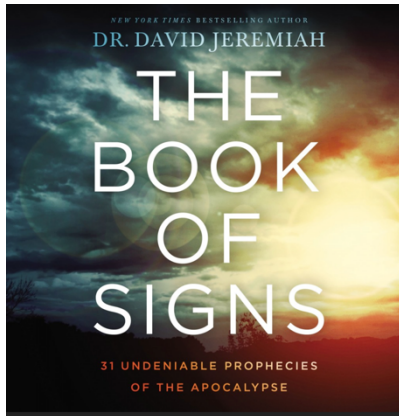


20230312 The Book of Revelation – “I Can’t Wait to See Jesus” - Introduction and Revelation 1:1-8



I began my talk on Wednesday night saying that there are two great dangers when studying biblical prophecy. One is to put too much emphasis and time into it, and the other is to ignore it totally. We are to study the Book of Revelation in a balanced way as it is part of the “whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27) God is working His purposes out in the world, and the main thing we need to remember is that no matter what we see going on around us, He is working His purposes out. This brings us great comfort. We need to study this because the Bible is God’s

Word and all scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, correction, and instruction in righteousness, that the man/woman of God may be mature, thoroughly equipped to do all good works. (2 Timothy 2:15 Pastor Faber’s paraphrase). There is no reason to have anxiety or fear about any of this. We all sense that there are signs that things are changing from how the world has worked for two millennia. We are steadily marching towards Jesus’ second coming.

About six months ago, I purchased a copy of “the Book of Signs” (by Dr. David Jeremiah) for our pastoral library. The book lays out signs of the times that show that we are experiencing birth pains which will culminate in the second coming of Christ. I would never be so foolish as to try to guess when Jesus is coming again, but events are falling into place that lead me and others to believe that the “fruit on the tree” is growing ripe. The time line of history is steadily approaching to an end. Again, this is a word of fright to some, but a word of great comfort to the believer. What is amazing is that many of these signs never existed until our lifetimes. The return of Christ was sort of a biblical impossibility until things fell into place that seem to line up with scripture in an unprecedented way.

These signs simply did not exist during the lifetimes of many of our parents or grandparents. Four signs (of many) that I believe make the end a real and present possibility are: 1) The reestablishment of the Jews in the Land of Israel on May 14, 1948. Much of Bible prophecy remained a “biblical impossibility” before that happened, 2) The Abraham Accords (peace treaties begun during the Trump Administration that continue).¹ These set the stage for an Israel described to be living in peace without fear of neighbors as in Ezekiel chapter 38, 3) The witnessing of the global political response nearing total control during the Covid pandemic of 2020, and 4) Alliances of nations taking place that have never existed that fall into patterns of Bible prophecy. Of present

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Accords

interest to me is the alliance between Syria, Russia, and Turkey.² Unnoticed by many, Russia has now set up Khmeimim Base as a permanent military base, in Tartus, Syria.³ Turkey is now the number one destination for Russian tourists. These are unprecedented events in the timeline of biblical history. So how will the end unfold? What happens first?

The Rapture is the trigger event that will end the Church Age. We entered the Church Age on the Day of Pentecost and this same age will end when believers are removed from the earth in the event the Bible calls the Rapture. There are no signs needed to trigger the Rapture. The Bible tells us that in the twinkling of an eye, every believer will be taken from the earth. This event is described in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. There is no prophecy that needs to be filled for this to happen. When it happens, millions of believers will be removed from the earth in an instant. Chaos will ensue as the Holy Spirit (the “restrainer”) is removed from the earth. All hell will break loose. Seven years of Tribulation will then follow, and the Book of Revelation chapters 4-22 describe what will happen during those seven years. It will be a time period of sorrow and destruction such as the world has never known. At the end of those seven years, Jesus the Messiah will come again in what we call “The Second Coming”. There are no signs needed to indicate that the Rapture will happen, but there are many signs telling us that the Second Coming of Christ is approaching, and that will happen approximately seven years after believers are taken to heaven in the Rapture.

The Book of Revelation is the period on the end of human history. In Greek, it is called “*The Apokalypse*” (meaning the revealing or unveiling). Those who are Spanish speakers know the book by that same name. It is called “*Apocalypsis*” in Spanish.” It is the unveiling of the end of times in the way the Book of Genesis chronicles the beginning of times. As most know, the book is mysterious and cryptic. The age old question is how to deal with all of the symbolism. I’ve often wondered why there is so much symbolism and Dr. David Jeremiah suggests that it is for several reasons. First, it’s important to remember that when it was written, the Emperor Domitian had put the Church under tremendous persecution. If things had been super explicit in the book, Roman soldiers would have killed many more Christians. If a Roman soldier picked up the Book of Revelation and read it, it looked like the musings of a mad man to a person unfamiliar with Old Testament symbolism.

