

## **“Apocalyptic Blessing”– Revelation 1:1-3**

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*[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, [www.welovethegospel.com](http://www.welovethegospel.com).]*

Take your Bible and meet me in Revelation, chapter 1...

Last week we began a new series that will take us through the seven letters that Jesus addresses to seven churches. These letters help us learn more about how Jesus Himself measures the health of a church. We find the seven letters in chapters 2 and 3, but each of these letters are themselves part of one single letter that we refer to as the book of Revelation. So before we get to those micro-letters we have to begin with the first chapter of Revelation that introduces them (and the whole book for that matter). That’s what we began to do last week and, if you missed it, you can read or listen to that message on our church website.

Revelation begins with a prologue that spans the three opening verses. Today we are going to continue to look at these verses because there were a couple things we couldn’t get to last Sunday. Let me read them to you again as we begin our time...starting in verse 1...This is God’s Word...

*“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup> who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. <sup>3</sup> Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.” (Revelation 1:1-3)*

The title of our sermon last week was “Getting the Mail,” which was a play on words. Let me explain. We spent some time introducing what kind of literature (i.e., the genre) we are reading when we read the book of Revelation. We noted that it is both a letter and an apocalypse. It’s an apocalyptic letter.

As a letter it has a sender, an audience, and a situation it was aimed at addressing in a particular historical setting.<sup>1</sup> The more we know about those features the better equipped we will be to make sense out of the confusing sections of the book. But Revelation is not just a letter. It’s also called an “apocalypse” in the very first verse, though the word for apocalypse is usually translated “*Revelation*.” Apocalyptic literature is very strange to modern readers, but, as we saw last time, first century Jews and Christians were quite familiar with it. We looked at several common features of apocalyptic literature and noted that they are present in this book as well.<sup>2</sup> So that was what they were receiving. It’s an apocalyptic letter. That’s what they were “getting” (cf. “Getting the Mail”).

But the verb “to get” can also mean “to understand” or “to perceive.” I labored to show last Sunday that the knowing what the book of Revelation is—a letter and an apocalypse—affects how we should and should not read it. I made several suggestions.

- We should seek to understand it in its historical setting, learning as much about the author, audience, and their situation as we can (because it is an ancient letter)
- We should resist the urge to read it in an overly linear way (because it is an ancient apocalypse)
- We should resist the urge to read it in an overly literal way (because it is apocalyptic literature, which is notoriously symbol-laden)

- We should resist the urge to read as chronological snobs (who assume that our time and history is the key to unlocking meaning that would have been concealed to previous generations of Christians)
- We should resist a Revelation-made-easy approach (because it's not easy) and read instead with humility
- We should read with biblically informed imaginations and not just our intellects (so we are impacted by the book in the way it was intended)

If we take these things to heart we will be more equipped to grasp the meaning that the original author intended.

But notice though that when the book is called, in verse 1, an apocalypse/revelation it's said to be, specifically, "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*" There is a certain ambiguity in the Greek there and it's preserved by the English word "*of.*" What does John mean? Does he mean that Jesus is the source of the Revelation, "the Revelation *from* Jesus Christ"?<sup>3</sup> Or perhaps he means that what he wrote is concerns Jesus, "The Revelation *about* Jesus."<sup>4</sup> So which is it? The answer, it seems to me, is "yes."<sup>5</sup>

The context clearly suggests that Jesus is the source. If you look again at the first two verses you can detect a chain of communication involving five links, where (1) God the Father gave the Revelation to (2) His Son, Jesus, who made it known by sending (3) an angel to (4) John, who then finally passed it along to (5) God's people. So in some sense the book has a heavenly source that Jesus is part of. In fact, the opening chapters are almost entirely a first-person transcript of what Jesus said. Lots of red letters. Jesus is clearly the source of the material.

