

Introduction

Have you ever been walking through a forest on a beautiful sunny day and as your eyes catches the beauty of the sunlight, the height of the trees, the vividness of the grass, the complexities of the flowers, and the varieties of the animals your soul is thrilled with your Creator who designed and made it all.

However as your soul is thrilled at such wonderful truths, you happen to see a family walking through the forest and as you notice the family, there is one of the family members fixated on their mobile phone: playing a game or sending messages. As you watch this family member for a short time as they walk past they never once lift their eyes up from their mobile and you begin to think to yourself...

- They are missing the wonder of all that is around them!
- They are missing the beauty of creation!
- They are missing the grandeur and the majesty of the LORD who would thrill their soul!

And so it can often be when it comes to the Book of Revelation! For some people the Book of Revelation is nothing more than a manual for their End Time Position. For many it is nothing more than a handbook of arguments.

- But the Book of Revelation is about something far greater than the End Times;
- The Book of Revelation is about something far greater than a handbook of arguments;
- The Book of Revelation is about Christ!

Turn with me to 1:1, *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ"*.

What is this book all about? It is about revealing Jesus Christ! It is about seeing Him all the more clearly for the Greek term used here for *Revelation* means to unveil, to disclose.

- In fact it's very first usage in the NT is in Luke 2:32 where we it is translated as lightening: throwing light upon that which needs it!

Men and women, while the book of Revelation will address issues to do with the End Times such as the Binding of Satan, the Millennium and the Judgment of the World, yet the book of Revelation only addresses these issues as they relate to Jesus Christ!

Some people will use the It is about revealing Christ! It is about turning people's eyes – not upon the end times – but upon Christ!

- In John 5:39 Jesus Christ said to Jews, *"Search the scriptures; for...they are they which testify of me."*
- In Luke 24:27 we read that when Jesus Christ spoke to the disappointed and downcast disciples on the road to Emmaus, *"He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"*.

Just as all of Scripture is about Christ, so the book of Revelation is about Christ! It concerns Him!

Furthermore...

- In Colossians 1:16 we are told regarding Christ, *"all things were created by him, and for him"*; and
- In Romans 11:36 we read *"for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen"*

Just as Scripture is all about Christ, so history is all about Christ! But not just history and that which has already been, but also prophecy and that which is to come – it is all about Christ! As one man said, *AAll of history is HIS-story"*

So men, women and young people, when you and I come to the book of revelation, I want you and me to have the correct theme and focus: I want you and me to see Christ! Our minds to be filled with a vision of Him!

I find it fascinating to realize that the very last words of Christ to you and me are found in the book of Revelation.

- Of course, the last words of a loved one are very special: especially if they know they are the last words they will speak to you on this scene of time. They are words you would lean in to hear. They will possibly be words of great significance, of great wisdom, of great advice!

And so here in the very last book of the Bible where we have the very last words of Jesus Christ to you and me, you and I have Him directing us to Himself!

I find that fascinating! Why?

- Because Jesus Christ knows that it is only through the sight of Him that you and I will be strengthened in our faith in Christ!
- Because Jesus Christ knows that it is only through the sight of Him you and I will be strengthened in our love for Christ!

- Because Jesus Christ knows that it is only the sight of Him that is the answer to the difficulty, despair, danger and disappointments in our lives!

Men and women...

- There is no book so solemnly introduced to you and me like the Book of Revelation;
- There is no book so solemnly concluded as the Book of Revelation – a divine warning being given to anyone who alters it in any way
- There is no book so greatly urged upon our attention as the Book of Revelation!

Yet...

- Can it not be said of some of us that the Book of Revelation is a Book that we treat with contempt as we only look for our end-time views in it?
- Can it not be said of some of us that the Book of Revelation is a Book that we treat with contempt as we disregard it, shun it or neglect it because we find it too confusing?
- Can it not be said of some of us that we are happy to live without the Book of Revelation? For it to remain a closed book to us for we do not feel we shall lose much if it is?

Oh may the LORD step in to change our minds and hearts!

Having seen God's messages throughout the scope of Scripture regarding the End Times it is my desire this evening just to look at...

