My Thoughts\*\***  
**Take Heed to the Warnings!**

Recently I heard on a Christian radio station that a survey was given to people who believed that the Scriptures were God's infallible Word to man. They concluded that 65% of the people in the survey had never even read the entire New Testament, much less the entire Bible.

The Apostle Paul said to Timothy, *"Until I come, devote yourself to the **public reading of Scripture**, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. **Watch your life and doctrine closely**. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers"* (1 Timothy 4:13-16, NIV).

The Greek word for "reading" in this passage is *anagnosis* and means reading, especially the public reading of Holy Scriptures. In 1 Timothy 4:13, it refers to the public reading of the Scriptures (including the letters of the apostles) appointed to be read in public in the New Testament worship service (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). The readers in the church whose duty it was to read, expound or give application to the passage were called *anagnomstai*, the public readers.

*"The word for 'Scripture' in Greek is 'graphe.' In the New Testament this term is used exclusively of Scripture and is used in such a way that **quoting Scripture (or reading) is understood to be the same as quoting God** (See John 10:35; Romans 4:3; 9:17; Gal. 4:30)"* (Expository Dictionary of Bible Words, p.544).

*"The Scriptures were formally constituted into a 'canon' (a rule of measure that established them as being the true Word of God). The reading of them was, along with prayer, the chief part of the service of worship from the time of Ezra onwards. Indeed, it seems that the reading out of the law (the Word of God) gave the motivation [and pattern] for the first meetings for worship (in the New Testament church), where the word of God was heard. The first Christians were Jews among Jews."* (Dictionary of N.T. Theology, Vol.3. pgs. 485, 493).

It was always the **practice of God's people to have the Word of God read aloud** in the congregation. This is true whether it was the Old Testament or the New Testament (Ex. 24:7; Deut. 31:11; Josh. 8:35; 2 Kings 23:2; Neh. 8:7-8; Luke 4:16; Acts 15:21; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). In the book of Revelation it states, "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy (usually in the New Testament the epistles were read aloud) and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it" (that is, the blessing comes to those who obey and apply its words) (Rev. 1:3). There was also a warning that what was read was not to be added to or taken away from (Rev. 22:18-19).

To illustrate the point I am trying to make, I wrote a fictitious letter to my friend Jeff and his family.

***Dear Jeff and family,***

***I thank God that your faith is being spoken of everywhere. You are an inspiration to all that meet you. I long to see you and be encouraged by your faith. You are the object of God's love called to be His very own.***

***I remember you in my prayers often especially regarding the information we have received that in December the local shopping mall will not be safe to attend. Our reliable source tells us to beware of that place. Take heed and tell others.***

***I am confident that you are doing well at this time and prospering in all that you do. Greet your wife and family for me. I pray to see you and your family very soon.***

***God bless you!  
Don Krow***

Later, I heard that Jeff was in the hospital. He had lost a leg when an explosion went off at the local mall and a friend with him was killed.

When I visited Jeff at the hospital I inquired, "Didn't you get my letter, it contained a warning about the mall?" "Yes," he replied, "But I was too busy listening to my favorite TV preacher to read all of it. The TV preacher had also received the letter and he didn't say anything about a warning." As important as the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher is (Eph. 4:11-12), to depend on them instead of the Scriptures for your guidance is like eating predigested food that has already been chewed and spit out for you to eat. There may be some nutrition in it but it could also contain some deadly germs (2 Peter 2:1-2). We need to learn to commit ourselves to the Scriptures **first**, they contain the more sure word of prophecy, even more dependable than an audible voice from heaven (2 Peter 1:17-19).

There is several ways that Jeff could have responded to my letter (just as there are several ways that we can respond to the Word of God). **1.** Jeff could have avoided reading it altogether and just relied on his favorite teacher, tapes, CD's and books to tell him what it says. In a sense these things have replaced the Word of God as the ultimate source in Jeff's life. (See Acts 17:11). **2.** Jeff could have read only the section or verses of my letter that he liked, not heeding to my entire letter, missing my warning altogether. **3.** Upon reading the whole letter, Jeff could have said, "Don did not mean in December, he must have meant July because everyone shops in December for Christmas." This letter interferes with Jeff's doctrine so he is unable to receive the warning. He goes to the mall in December and encounters the explosion. Jeff changed the letter by bringing his own private interpretation to its meaning. His doctrine would not allow him to see the truth of the letter. **4.** Upon reading the whole letter, Jeff could have said, "Don could not have meant I can't go to the mall in December. It could not be about what I do, whether I go to the mall or not. He is being legalistic, he is wrong." Jeff tested

the word. He goes to the mall December 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and nothing happens. He returns on December 15<sup>th</sup> and is met with an explosion. He friend dies and he is severely crippled. 5. Jeff could read all of the letter, heed to what it says and prosper in his doing of the word (James 1:22; 2 Peter 1:4).

My suggestion is: Take the Scriptures as a whole, they were written as letters to be read as letters (Col.4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; Rev. 1:3, 18-19). Take advantage of the last 100 years of scholarship by reading a whole letter from many translations. Remember that correct doctrine always leads to godliness (1 Tim. 6:3-4; Titus 1:1; 2:1). There is a tension in the Scripture that must not be disturbed. For example, no one is saved apart from the grace of God, without grace it leads to legalism, false grace leads to lasciviousness, and true grace teaches to deny ungodliness (Gal. 2:21; Jude 4, Titus 2:11-12). ***Without using all the Scriptures on a subject, we will be led to wrong conclusions, resulting in wrong doctrine.***

Without instructions, boundaries and warnings there is no protection from Satan's deception (Hebrews 3:13). If we were in a perfect world and didn't have what the Bible calls "the flesh" (drawn away by our own lust), then we would not need instructions, boundaries and warnings. But since we are in a fallen and imperfect world we must guard our hearts, and look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, so that we may lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us (Heb. 12:1-2; Rom. 8:13).

The goal of all Biblical study is a revelation of God the Father and His Son Jesus the Christ (Jn. 17:3; 5:39; Lk.24:27). The New Testament is a revelation of His Person. The New Testament reveals who He is and what He looks like. For example, Jesus is not a fornicator, adulterer, liar, thief, blasphemer, covetous person, etc. Instead of looking at the New Testament instruction as law to be obeyed, we must look at it as Christ to be expressed. To depend upon Christ to express Christ is the heart of New Testament teaching (Gal. 2:20; Rom.7:24-25; 8:2). The apostle's revelation of Scripture led them to a life of faith and a life of dependence that renounced one's own ability and turned to Christ and His ability. This is the life of grace and this is the life of faith.

May God's blessing be upon you as you seek not the black and white letter of His book, but His Spirit behind the letter of His book. The Word was God, and the Word is God, the revelation of His Person (Jn. 1:1).

(Three box illustration)

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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