There are many reasons that symbolism was used. Those reasons include but are not limited to the following: 1) Symbolism is not weakened by time. 2) Symbols impart values and arouse emotions, and 3) Symbols can be used as a secret code.⁴ All three of those are employed in the Book of Revelation.

² <https://endtimeheadlines.org/2023/01/prophecy-watch-todays-alliances-as-predicted-by-the-prophets-of-the-bible/>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khmeimim_Air_Base

⁴ David Jeremiah, *Escape the Coming Night*, p. 18.

I explained to the group on Wednesday night that I have not been moved to do a study of this book while I've been at the Grove. I suppose that is because I've been perhaps willfully ignorant of what is even in the book. Yet, the Bible tells us that we will be blessed in studying this book, so I don't intend to keep a blessing from this congregation. It is hard enough to understand the mysteries of God when you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but God has a word in here for us all, and we are equipped to receive it. Those who don't know the Lord can't begin to understand what the pages of Revelation might have to say. When God was revealing prophetic truths to the Prophet Daniel, He explained that the unbeliever is not able to understand the truths of God. They are not spiritually equipped to do so. After Daniel had received a vision, the messenger said,

⁹ ... *“Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.”* (Daniel 10:9)

Our true spiritual wisdom comes only through the Holy Spirit, so we will trust that God will show us what He wants us to see in this book and that we will understand what He means for us to understand. Scripture tells us, ¹⁴ *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14) Without the Holy Spirit a person has no spiritual discernment.

Frankly, many Christians just don't know what to do with the Book of Revelation so they take a pass. Thomas Jefferson, an unbeliever, (yes, *that Thomas Jefferson*) described it as “the ravings of a maniac, no more worthy, nor capable of explanation than the incoherences of our own nightly dreams.” Martin Luther, the acclaimed Protestant Reformer described the book as being “neither apostolic nor prophetic,” saying further that he “can [could] in no way detect that the Holy Spirit produced it” (LW 35:398).⁵

The age-old hermeneutical problem has been how to properly interpret the symbolism that is in the book. I have given a footnote below which guides the reader to notes by Dr. Thomas Constable that explain the four basic interpretations of the Book of Revelation throughout church history: 1) idealist/allegorical, 2) preterist, 3) historicist, and 4) futurist view.⁶ In our study, we will be using four basic rules of interpretation as we make our way through the book:

- 1) **The rule of plain sense** – when a verse of scripture makes perfect common sense, we'll use the meaning that makes sense.
- 2) **The Law of “Double Reference”** – there is a tendency in prophetic scripture to refer to two things at the same time. Often one is the present meaning when

⁵ <https://matthewhalsted.com/2021/10/10/thomas-jefferson-and-martin-luther-on-the-book-of-revelation/>

⁶ <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/revelation.pdf> (see pages 4-5 specifically)

written and the other is way off in the future. One is nearby and one is distant. So, one scripture can refer to two different events in time.

- 3) **The Law of Recurrence** – describes the recording of an event followed by a second recording of the same event giving more detail. This means that ideas might be repeated again and again with different words. A good example of this is the creation story in Genesis. If you don't understand this, you will think God created people and then He created Adam and Eve (created humans twice).
- 4) **The Law of Context** – a verse means what it means in the context in which we find it. We have context of the verse itself, the book in which it is found, and the meaning with respect to the rest of the whole of scripture.

We will divide the Book of Revelation into three parts: 1) The things that John has seen, 2) The things that are, and 3) The things that will take place after this (chapters 4-22). I know that we'll study at least the first 4-5 chapters verse by verse. We'll see where we go from there. So, let's begin.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,² who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.³ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.⁴ John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

V.1 The book is a complete revelation of Jesus Christ in all of His essence. It will put His character on full display. He was indeed the Lamb of God that humbled Himself even unto death on the cross. He will return as King of Kings and Lord of all Lords. It is addressed to each and everyone of us who is a "servant" of God. That's you and me! It is a revelation that is given for our benefit, and it will tell us of things that are "shortly to take place." That means that as John wrote it, there was an immediacy to it. It could happen at any time after it was written. As I explained earlier, the events could begin at any moment. The passage tells us that it was basically "signed and sealed" and delivered to John for all of us.

V.2 John had “born witness” to the Word of God. He had been there. He had seen Jesus. He had held Him. This is that same disciple whom Jesus loved so much. He was there at the foot of the cross when Jesus put His own earthly mother in John’s care. He had heard the testimony of Jesus Christ and He had been an eyewitness to the things that Jesus did during His ministry. It is important to remember that John’s Gospel is an eyewitness account that over and over assures the reader that Jesus is God incarnate, and yet He was fully man.