God's Message in the Book of Revelation

It is not my desire to show you the various ways of interpreting it this evening. That can be kept for another occasion. Instead it is my desire simply to open to you the book as it is!

Many will agree that there are seven clear sections to the book because of noticeable structures within the book itself:

- After a brief introduction in 1:1-8; there are...
- The 7 Letters to the Churches (1:8-3:22)
- The 7 Seals (4:1-8:1)
- The 7 Trumpets (8:2-11:19)
- The 7 Histories (12:1-14:20)
- The 7 Bowls (15:1-16:21)

These are five clear sections – all notable by the number 7.

Then at the very end of the book two women are compared – there is the Great Whore and the Bride of Christ:

- The first is called the city of Babylon and the latter is called the city of Jerusalem;
- The first is defeated and the latter is victorious;
- The first is wicked and the latter is holy;
- The first is hated and the latter is loved.

These two comparisons lead people to note two final sections...

- The Defeat/Fall of Babylon and the Whore (17:1-19:21); and
- The Victory of Jerusalem/the Bride (19:11-22:21)

Because of the notable clarity of this structure within the book itself, and the fact that it is a structure accepted by many people regardless of what view they hold to, it is my desire to now give you a summary of the book of Revelation – using this structure as a helpful guide.

Notice with me first of all...

❖ **The Brief Introduction (1:1-8)**

In the opening verses of chapter 1 the apostle John sets the scene:

- He tells us that this book is about – it is about Christ – v1
- He tells us who the book is addressed to – it is addressed to the 7 churches which are in Asia – v4; and

- He will tell us where he is when he is given this book – he is on the isle of Patmos suffering persecution and tribulation for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.
- Patmos is a small, hilly island 50 miles from Ephesus.
- Being persecuted, imprisoned and isolated the apostle is unable to...
 - o See the people he loved in the churches, and
 - o Perform the work he loved of preaching the Gospel of Christ to them

It is clear that John was in a difficult and discouraging situation – the people he loves are in danger and all the work he has done could be ruined. He is also in a dangerous situation for in the midst of persecution many of God's people are dying.

But in this situation we have the first vision of Christ and the first major section of the Book:

1) The 7 Letters to the Churches (1:9 – 3:22)

In 1:11 the LORD Jesus Christ appears to the apostle John and in a most stunning vision reveals Himself to John. But how does Christ reveal Himself to this discouraged saint? Notice with me,

- Christ reveals Himself as the great High Priest who is among the golden candlesticks of God's people and serving them (v13, 20)
- Christ reveals Himself as the mighty King who has dominion over all (title, v12, *Son of man*) and will with purity (white hair), accuracy (red eyes), integrity and authority – will rule over His kingdom and judge the souls of men.
- Christ reveals Himself as the sure Prophet, girt about with the prophet's girdle (v13), holds His messengers in His hand and through His Word, applies it effectively and powerfully to the hearts of men, bringing light and truth into their very lives!

Such a vision of Christ overwhelms John, and in his present circumstances, the LORD Jesus Christ reminds John v17...

- I am the One who knows all things – I am the first and the last
- I am the One who is victor of all things – I am He who was dead but now lives
- I am the One who has power over all things – I have the keys of hell and death
 - o I am able to judge the wicked and I am able to preserve my people from persecution. Fear not. I am in control.

What an encouragement to the apostle John!

Do you see today, that in all that is happening in the world – even in times of discouragement, danger and disappointment...

- Christ is the High Priest who is among His people – working and serving?
- Do you see that Christ is King over all – ruling and ordering all things for His glory?
- Do you see that Christ is the Prophet – upholding His messengers and blessing the Gospel – saving souls?

Do you see...

- Christ will judge the awful wicked? And
- Christ will preserve His people? They will not die while Christ still has a work for them to do!

After this wonderful vision the LORD Jesus Christ gives the apostle John a message for seven churches. These were real churches in the 1stC and the order they come in are the order in which a messenger would deliver the messages – the churches forming something of a circle throughout Asia.