But I think it is also appropriate to understand Jesus as the content as well. In a very real sense the book is revealing something about Jesus. He is the main subject and central figure of the book. In truth, He is really the central figure of Scripture as a whole. In verse 2, John even describes what he is bearing witness to as not only "*the word of God*" and "*all that he saw,*" but also as "*the testimony of Jesus Christ.*"<sup>6</sup> Without a doubt, that includes testimony *about* Jesus.<sup>7</sup> This book is dripping with Jesus revelation. It shows us the glory of Christ.

Friends, this is why the book is such an encouragement. This is why it is such a blessing to the church. It's a blessing because it reveals to us Jesus. That's the note that the prologue ends with in verse 3. "*Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it...*" It was meant to be a blessing. It's a blessing that these suffering saints needed for the reason John states at the end of verse 3—"for the time is near." What time? The time that will be described in this book. Look again at verse 1. "*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.*" So what John has written is, evidently, at least in part, a record of "*things that must soon take place*" from his perspective.

That's a difficult phrase for many people today. Some of us have been conditioned to think of this book as a roadmap for the final years that will precede the second coming of Christ. And if that's what you have concluded then it seems strange that John would say two thousand years ago that he is writing about things that will happen "*soon...for the time is near*" (1:1, 3). Was he wrong? Was he expecting the end of the age in his day and just miscalculated?<sup>8</sup> Did he misplace a decimal? I don't think so. So what are we to make of those statements?

Some have taken the word "soon" not as a reference to how quickly the events will begin unfolding (e.g., within our lifetime) but as a reference to how *swift* the things will unfold when the events take place. They will happen rapidly or suddenly, even if they happen thousands of years later from John's perspective.

That's certainly a viable interpretation. The Greek word can carry that nuance. And that would explain why at least some of the events described in Revelation didn't take place within John and his audience's lifetimes.

On the other hand, maybe he really did believe that he was living in the "last days" and the "end times." And maybe he wasn't wrong... Many scholars have noted the various parallels between this text and Daniel 2. The Greek translation of Daniel 2 has a lot of the same language that we find here in these opening verses of Revelation 1. The verb "revealed" occurs five times, the verb "show" or "signify" twice, and the phrase "what must come to pass" three times. The parallels are intriguing and suggest that John is echoing language from Daniel 2. The question is why?

You might remember that Daniel 2 recounts a dream that the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had and how the prophet Daniel interpreted it for him when no one else could. In the dream Nebuchadnezzar sees the image of a man with a gold head, silver chest and arms, a bronze midsection, and feet of iron and clay. Daniel eventually explains that each section represents a different kingdom that will exist. But the king also sees a stone that was not cut out by any human hand. This stone strikes the image on the foot and it shatters, head to toe, into oblivion. And Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar,

*"But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth...the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure." (Daniel 2:35, 44-45)*

Jesus actually draws on this story to show that He is that stone and it is His kingdom that will expand.<sup>9</sup> But interestingly the whole thing is set up by Daniel telling the king, *"there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days"* (Daniel 2:28). John, here in Revelation 1, uses the same language but rewords it a bit. What Daniel was describing as the "latter days," John is describing as "soon." What Daniel expected to occur in the last days, John is telling his readers to expect in their own. That doesn't mean that every event described in Revelation will be fulfilled in their day, but that some of the events that Daniel (and others) associated with the "latter days" were beginning to come to pass because, from John's perspective, they were living in those "latter days" that the prophets of old were describing.<sup>10</sup>

For what it is worth, John is not unique in associating the present age with the "last days." That seems to be suggested by almost all the writers of the New Testament. There's an apparent consensus that the so-called "end times" began in their day and encompass every subsequent generation until the Lord Jesus returns. So, for instance, think about Peter's speech at Pentecost in Acts 2. The people gathered together, the Holy Spirit was given, and having been filled by the Spirit the people began to speak in tongues. Some of the onlookers thought they were drunk. Eventually Peter denies that assumption and explains that the onlookers were actually witnessing a fulfillment of prophecy. To prove his point, he quotes from the book of Joel:

*"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even in my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." (Acts 2:17-18; cf. Joel 2:28-32)*

So the arrival of the Spirit of God at Pentecost was a fulfillment of these words of Joel. But when did Joel say these words would be fulfilled? *“In the last days...”*<sup>11</sup> Technically, Joel said *“afterward”* but Peter, recently filled with the Holy Spirit, clarifies the meaning of Joel’s prophecy by showing that it related to the last days, which began in their day. So Luke, the author of Acts, suggests the same thing that John seems to be suggesting in Revelation. The time of the “end” stretches from their first-century day on to the present moment.

