Revelation Introduction & Chapter 1

Introduction

- *Revelation*--Greek *apokalupis*--an "uncovering", an "unveiling", or a "disclosure"
  - The culmination of the entire Bible's progression of revelation of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit; 274 of the 404 verses relate to the OT, which illustrates the total connectedness of our Bible!
  - Reveals Jesus Christ in glory & at His final victory, clearly visible through the visions of John
  - The final warning that the world will end when God determines & His judgment is certain
  - A lot of people shy away from the book of Revelation, but it is not only a very important book but it is a message of assurance to God's people--no matter how bad the world gets, God wins!!!
- The Apostle John wrote Revelation ~95 A.D. while banished to the Isle of Patmos by emperor Domitian; some say different author or earlier date, but internal & external evidence supports this
  - Patmos--a barren island of volcanic hills & rocky ground; used to hold "enemies of the state"
  - Despite being so exiled, John maintained His strong faith & reliance on Jesus Christ
- As in his gospel, John testifies as an eye witness thru frequent use of "saw" & "heard" in this book
  - Carefully & fully explains its supernatural origin, chain of transmission & messages he received
  - Not fiction, allegories or undecipherable symbols; a prophetic account of future events intended to strengthen believers' hearts; we can believe it because of all the prophecies already fulfilled!
  - Revelation was written to be understood by the generation near its fulfillment--that might be us!
    - **John 16:13** When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.
    - **1 Corinthians 2:12** We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.
- Differing views of the millennium (will be discussed in more detail when we get to chapter 20):
  - *Amillennialism*--1,000 years are spiritual & symbolic; Christ rules now & Satan is already bound
  - *Postmillennialism*--"1,000 years" is now; the world will turn to Christ before Jesus' 2nd Advent
  - *Premillennialism*--1,000 year reign after Christ's return; *Classic*: no rapture; *Dispensationalist*: rapture before the Great Tribulation, then God will work with & fulfill His promises to Israel
  - Notes are in accord with a pre-millennialist view; if you differ, feel welcome to discuss
- Why is it important to study Revelation?
  - To be blessed: **Revelation 1:3**
  - For maturity in Christ: **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
  - To understand that God controls all history & future: **Ephesians 1:9-10; Revelation 1:1-2**
  - To realize the authentication of the Word of God: **1 Corinthians 14:22b**
  - To be guided on our walk with Christ: **2 Peter 3:11**
  - To be motivated to reach out to unbelievers in a lost & decaying world: **John 9:4**
- A very important passage for our study is **2 Peter 1:20-21** Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation. **21**For no such prophecy was ever brought forth by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
  - **McGee**:[1] You don't interpret a single text by itself; you interpret it in the light of the entire Word of God.

⇨ All *major* events of *past, present* & future were designed by God from the beginning of time

[1] J. Vernon McGee: Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee; Volume V, 1983, compiled from previous publications by J. Vernon McGee. Note: one of my favorite commentators--like he's talking to you across the table, with simple explanations & humor.

Revelation Chapter 1

Revelation 1:1-3 Prologue

- *v1-3* The revelation is both *from* Christ & *about* Christ
  - *v1* The Father gave the revelation to Jesus to be shown to John by by an angel (messenger)
    - *Must*--all is **certain***; soon*--suddenly, in God's good time, which only He knows
      - **Matthew 24:36** No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
      - **2 Peter 3:8** Beloved, do not let this one thing escape your notice: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.
    - *Known*--Greek *seminew* refers to the conveyance of truth by signs & symbols we will encounter
    - We will see that such signs & symbols must be interpreted either from context or other Scripture
  - *v2 Who testifies*--John saw & heard all in this book & wrote what he saw
  - *v3* The only Bible book with a blessing; it is to be known & obeyed, not just discussed/debated

Revelation 1:4-8 John Greets the Seven Churches

- *v4-6 John*--leader of the Ephesian church after death of Paul & destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD)
  - *v4 Seven churches*--founded by the Ephesian church; *Asia*--western Asia Minor (Turkiye today)
    - *Seven*--represents completeness; used often in Revelation; expresses completeness of the Holy Spirit
    - *Churches*--each was a primary dissemination point to its' surrounding area; multiple views: e.g., each represents a period in church history; examples of departure from truth & obedience; etc.
    - *Grace and Peace*--beautiful blessing! Note that *Grace* comes first, because it enables *Peace*
    - *Him who is. . .is to come*--paraphrase of the "I AM" of **Exodus 3:14** expressing His eternity
    - *Seven Spirits*--symbolic reference to the Holy Spirit, as provided in multiple OT texts, including:
      - **Isaiah 11:2** The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the LORD.
      - **Zechariah 3:9** See the stone I have set before Joshua; on that one stone are seven eyes.
  - *v5-6 Faithful witness*--He has finished His work of revealing the Father as He prayed in **John 17**
    - *Firstborn of the dead*--firstfruits of the resurrection; *ruler of the kings*--as declared in *v19:16*
    - *Loved us*--so much that He took our place on the cross; *washed us*--we are redeemed thru His blood such that we take on His righteousness; *kingdom*-- *priests*--gives us the right to enter God's presence
    - *Glory*--manifestation of His holiness; Jesus' glory & authority are proclaimed throughout Revelation
- *v7-8* Jesus will return! This is not His coming to rapture His own, but coming as foretold to reign
  - *v7* This verse connects to multiple passages, OT & NT, that prophecy to Christ's return
    - *With the clouds* (clouds of God's glory--*Shekinah*): **Daniel 7:13a** In my vision in the night I continued to watch, and I saw One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.
    - *Every eye will see*: **Matthew 24:30** At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
    - *Those who pierced* (not the 4 Roman soldiers, but those who conspired to murder Jesus "by Roman": **Zechariah 12:10** Then I will pour out on the house of David and on the people of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and prayer, and they will look on Me, the One they have pierced.
    - *They will mourn*: **Zechariah 12:11** They will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son.
  - ⇨ Jesus will return in the same manner He ascended to heaven, as told in **Acts 1:9-11**
  - *v8 Alpha & Omega*--1st & last letters of Greek alphabet => God's completeness, eternality & sovereignty; confirms the certainty of Jesus' personal deity since no human could ever say this
    - *Almighty*--the power of the Godhead is unlimited & omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient

Revelation 1:9-20 John's Vision on Patmos

- *v9-11 Word. . .testimony*--then & in many parts of the world today, the Gospel is suppressed
  - *v9 Word of God & my testimony*--John would not compromise his beliefs & witness to Jesus
    - *Tribulation*--believers were being persecuted for their faith, but this was not the "Great Tribulation;" note that Jesus never hid the cost of following Him or that the world will hate believers
      - **John 15:19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.
    - *Kingdom*--believing in Jesus brings the Kingdom into one's heart which: brings faith in His coming glory & millennial reign, enables perseverance in trials & gives inner peace
    - Reaction against God's Word is growing; truth is "hate speech" to many because it convicts them
  - *v10 In the Spirit*--John does not define this; perhaps he was submitting fully & seeking guidance
    - *Lord's day*--Sunday, the first day of the week, as the new day of worship for Christians
    - This was not a dream; the Holy Spirit empowered John's senses to perceive revelation from God
  - *v11 Loud voice like a trumpet*--common view is this was Jesus; found an alternate that says is the angel from *v1 & v4:1;* that Jesus' voice is "like the roar of many waters." Thoughts?
    - *Seven churches*--all relatively close to Patmos compared to Italy, Israel, etc.
    - We will see that each church receives different praises & identification of needed corrections; the purpose is so they can see their errors and change; they may represent all churches then & now
- *v12-16 Son of Man*--messianic title from **Daniel 7:13**, & Jesus' favorite designation for Himself
  - *v12 Lampstands*--the seven churches of *v11 (v20)*; Jesus has authority over all the church
    - Separate lampstands because each was supposed to shine light into a spiritually dark world
    - *Golden*--indicates the presence of God, because the spiritual meaning of gold is purity of God
  - *v13-16* A symbolic description of the risen glorified Jesus
    - *Son of Man*; relates Jesus to Israel but also reveals His humanity--100% God/100% Man
    - *Long robe*--depicts a judge or priest, fitting because Jesus is both judge & high priest
      - **John 5:27** And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.
      - **Hebrews 4:14-16** Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we profess.
    - *Golden sash*--symbolizes Jesus' purity, which was necessary for the atonement for our sins
      - **2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
    - *White*--as in **Daniel 7:9**; symbolizes justice, purity, glory, wisdom, experience, dignity & authority
    - *Eyes like a blazing fire*--nothing is hidden from His sight; He judges righteously (**Romans 1:18-20**); recalls OT passages referring to God as an "all-consuming fire" (**Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3**)
    - *Bronze*--used in the temple for sacrifices for sin & expressing in fire God's judgment on sin; also indicates great strength & steadfastness
    - *Roar of many waters*--like a mighty man roaring aloud against his enemies
      - **Isaiah 42:13** The Lord goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.
    - *Seven stars*--per *v20*, angels of the seven churches; may be chief elders, actual angels or those who took the messages to the churches since the Greek word *angel* may also be translated "messenger"
    - *Right hand*--a sign of strength & control: indicates importance & His authority over; Jesus protects His servants like He protects His sheep (us);
      - **John 10:28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.
    - *Two-edged sword*--the Word of God which condemns the wicked; Romans used such a weapon
      - **Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
    - *Face was like the sun*--His glory shone forth; recalls the Transfiguration of **Matthew 17:1-2**

- *v17-20* Seeing Jesus in His deity face-to-face is overwhelming! But Jesus does not let his fear linger
  - *v17* Recalls God-appearances in the OT; Moses hid his face at the burning bush (**Exodus 3:1-6**); Isaiah cried out "Woe is me!" (**Isaiah 6:5**); Daniel's strength left him (**Daniel 10:8-12**)
    - With such description as in *v13-16* is there any surprise at John's reaction?
    - *Fear not*--used over 80 times in the Bible, usually to quiet fear in the presence of God or His angel
    - Good news!! We, too & all those united by faith to Jesus have nothing to fear
  - *v18 I died. . .I am alive*--Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection
    - **1 Corinthians 15:20** But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
    - *Keys to death & Hades*--true believers need not fear death, since Jesus has promised life with Him
      - **John 11:25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,"
- *v19-20 Write*--John's commission to write unlocks the door to the rest of the book
  - *v19 You have seen*--the vision John has just had (chapter 1); *which are*--the conditions of the churches (chapters 2-3); *which will take place*--the revelation of the future (chapters 4-22)
  - *v20 Mystery*--a hidden message for the world but to be revealed to the church
    - *Angels of the seven churches*--most commentators view these as pastors/bishops of the churches, since they are "messengers" and must faithfully preach God's Word to the people & are held in His right hand
    - *Seven churches*--**BibleRef.com**: A lampstand is an appropriate symbol for a church, because a church's responsibility is to help enlighten its members regarding God's will and to shed the light of the gospel into a spiritually and morally dark world.

⇨ The lampstands/churches lift & spread the light, but Jesus is the source of the light