You can look at these churches and notice their particular characteristics, such as:

- Ephesus was the church that lost its first love and needed to repent
- Smyrna was the suffering church and needed to remain steadfast
- Pergamos was the liberal church and needed to separate from sin
- Thyatira was the compromising church and needed to discipline error
- Sardis was the dying church and needed to strengthen what little remained
- Philadelphia was the praiseworthy church and would be victorious
- Laodicea was the proud church and needed to humble itself and see the turn from its luke-warmness

However, within each of these churches there is a great revelation of Jesus Christ:

- Christ is the One ever Present among His people – 2:1
- Christ is the One whose love is eternal, even in our sufferings – 2:8
- Christ is the One whose Word is powerful to save and judge – 2:12

- Christ is the One who is the True God who sees all – 2:18
- Christ is the One who has all the graces of the Holy Spirit – 3:1
- Christ is the One who is the Sovereign God: Holy and True – 3:7
- And Christ is the One who is Amen – who keeps all His promises – 3:14

Many of the titles given to Christ in this section are those given in the introduction – but they are here built upon and applied to the lives of God's people.

2) The 7 Seals (4:1-8:1)

In this section the apostle John is given a vision of heaven and immediately his attention is caught by the throne of God and Him who sits on it:

- One who is King (4:3)
- One who is beautiful and valuable like precious stones (4:3)
- One who is gracious to sinful men (rainbow, 4:3)
- One who lives with His glorified people who are dressed in white raiment (24 elders, OT and NT – 4:4)
- One who judges with awesome and fearsome power like at Mount Sinai with its lightning, thunder and voices (v5 – Sinai)
- One who is shown forth by the witness of His people (v5b)
- And One who is attended by servants: servants who are strong like lions, loyal like oxen/calf; wise like men and swift like eagles (v6-7)

Then in chapter 5, as John looks at Christ more closely, John sees Him as...

- The Lamb of God – the perfect sacrifice and suffering servant; and yet who is also now...
- The Lion of Judah and Root of David – the mighty King who has prevailed and conquered – ruling now over all the earth with perfect power (seven horns, v6) and perfect wisdom (seven eyes) by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

He is here praised and worshipped by the faithful (5:9-14).

It is Him who in chapters 6 and 7 opens up the seven seals of the book He is given: in these seals we will read of...

- 1. Christ as a warrior, riding on a white horse and going forth conquering and to conquer
- 2. Oh yes, there will be war against Christ (red horse – 6:3-4)
- 3. There will be famine (black horse – 6:5-6); and as a result..
- 4. There will be death among God's people (pale horse – 6:7-8);
- 5. But Christ will be victorious in the midst of it all – His people who die will be taken to glory (6:9-11)...
- 6. And Christ brings great judgment upon the wicked on the day of His great wrath (6:12-17)
 - o God's own people are protected on this day – them being noticeable belonging to Him (7:1-4)
 - o Every one of them (7:5-8) worshipping Christ at His throne in safety and glory (7:9-17)
- 7. The seventh seal is opened in 8:1 but there is silence – all people in awe at what has just taken place.

Oh how the apostle John could be encouraged as he is on the isle of Patmos separated from the people and work he loves.

- In the midst of the war of wickedness and persecution of God's people
- In the midst of the famine and death
- Christ would be victorious: He is going forth to conquer and to conquer
 - o How Christ is beautiful like precious stones to His people
 - o He is gracious to sinners
 - o He lives with His people
 - o He shines forth the witness of Himself; and to those who in utter rebellion will not bow...
 - o He will judge with awesome and fearsome power
- Christ is the suffering Lamb – but He conquers as the mighty Lion King!

Application: do not trifle with the Lamb of God now, for one day the Lamb will roar like a lion on the great day of His wrath!