Similarly, the writer of Hebrews began his letter like this: *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...”* (Hebrews 1:1-2). He says later that Christ *“has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”* (9:26). James talks about how certain landowners have hoarded *“treasure in the last days”* (James 5:3). Peter writes that Jesus was *“made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God”* (1 Peter 1:20). I think Peter makes a similar point 2 Peter 3, as does Jude 18, and Paul in Romans 13, and other passages that we don’t have time to look at.

The point is if you had asked Paul or James or Jude or Peter or John or the writer of Hebrews or any New Testament author “are you living in the last days, the latter times, the end of the ages, the final hour?” they would all have replied “yes.” And they were not wrong. They *were* living in the last days. But those last days cover the span between the first and second coming of Christ, not just the future time that will precede His second coming. So if someone asks me, “Do you think we are living in the last days?”, I say “Yes, but...” But what? But...not in the sense that you are probably thinking when you ask that question.

When people ask that question they’re usually wondering whether the events described in the book of Revelation will start happening in our generation. There is no way we can know that with absolute certainty as it relates, for instance, to things like the second coming of Christ. However, I do think some of the events described in Revelation are being fulfilled in our day and have been progressively unfolding in every generation since John’s own. So I agree with Greg Beale on this point that John “sees the end-time kingdom of Daniel as having arrived in the person of Jesus Christ” and, therefore, Revelation was meant to “speak into the heart of the present, not simply the distant future.”<sup>12</sup> This writing was meant to be a blessing because John’s original audience was living in the end times and they needed the encouragement that the book of Revelation provides. It stands to reason then, since we too are living in the end, that this book would provide a similar blessing to us as well.

Look again at Revelation 1:3, where that blessing is described. *“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”*<sup>13</sup> This is the first of several beatitudes in Revelation. If you had to guess, how many beatitudes do you think we might find in Revelation? Seven! Imagine that. John likes his sevens, doesn’t he? Let me read you the other ones because they do relate, as we will see, to where we are heading in this sermon series.

*“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”* (14:13)

*“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”* (16:15)

*“Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”* (19:9)

*“Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.”* (20:6)

*“Blessed in the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” (22:7)*

*“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.” (22:14)*

So all seven of the beatitudes of Revelation are meant to encourage the church. As you will recall from last week I suggested that the seven churches that are addressed in Revelation 2 and 3 are real churches but that they are not the only churches in the region. The fact the number of churches addressed is limited to seven churches may suggest that the message that those seven letters convey was meant for the complete church because seven is very often used as a symbol of completion. That symbolism is no doubt built off of the seven days of the creation account. God rested on the seventh day because His creation work was complete. So perhaps the number seven tied to the churches suggests the intended relevance of those letters for every church and all Christians.

Further evidence of that could be cited from these beatitudes because, interestingly, all seven are parallel to certain statements made in the letters. Take a look at this chart:<sup>14</sup>

<b>Seven Beatitudes</b>	<b>Seven Sayings in Revelation 2-3</b>	<b>Church</b>
1. Blessed are those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep them (1:3)	You have heard, now keep and repent (3:3)	Sardis
2. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on (14:13)	Become faithful unto death (2:10)	Smyrna
3. Blessed are those watching for his coming as a thief (16:15)	Become watchful of Christ will come as a thief (3:2-3)	Sardis
4. Blessed are those invited to the marriage dinner of the Lamb (19:9)	Christ will dine with him (3:20)	Laodicea
5. Blessed are those in the first resurrection because second death has no authority over them (20:6)	Second death will not harm victors (2:11)	Smyrna
6. Blessed are those keeping the words of the prophecy (22:7; cf. 22:9)	You have kept my word (3:10; cf. 3:8)	Philadelphia
7. Blessed are those washing their robes for they have the right to the tree of life (22:14)	Victor will eat from the tree of life (2:7)	Ephesus

I just wanted to introduce that today, but we will come back to the significance of these connections later when we get into chapters 2 and 3. So log that information away in the back of your mind for now.