V.3 In this verse, we are told, ³ *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

I don’t know about you, but anytime the Bible tells me that something is a blessing, I’m ready to get in on it. The verse tells us that we are blessed merely by reading this book or by hearing the words of this prophecy. Remember that this was a letter that was circulated and read to churches all over the Christian world at that time.

V.4 In verse four, John addresses the letter to “the seven churches that are in Asia.” We will learn shortly which churches these are. Sandy told me that when she was a young girl she used to read Revelation and wonder why God was only directing this message to just seven churches. My own feeling is that John was addressing instructions to all Churches at all times throughout their history. Churches go through stages and phases and perhaps there is a word for the Grove as we listen to the words given to each church. There is then a wish for grace and peace from Him who is, Who was, and Who is to come. That of course is Jesus. It then mentions seven spirits and we’re not given an explanation of who or what those spirits are.

Some think it’s the Holy Spirit. Perhaps seven is because of it being God’s holy perfect number. The apocryphal books of 1 Enoch (20:2-8) and Tobit (12:15) name seven angels who supposedly stand before God: Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraqael (Sariel), Gabriel, and Remiel. Pastor Warren Wiersbe says, ““Seven” is the number of completion and stands for the fullness of the Spirit. I think a better approach is just to say that we aren’t exactly sure what or who they are because John doesn’t tell us. We do know that “Seven” is the number of completion and it is linked with the Spirit. We will hear over and over some statement that we don’t quite understand, and I’m going to take a pass on it. I’m not going to guess and make things up.

V.5 This reminds us that Jesus WAS the FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD. Jesus was the first to be brought back to life and He never experienced death again. That was a first, but it won’t be a last because the same thing is going to happen to each of us. Poor Lazarus was raised from the dead, but he had to once again experience physical death. Like Jesus, our bodies will be raised, never to die again. Hallelujah!

V.6 This verse is confusing in the NKJV. The Greek reads that He has made us a "kingdom" and "priests". We are a kingdom and we follow a king, THE KING. Scripture tell us He has made us a "royal priesthood." ⁹ *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;* ¹⁰ *who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10)* We are now royalty, and we enjoy a ministry of reconciliation directing others to the gospel of reconciliation that God extends to all people. We are sons and daughters of the King of All Kings and we are priests in that we enjoy direct communication with Almighty God and we are equipped to direct others to Him.

V.7 This assures us that HE IS COMING AGAIN. He will come just how he left. He left through the clouds and He'll return in the same way on the Mount of Olives. This is talking about the Second Coming of Christ because ALL WILL SEE HIM. The Jews (those who pierced Him) will see Him as well all the Gentiles of the earth. They will all mourn. All will be aware of His Second Coming at the end of that seven year period known as the Tribulation. And the event that will begin that time of Tribulation will be the Rapture.

When the Rapture happens, none will be aware of His coming except believers. One day, you and I will be going about our business and we'll hear a voice that we've never heard before. We will hear the voice of the archangel Gabriel. We will hear a trumpet sound like we've never heard before, and we will go to meet the Lord in the air. Are you ready for that? Man, am I ready!

V.8 This portion of scripture ends with a declaration of Who Jesus is. He is the Alpha, the beginning. He is the Omega, the ending. He was there when this earth was created (John 1:1), and He'll be there when this earth ends and a new earth is created. This reminds me of an old Pat Terry song called "I can't wait to see Jesus".ⁱ And you know what friend, I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE JESUS! What about you?

Let us pray.

[I Can't Wait to See Jesus Lyrics⁷](#)

I can't wait to see Jesus
In His glory as He bursts from the sky
I can't wait to be held in His arms
And see the glimmer in His eyes

Tell me, how it's gonna be
Read it from the Bible again

⁷ <https://tabs.ultimate-guitar.com/tab/the-pat-terry-group/i-cant-wait-chords-2836901>

I can't wait to see Jesus
'Cause Jesus is coming again

I can't wait to hear trumpets
'Cause I know what they mean when they sound
I can't wait to cast off my burdens
And feel my feet leave the ground
Tell me, how it's gonna be
Read it from the Bible again
I can't wait to see Jesus
'Cause Jesus is coming again

I can't wait to see Heaven
And to walk those streets of gold
I can't wait to check into my mansion
And get my sleeping bag and roll

Tell me, how it's gonna be
Read it from the Bible again
I can't wait to see Jesus
'Cause Jesus is coming again
He's coming again

I can't wait to see Jesus
I can't wait to see Jesus
He's coming again

I can't wait to see Jesus
I can't wait to see Jesus
He's coming again

I can't wait to see Jesus
Jesus is coming again
I can't wait to see Jesus
He's coming again...

ⁱ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPKY8KC3Pfg>