This brings us to the third section, which gives us a further revelation of Jesus Christ:

3) The 7 Trumpets (8:2-11:19)

From 8:2 the apostle John sees a new vision: seven angels who stand before God with seven trumpets and will blow these trumpets in response to the prayers of God's people (8:3-5)

Four of these trumpets are blown in chapter 8 and parallel the 10 plagues sent upon Egypt in the book of Exodus:

- 1. Hail and fire mingled together;
- 2. Water becoming blood; animals dying
- 3. Many men dying; and
- 4. Great Darkness

Two more of these trumpets are blown in chapter 9:

- 5. Being told of one who has fallen from heaven and has the key to the bottomless pit (9:1) we read that he opens the pit and from it arises swarms of awful creatures which hurt those who are not sealed and protected by God (v2-5).
 - o These awful creatures bring torment, pain and despair (v5-6)
 - o These awful creatures look attractive with crowns of gold, comely faces and nice hair (v7-8) but they have teeth like lions and tails like scorpions (v8-10); and
 - o These awful creatures have a king – Apollyon – the devil himself (v11).
- 6. In the sixth trumpet we are told of great armies of this world fighting through which many of the people of this world die. These armies are spurred on by such awful creatures as before mentioned – who have their power in their mouth and sting in their tails. But in spite of men dying they still do not repent from their sin unto God (v20-21)

And in the midst of the horror of the devil and the disasters which wreak such havoc in this world, we have at the beginning of chapter 10, a picture of Christ:

- One who is mighty
- One who is from heaven with all its calmness and peace
- One who has a rainbow upon His head – full of grace to sinners
- One whose face is like the sun – full of glory and majesty;
- One whose feet are like pillars – steady and sure in all He does in all the earth (v2); and
- One who can roar like a lion in judgment upon wickedness (v3-4)

This One has a book in His hand (v2): a book that is given to John and is both bitter and sweet (v9). No doubt bitter because of the horrors it reveals, but sweet because of the promises it reveals to those who are God's people.

In chapter 11:1-14...

- We read of God's holy temple and holy city being persecuted (11:1-2)
- However in the midst of this persecution, there are those who witness for the LORD (11:3-6)
- This witness is greatly persecuted by a beast which comes from the bottomless pit (v7-13) and while those in the world will rejoice over this persecution (v10) yet this witness will visibly arise and ascend to heaven in a cloud (v12).

Then, in v15-19, the seventh trumpet sounds...

- And the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of Christ (v15)
- Christ is worshipped (v16-17)
- And the nations of this world are judged with devastating wrath (v18-19)

Application

Men and women...

- Often when we read the Book God has given it can be bitter to the taste as we read of disasters and difficulties in life as well as the devil and his persecution.
- However, while the Bible can be bitter it is also full of sweetness for it is full of the promises of Christ!
 - o The One who is Beautiful to us like the Sun
 - o The One who is Sure and Steadfast like a Pillar
 - o The One who is Hope to sinners like a rainbow
 - o The One who is strong like a lion
 - o The One who will bring His kingdom to this world and will be worshipped by His people!

In chapters 12-14 we have the records of seven groups of people:

- The Dragon (12:7-12)
- The Woman (12:13-17)
- The Beast from the Sea (13:1-10)
- The Beast from the Land (13:11-18)
- The 144,000 (14:1-5)
- The Wicked City of Babylon (14:6-11)
- The Son of Man (14:14-20)

In Revelation 12 we have a woman from whom a child comes:

- This child is One who will rule the nations when He ascends to God and sits on His throne (12:1-5).
- This child however is greatly attacked by a great red dragon (v3), the Devil when He as the ancient serpent bites Christ's heel (
- But this child is not devoured. He ascends to His throne in the presence of God: bringing salvation to God's people and destroying the power of the devil with his accusations (v5-10).
- The devil knowing his time is short before his judgment makes war against those who keep the testimony of Jesus Christ (v11-17) – a war which is frustrated, for those faithful to Christ are protected and preserved (v13-16)

In the midst of the devil's frustration, in Revelation 13, we read of two beasts who arise:

- One beast has seven heads with seven kingly crowns. This beast has great authority from the devil over nations (13:2+8) and it blasphemes God and all that belongs to Him (v3-6) while making war with God's people (v7).
- The second beast which arises is like a lamb (v11).
 - This beast does great wonders and deceives men on this earth with supposed miracles (v13-14)
 - This beast forces people to worship the first beast – the one with authority over kingdoms and even kills God's people who resist such worship and obedience (v14-18)

But now in chapter 14, in the midst of persecution, we are given a vision of Christ!