But listen again to the hope of that first beatitude—*“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near”* (1:3). There are really two people addressed there. The first is the one who reads the letter aloud to the churches. Not everyone in that day could read and even if they could they wouldn’t have a copy of the letter to read to themselves. Someone would have to read it aloud and John says that person is blessed.

What a blessing it is to have the truth of the Lord—what’s called here *“the word of God”* and *“the testimony of Jesus”*—and get to share that with people who have never heard it. What a privilege to know what God has revealed about Himself and the salvation found only in Jesus Christ. What an even greater privilege to be the person whom God uses to share that with other people. Do you count it such a privilege?

We will be bold Gospel witnesses to the degree that we do. The more we are impacted by the grace that has been shown to us in Christ, the more we will count it a blessing to testify about that grace. The more we are moved by the gift He offered us freely because He purchased it fully when He substituted Himself on the cross in the place of sinners and rose from the dead so that we could be declared “not guilty” before the courts of heaven, the more we will move to make His work known. What a blessing, church, we have words of life! The more the Gospel of life changes us, the more we will count it a blessing to share it with others even if that lands you in on the island of Patmos (as it did John). It doesn’t matter what it cost us. It can’t erase the blessings that we bear witness to.

Jump down to verse 9. “*I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*” Then in verse 10 he began describing what he saw in the vision. Do you hear the language echoed from the prologue? What is it that John says he is bearing witness to in this letter? Look at verse 2—“*the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.*” It’s the same language. What John has lived most of his adult life announcing has cost him dearly. Do you realize that his fellow Apostles were crucified upside down, and beheaded, and impaled by spears, and beaten to death with branches, and boiled in oil? He’s not writing about future tribulation. He describes himself as a “*partner in the tribulation*” that every church age knows, even if we in America only know about it secondhand. We’re pretty spoiled. We didn’t come here today fearing that an angry mob would break down the door and carry us out. We didn’t come here fearing the police would drag us off to jail because we have assembled to worship Jesus. But many of our brothers and sisters around the world did this morning. And they have been for a couple thousand years. That’s tribulation. John knows it firsthand.<sup>15</sup> And that’s why verse 3 creates something of a tension in the reader’s mind potentially.

Think about it. John announces blessings on all those who pass on the revelation, but can’t you just hear someone saying, “Wait a minute John. Why would we do that? The book announces the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, but when you were announcing those things it got you a one-way ticket to exile! You can’t bring this letter to us yourself because you were banished to some island. You don’t seem so blessed to me. If that’s blessed, I think I’ll pass.” But, evidently, John “thought it more blessed to proclaim the book of Revelation than to avoid the suffering that could result.”<sup>16</sup> And we should too.

But, as John notes, it is also a blessing to hear and to keep what God reveals. I think these are referring to one group, not two. You are not blessed simply because you hear truth that rolls in one ear and out the other. That’s the sad story of many who attend churches. Instead, it is those who hear *and* keep the truth who are blessed. So there is an ethical dimension (which I alluded to last week). It’s meant to influence our behavior and way of thinking. In biblical idiom hearing and heeding go together to the point that hearing is often synonymous with obeying.<sup>17</sup> The Hebrew word for “hear” also can mean “obey.” And John draws attention to these connections probably more than any other writer in the New Testament.<sup>18</sup> When we believe what God is revealing here, then we will “*keep what is written.*” And when we obey God’s Word, we are blessed John says. And maybe not just us. A powerful thing can happen in the world when a person takes to heart God’s Word.

In the second century there was a Christian who wrote to a man named Diognetus. Listen to how the author describes Christians.

