

THE APOSTLE JOHN, HIS BOOK, HIS LORD  
AND THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA  
Revelation 1, 2, 3

Intro: It is my intention to spend one Sunday each on these three chapters -- a chapter a Sunday.

This is the only distinctly prophetic book in the New Testament, but even then it is entitled, "The revelation of Jesus Christ." So, while the events of the book are extremely important, the Person of Christ is even more important -- and the one who is to be blessed by the reading, or hearing, of this book, will only be blessed as he considers the book in that light -- and keeps it!

Verse 19 is generally considered to be John's threefold division of the book -- with the three chapters we will be considering as being the first two divisions:

- I. The things which John had seen (Rev. 1).
- II. The things which are (Rev. 2, 3).
- III. The things which shall be hereafter (Rev. 4-22; cf. 4:1b).

Chapter 1 is clearly introductory to the whole book.

In it we have three major themes:

- 1) John and his book (vv. 1-3).
- 2) John and the seven churches -- especially with his greeting to them (vv. 4-8).
- 3) John and his Lord (vv. 9-20).

Thus, this morning we will be concerned with

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Revelation 1

and their relationships to each other.

I. JOHN AND HIS BOOK (Rev. 1:1-3).

V. 1 tells us what the book is,  
how John got it,  
and what he was to do with it.

V. 2 tells us what John actually did with it, i.e.,  
how he treated it. Note how threefold divisions begin to be used.

V. 3 shows how blessing will come through this book. Cf. also Rev. 22:7. Again we have a threefold division.

II. JOHN AND THE SEVEN CHURCHES (Rev. 1:4-8). Here we see the original destination of this book -- it was for "the seven

churches which are in Asia." But does this mean that it is not for us? A book I have been reading deals with John 15:16 in this way -- that it was only for the Apostles. But if we say that, how do we determine what is for us? To be consistent we must say that there really isn't anything in John 14, 15, 16 for us because the Lord was speaking directly to the Apostles. With the same reasoning we could do away with the whole Bible. Let this be clear: This book is just as much for us as it was for the seven churches of Asia!

The greeting is the usual Apostolic greeting: "Grace be unto you, and peace . . ." (v. 4a). The unique thing about it is that it is given from all Three Members of the Godhead, and John goes into some detail about each One -- concentrating finally upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vv. 4b, 5a speak of the Trinity:

- 1) About God, we have an emphasis upon His eternity, and His immutability.
- 2) About the Holy Spirit (and there is little doubt but that He is the One Who is intended by the expression, "the seven Spirits which are before his throne"), we see His omnipresence indicated -- so present with God and with the churches that it was just like there were seven Holy Spirits!
- 3) About Christ (where obviously there is a special emphasis, John speaks first of the offices He has held (and continues to hold):
  - a) "The faithful witness" -- usually linked with His earthly ministry in the past, but having to do also with this book.
  - b) "The first begotten of the dead" -- the marvelous result of His death on the Cross.
  - c) "The prince (the Greek word for ruler, indicating His absolute sovereignty now as well as when He comes to reign.

Vv. 5b, 6 show John going on to speak of Christ in His work for believers -- which again is threefold, and in which we have the Gospel:

- 1) The basis on which He did what He did: "Unto him that loved us."
- 2) The nature of what He did: "And washed us from our sins in his own blood," or, loosed us . . .
- 3) The result of what He did -- full and continuing access to the Father as priests: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father," or, a kingdom of priests.

And then John concludes this part with a doxology (which should be ours, too, when we contemplate the various members of the Godhead, and what They have done: "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

This part concludes with the promise of Christ's return (v. 7), and then one of grandest declarations of the Deity of Christ to be found anywhere in Scripture (v. 8). (John is very strong on this latter point.)

### III. JOHN AND HIS LORD (Rev. 1:9-20).

The vision which was given to John in which he saw the Lord as he had never seen Him before, is the main part of this section (vv. 12-16). Obviously the Lord has been glorified. He probably appears here as a Judge, but there are other details that are just as important:

- 1) Where John was at this time, and why (v. 9).
- 2) What he saw and heard (vv. 10-16).
- 3) The reaction that it all had on him (v. 17).
- 4) What the Lord told him to do (vv. 17b-20).

He was being taught more about:

- 1) The glory of the Lord.
- 2) The omnipresence of the Lord -- Who was not only with the churches on the mainland, but also with him on the Isle of Patmos!
- 3) The sovereignty of the Lord, His almighty power -- holding the seven stars (whether angels or ministers to the churches) in His right hand.

Note the nature of the churches: "the seven golden candlesticks," or, lampstands.

Concl: I hope you are familiar with the name, Samuel Rutherford. He was born about 1600, and died in 1661. He will always be remembered for his unusual devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of his letters have been preserved for us.

His biographer, Andrew Bonar, makes this comment of the close of a brief biographical sketch he wrote about Samuel Rutherford. I use it to close because I believe Samuel Rutherford was in the same category of saints with the Apostle John -- the category that you and I should be in. Listen to what Bonar wrote:

But O for his insatiable desires Christward! O for ten such men in Scotland to stand in the gap! -- men who all day long find nothing but Christ to rest in, whose very sleep is a pursuing after Christ in dreams, and who intensely desire to "awake with His likeness" (p. 30).

May God make us men and women with the desire for Christ that John had, and that Samuel Rutherford had, and that millions of others have had, but which seems to be extremely rare today.