- One who has with Him saints in glory (14:1+4)
- One who has incomparable authority (v2)
- One who is worshipped by God's people (v3-5)
- He brings great judgment upon those who have worshipped the beast and devil; drinking the wrath of God. The smoke of their judgment and torment will last for ever and ever and they will receive no rest day and night (v7-11)
 - While God's people now rest from their labours with the Son of God adorned as King with His golden crown (v13-14)...
 - The wicked are trampled underfoot like grapes in a winepress (v15-20)

5) The 7 Bowls (15:1-16:21)

This section opens with the apostle John being given a vision of heaven – and in heaven are seven angels with seven plagues (15:1)

Those who were faithful to God and did not bow down to the temptations of the devil sing the song of Moses when God judged Pharaoh and Egypt for their sin at the Red Sea (15:2-3) and brought the freedom of God's people.

The seven angels are then given seven vials/bowls full of the wrath of God (15:5-8) which they pour out upon those who followed the beast and the devil in chapter 16 (16:1-2).

- Like the first 6 trumpets earlier, these bowls of wrath resemble the plagues in Egypt in that they bring
 - 1. Plagues
 - 2 and 3 sea into blood and polluted water
 - 4. Scorching from the sky
 - 5. Darkness and pain,
 - 6. Famine and that which is like frogs
 - 7. Earthquake and Hail

- However, unlike the 6 trumpets which only brought partial destruction to the earth before the 7th and final trumpet which brought final judgment, these 7 bowls of wrath together bring final judgment.

In these verses you and I are given an image of Christ:

- He is the One who the Almighty (15:3) – no one can stop Him
- He is the One who is Just and True (15:3) – fair in all He does
- He is the One who is King over all (15:3) – with authority and power
- He is the One who is to be feared (15:4) – no one else
- He is the One who is to be glorified (15:4) – worthy of glorifying

And for all those who do not fear and glorify Him but persecute His people (16:5)...

- He is the One who judges with true and righteous judgments (16:3)

For those who rally against Him with their lies and supposed miracles to the great battle (v13-14)

- He is the One who gathers them to one place (v16) and with awesome terror judges the city of wickedness, Babylon in the fierceness of His wrath (v17-18) and the land on this earth flees away (v20).
 - o Just as the children of Israel got victory against the Canaanites at Megiddo, so Christ gains victory against the wicked at Armageddon (that is, the hill/city of Megiddo).

Oh men and women,

- If are one of God's people – be encouraged, no matter how much this world rages and attacks Christ, He will win!
- If you are against God, be warned – no matter how much you rage against Christ, you will lose!

6) The Fall of Babylon and the Whore (17:1-19:21)

The apostle John seeing a new vision in chapter 17, John is shown the judgment of the great whore (17:1):

- She is one who has seduced men into sin through immorality and drunkenness (17:2); and
- She is one who is attractive – being adorned in purple and red with gold and precious stones (v3-4)

BUT...

- She is one who is full of wickedness and evil (v4);
- She is one who has persecuted the people of God and killed them (v6);
- She is one who from the devil himself (v8)
- She deceives those that dwell in this earth whose names are not written in God's book of life (v8)
- She is built upon seven mountains (v9)
- She lasts the reign of several kings (v10); and
- She makes war with the Lamb (v14).
- She sits upon and has power over many peoples and nations (17:1+15)
- She reigns over the kings of the earth (17:18)
- She is called Babylon the great

But what becomes of her?

- She is played with by the kings of the earth (17:16 and 18:3) who wax rich through her and then cast her off
- Those of God's people who are within her are told to come out from her (18:4-5)
- And then she is judged with great torment and sorrow (v18:6-8)
- The kings of the earth whom made their riches through her earn them no more (18:9-20);
- And she is seen no more like a millstone which is cast into the sea (v21-24)

This brings great praise from those in heaven who has judged righteously the great whore (19:1-6).

John is then shown another woman – one who is completely different:

- One who is pure and clean
- One who is loved by God
- One who is beautiful and prepared for Christ

- One who is described as the Bride of Christ

As John gazes upon her, heaven opens and we are given a vision of another who comes to her (v11-17)...