“They love everyone, and by everyone they are persecuted. They are unknown, yet they are condemned; they are put to death, yet they are brought to life. They are poor, yet they make many rich; they are in need of everything, yet they abound in everything. They are dishonored, yet they are glorified in their dishonor; they are slandered, yet they are vindicated. They are cursed, yet they bless; they are insulted, yet they offer respect. When they do good, they are punished as evildoers;

when they are punished, they rejoice as though brought to life...and so Christians when punished daily increase more and more.” (*Diognetus* 5:11-16; 6:9b)

What a description! Commenting on this James Hamilton wrote,

“...these Christians live in a way that says that knowing God is better than freedom from persecution. Knowing God is better than avoiding martyrdom by denying him. Knowing God is better than money. Knowing God is better than worldly fame. Knowing God is better than doing evil to avoid persecution from a criminal government. And this causes their numbers to increase. When people show by their lives that knowing God is this good, others want to know such a God!”<sup>19</sup>

When you believe you are that blessed by the Lord, then you will want to tell others. And when you tell them out of an overflow of that blessing, don't be surprised when people believe the good news on your lips. And when you believe that the Jesus that is revealed in this letter is better than everything, then obedience loses the look of burden and takes on the luster of blessing. That was John's experience. As one writer put it, “John must think it's better to stand right before God by faith in Christ, forgiven and free of all sin, than it is to have all Rome bow before you...Is your experience of Christianity like John's?”<sup>20</sup>

Well, friends, that's why we need the book of Revelation. We need it because we are tempted to believe that there are things in this world more valuable than Jesus. We are tempted to go astray or give up and not persevere in the face of evil. We are tempted to bow in the midst of pressure. And Revelation puts before us the glory of Jesus so that we can hold fast in the faith.

There is a battle being waged with clear lines being drawn. There are those with the Holy Trinity and those with the unholy trinity that Revelation depicts—the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon. There are those who worship the Lamb and those who worship the beast. Neutrality is not an option. There are those whose robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb and those whose robes are still stained by personal sin. Whose side are you on?

Maybe it would be good to close our study of the prologue of Revelation by taking a glance at the letter's epilogue (at least part of it) as we wrap up. Flip to Revelation 22. I'll begin reading in verse 12...Jesus says,

*“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. <sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.’ <sup>14</sup> Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. <sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”* (Revelation 22:12-15)

What's the difference between those inside and those outside on that day? Is it that the insiders were able to crack the code of Revelation? No way. The difference is that those inside have had their robes washed white, pure and clean, by the priceless blood of the Lamb. They heard and believed these words and have been blessed ever since. They belong to the Jesus.<sup>21</sup> The question is, do you? Do you belong to the Savior and King? Do you worship Him? Have you trusted Him with your life and future? Have you believed that He alone can save you? The blessing of this book is not that you crack a code. The ultimate blessing is that Revelation announces that you can belong to the Lamb through faith. And when you do, what John writes can resonate with you. You will hear and keep what is written. And you'll be saying with him what he says in the next to last verse, “*Amen. Come Lord Jesus!*” (22:20).

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<sup>1</sup> The sender is identified as “*John*” in verse 4. He was an Apostle who at this point is an old man who finds himself banished to the island of Patmos because of Christian witness (1:9). Seven churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) are explicitly mentioned as the original recipients of the letter, though, as we noted last time, there are several other cities and churches in the area that this letter was no doubt intended to circulate through. It was meant to be a circular letter and an open letter that originally made the rounds among these regional churches. Their situation is harder to deduce with certainty. It’s generally held among Evangelical scholars that the letter was written during the reign of a Roman emperor named Domitian, who was a bad man. We know from history that there was growing persecution of Christians during Domitian’s day and that persecution is consistent with what we find in the book of Revelation. It’s hard to know how widespread and severe that persecution was across Rome, but the kinds of pressures and fears we can detect in this book are consistent with what we know about that historical period.

<sup>2</sup> It tends to involve heavenly revelation, communicated through an angelic figure, to some famous individual, concerning God’s intervention in history for His people. It’s communicated with very vibrant visual effect and lots of symbolic images and numbers. It tends to be cyclical, meaning it repeats some of the same events or ideas from different angles making it difficult to simply read it as an unfolding of linear events. And it typically has an ethical dimension because it’s intended to influence the behaviors and hopes of the audience. Those are typical features of apocalyptic literature from the period and Revelation, not surprisingly, shares all of these characteristics as well. The book is an apocalyptic letter.

<sup>3</sup> Taking the Greek phrase as a “subjective genitive.”

<sup>4</sup> Read as an “objective genitive.”

<sup>5</sup> I agree with Craig Keener, “In the final analysis, however, the original, Greek-speaking audience of the book may not have worked as hard as we do to differentiate the two concepts (the grammar itself does not clarify any difference). The message is from Jesus Christ, but ultimately Jesus is the focus of everything in the New Testament, whether directly or indirectly. His purposes in history also reveal his character and invite us to worship him.” Craig S. Keener, *Revelation* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 54.

<sup>6</sup> Grant Osborne notes, “The two aspects, ‘word of God’ and ‘testimony of Jesus,’ are not separate but complementary descriptions of these visions. Due to their frequent appearance in the book, they become a semitechnical formula for gospel truth and faithful Christian witness to it.” Grant Osborne, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 56.

<sup>7</sup> Though, here again, there is ambiguity. It could also be what Jesus Himself testified. The options are not mutually exclusive.

<sup>8</sup> “Some understand all biblical references to an imminent (‘soon’) coming as referring to a secret return of Jesus for his followers before the final Tribulation, but most of these references in context clearly refer to Jesus’ return to consummate history, not to a coming before the Tribulation (e.g., 2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 1:7; 16:15; cf. 1 Thess. 5:2-3 with 2 Thess. 2:2-4). ‘Soon’ cannot simply mean ‘pretribulation.’” Keener, 60.

<sup>9</sup> As Tremper Longman III asks and explains: “Who is the rock? The symbolism is multifaceted, but readers of the New Testament cannot help but think of Jesus Christ as the rock who establishes God’s kingdom by crushing godless nations. It is true that the tradition that identifies Jesus as the rock derives from Psalm 118:22 (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; 1 Peter 2:7) and Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 (Rom. 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6, 8), but we get a clear reference to Daniel 2 in Luke 20:18. The context is the parable of the tenants (Luke 20:9-19). The parable is the story of the vineyard (often a symbol of God’s kingdom) rented to tenants, who then refused to pay. The owner sends messengers to collect the rent, but they are beaten and chased off. Finally, the owner sends his son, but the tenants do the unspeakable and kill the son. At that point, the owner returns himself, kills the tenants, and gives the vineyard to others. In a clear attempt to identify himself with the son and his listeners with the doomed tenants, Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,’ and then immediately associates this stone with the stone of Daniel 2 ‘Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed’ (Luke 20:18.” Tremper Longman III, *Daniel* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 92-93.

<sup>10</sup> “The focus of ‘quickness’ and ‘nearness’ in vv. 1-3 is primarily on the inauguration of prophetic fulfillment and its ongoing aspect rather than nearness of consummate fulfillment (the return of the Lord), though the latter thought is secondarily present. The following context shows that the beginning of fulfillment and not final future fulfillment is the focus. The references to the imminent eschatological period (v. 3b), the fact of Christ’s present kingship over the world’s kings (v. 5), the beginning form of the saints’ kingdom (vv. 6, 9) and the following ‘Son of man’ reference (v. 13) and vision (vv. 13-15), also indicating the fulfillment of Daniel 7, point strongly to this focus and to the presence of a Danielic frame of reference... Similarly, the allusion to seven lampstands from Zechariah 4 in vv. 12, 20 and the reference to Isaiah 49:2 and 11:4 (the sword in the Messiah’s mouth) in v. 16 also indicate that the OT prophecies in those texts have begun to be fulfilled. In fact, only one verse in all of Revelation 1 clearly includes reference to Christ’s last advent. And even that verse, 1:7, refers to the progressive nature of the fulfillment of Dan. 7:13 throughout the age, which will culminate in Christ’s final coming. There is no doubt that John saw the resurrection of Christ as fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel regarding the inauguration of the kingdom of God. This indicated that what is about to be written concerns not just the distant future, but what is before us here and now.” Gregory K. Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 36.