- One who rides victoriously upon a white horse
- One who is Faithful and True and judged in righteousness
- One who sees all
- One who is King over all
- One who is the Word of God
- One who is followed by the armies of heaven
- One who is the King of kings and Lord of lords

He comes to her and the marriage of the Lamb and His wife has come (19:7)

As He does, the wicked men of this earth rise up against Him, the kings of the earth and the false prophet – but the King of kings and Lord of Lords smites with the sword of His mouth and are cast into the lake of fire which burns with fire and brimstone! (19:15,18-21)

Having seen the defeat of the Whore, the wicked Babylon, we enter the seventh and final section of the book...

7) The Victory of Jerusalem, the Bride (20:1-22:21)

In this section...

- The dragon, the old serpent, the devils bound for 1,000 years (20:1)
 - He is then cast into the bottomless pit so that he will not deceive the nations (20:2)
 - During this period, those who have been faithful to Christ and obeyed Him on this earth live and reign with Christ.
 - When the 1,000 years are finished, Satan is loosed and gathering an army of people who are deceived by him, he raised a battle against Christ.
 - The devil and his foes attack the people of God and as they do so they are judged!
 - They are devoured by fire!
 - The devil is cast into the lake of fire and is tormented for ever and ever.
 - Judgment now comes upon those on earth and at the appearance of God the earth and sky flees away.
 - All are judged before the LORD and while the wicked are judged according to their deeds and cast into the lake of fire; those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are not cast into the lake of fire. Instead, the apostle John sees a new heaven and earth being established for them (21:1); and there God dwells with them and they with God (21:3). God wipes away all the tears from their eyes, there is no more death or sorrow or crying or pain for all these former things has passed away!
 - They are glorified – having the glory of God (v11)
 - They are safe – nothing that defiles entering in among them again (v27)
 - They are satisfied with the refreshing water of life and delicious tree of life (22:1-2);
 - And they see the face of One...(22:5)
-
- One who is Alpha and Omega (21:6)
 - One who quenches their thirst (21:6)
 - One who is their Bridegroom (21:9)
 - One who fills the new heaven and earth with His light and glory making the sun and moon redundant (21:22-23)
 - One who is true and has kept all His promises (22:6)

This ends the 7th vision.

Oh child of God, what wonders await us who are saved! And as we think upon them all surely it must humble us to think that it is all by grace?

What is the one reason why we don't share in the judgment of the ungodly? It is because we have been chosen graciously by God and from in eternity past He wrote our names in the Book of Christ. That is all! It was not our works. It was not our faith. It was grace – wondrous grace; amazing grace!

Will you sing like John Newton today...

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch; like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
 And grace my fears relieved;
 How precious did that grace appear
 The hour I first believed!

Thinking upon the grace of God, will you sing with confidence and comfort now...

The Lord hath promised good to me,
 His word my hope secures;
 He will my shield and portion be
 As long as life endures

And then will you rejoice...

When we've been there ten thousand years,
 Bright shining as the sun,
 We've no less days to sing God's praise
 Than when we first begun.

Conclusion

As the apostle John closes the book, the angel of God tells John that all he has seen is faithful and true (22:6). It is not lie and it is no exaggeration!

Jesus Christ then tells John in v7, "Behold I come quickly...and my reward is with me" (v12) and as a result, he is not to hide the truths of this book but to make it known!

Christ then gives John a further unveiling of Who He is:

- V13, I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last (v16) – I am the eternal God
- V16, I am the One who has testified unto you these things – I am the sure Prophet
- V16, I am the Root and Offspring of David – the almighty King
- V16, I am the Bright and Morning Star – the selfless Priest who has through my shed blood issued in a new and wonderful day of eternal glory

Finally, the LORD Jesus Christ says, "*Surely I come quickly*" (v20) and the *Bride of Christ* says, "*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus*".

Revelation is a book held in contempt by many: I wonder has it been held in contempt by you?

- Have you been like that family member walking around a forest and been fixated on one small issue within the book?
 - Have you been like one who never even goes into the forest?
- And as a result you have missed the beauty and the grandeur of Jesus Christ in this book?

If so, will you take the time to go out to the forest of Revelation and discover its riches and wonders – gazing upon its central theme: the LORD Jesus Christ?! The One, according to John in Revelation 1:5-6, "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father".

Then will you say like the Bride at the end of the book, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"