<sup>11</sup> Eckhard Schnabel is right to point out that “The rest of the Joel quotation and Peter’s explanation shows that Peter links the beginning of the last days not merely with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost but with the entire ministry of



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Jesus, which includes the giving of the Spirit and the proclamation of salvation for all those who call on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21, quoting Joel 2:32).” Eckhard Schnabel, *40 Questions about the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Beale, 38. Similarly Michael Wilcock writes, “John has seen the latter days arrive. The setting up of God’s kingdom has begun with the coming of Christ; and the promise that ‘it shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever’ (Dn. 2:44), is already starting to be fulfilled. The fulfillment is a process, not a crisis; and a lengthy one, not a sudden one, we may observe—for though events at its climax will move swiftly enough, the process itself will occupy the whole of the gospel age, from the inauguration of the kingdom (12:10) to its final triumph (11:15). If this that Daniel has foreseen for the latter days is what the angel is now bringing to John’s immediate purview, then ‘the time is near’ indeed. As soon as his letter reaches its destination in the churches of Asia, they will be able to say, ‘These things are happening *now*.’ Such immediacy it has always had for attentive readers, and so it can reveal to us in our own twentieth-century world the present reality of the conflict between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of the Lord.” Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation* (BST; Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 1975), 32-33.

<sup>13</sup> “Not many other books of the Bible can boast anything similar. It is as if this book has been singled out for our attention, and we need this extra encouragement to press on despite the difficulties and our sense of inadequacy.” Paul Spilsbury, *The Throne, the Lamb and the Dragon: A Reader’s Guide to the Book of Revelation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 18.

<sup>14</sup> This chart is adapted from Mark Wilson’s *Charts on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 60.

<sup>15</sup> Voddie Baucham, “Prologue: The Blessing of Revelation,” a sermon preached that can be found on monergism.com.

<sup>16</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches* (Preaching the Word; Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 33.

<sup>17</sup> See Keener, 56.

<sup>18</sup> “Again, it is in the Gospel of John that the greatest emphasis comes in NT writings. In 1:37, 40 ‘hearing’ is linked with ‘following,’ as the Baptist’s disciples come to Jesus. In 4:42 (cf. 5:24) it leads to ‘believing’ and ‘knowing,’ in 5:25 and 5:28–29 to ‘life,’ in 8:38 to action, and in 8:47 hearing results from ‘belonging to God.’ In the parable of the good shepherd (10:3–4, 27), several of these themes are brought together, as the sheep ‘hear’ his voice, ‘know’ it, and then ‘follow’ him. Hearing and keeping/obeying are combined in 12:47 and 14:23–24 (see also 14:15, 21; 15:10, 14). In Revelation this theme is continued. In the letters to the seven churches each letter contains the admonition ‘Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit says,’ and this is then connected to the promise to the ‘overcomer’ (2:7, 11, 17, 26–29; 3:6, 12–13, 21–22; cf. 13:9). The central theme of ‘keeping’ or ‘observing’ God’s commands is found ten times in the book (1:3; 2:26; 3:3, 8, 10; 12:17; 14:12; 16:15; 22:7, 9), twice with ‘hear’ (1:3; 3:3). The basic ethical principle of perseverance is defined throughout Revelation as ‘keeping’ God’s instructions, and this becomes one of the major themes of the book. The sovereignty of God over this world and the futility of Satan and his followers must lead to the perseverance of the saints who put their trust in God to overcome their enemies.” Osborne, 58.

<sup>19</sup> Hamilton, 34.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>21</sup> Baucham, “Prologue...”