

Revelation 1:1-3

John Introduces the Book

<p>[1] The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,</p> <p>[2] who testifies to everything he saw — that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>A. The MESSAGE</p> <p>From Jesus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus was given the message, to show it to us. • The events it describes will "soon take place." <p>For his people</p> <p>It was communicated to his servants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A heavenly messenger ("angel") was involved in its transmission. • John was the recipient (who would then show it to the rest of God's people.) <p>By way of John</p> <p>John was the eyewitness to this message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John testified to the accuracy of what was communicated. • What John saw is an expression of this message. <p>About God / Jesus Christ</p> <p>God / Jesus Christ is the focus and source of this message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a message ("word") from God. • It is a message (testimony or witness) from (and about) Jesus. 	<p>The message is about Jesus and his return.</p> <p>If we are willing to serve him, then we are his servants, and the message is for us! If we are not willing to serve him, we do not belong to him.</p> <p><u>Soon</u> - "quickly" or "in a short time." There is a sense of urgency in this word.</p> <p><u>Jesus</u>, the "mediator" between God and people, makes known to us the will and plan of God.</p> <p><u>Angels</u> were sometimes (perhaps often?) present when something was revealed to a prophet or apostle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example: When God gave Moses the Law - Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19. <p>Sometimes they helped the prophet or apostle understand what was being communicated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples: Revelation 17:7 and Zechariah 1:19. <p><u>John</u> was a "witness" (or eyewitness) to the truth. An eyewitness tells about what he has observed first-hand.</p> <p><u>The message</u> is summarized in verse 7: "Jesus is coming!" The rest of the book gives the details.</p>
<p>[3] Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.</p>	<p>B. The BLESSING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those who READ it - which may include reading it out loud for others who cannot read. (Most likely, one person would be reading it to the group.) • For those who HEAR it - those who pay attention to what was read. • For those who TAKE IT TO HEART 	<p>THE READER - most likely a person who is reading this letter to the whole group. Hence, he would be a person who was <i>sharing</i> the message with others.</p> <p>THE HEARER - especially those who pay attention to its message (those who accept it and allow it to change their lives). This would include the whole group.</p>

- This blessing (v. 3) shows that the book of Revelation has value to us even if we *aren't* living at the time of its final fulfillment. It has application to us, in that it should influence how we live. If we *do* live the way it tells us to live, we will be ready for *anything* that may happen to us in the future.

**** We must hear and do what God's Word says. ****
 We must *apply* it to the way we live - Luke 8:21; 11:28; James 1:22+.

<p>[1] ...what must soon take place.</p> <p>[3] ...because the time is near.</p>	<p>C. The URGENCY of the message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will SOON / QUICKLY take place. • The time is NEAR / "at hand." 	<p>We need to be in a continual state of preparedness. Being complacent about the issue is <i>not</i> an option.</p>
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We MUST do these things, if we were blessed. Why? Because the time is near. (Also - v. 1 - these things will occur soon/quickly.)



Being in a State of Preparedness - Because "the time is near" (Revelation 1:3)

The issue *isn't* whether or not we think the end will come during our lives. We must *always* be in a state of preparedness.

- 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 [Note - this passage in 1 Corinthians doesn't say we *shouldn't* have the things mentioned in these verses; rather we must not be *preoccupied* with them. They must not be the *focus* of our lives, but must take second place.]

Even if Jesus *doesn't* return during our lifetimes, our state of preparedness (or lack of it) will show our attitude toward him. What do the following passages tell us about this issue? [Note also the warnings found in these verses.]

- 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 (especially v. 6-8) [Verse 8 is the only logical (and legitimate) response to having the knowledge that Jesus will return. Note its similarity to Ephesians 6:11-18. This must *always* be our attitude.]
- Matthew 24:42-51 [Note: The problem was the servant's attitude, not the fact that he got caught.]

**** Be ready, alert and prepared. ****

If you are ready, alert and prepared for Jesus' return, you will be ready, alert and prepared for anything else that may happen in life. You will be able to resist the devil, to do what is right, etc.



But What If it Doesn't Seem to Be "Soon"?

- These events are the *next thing* on God's "agenda" - and they will "soon" happen. Right now, it may seem that it's taking a long time... but in eternity, we will have a different perspective.
- Remember, the Lord is not SLOW in keeping his promise... it *will* happen, at just the right time! [Why hasn't it happened yet? Only because of God's patience - 2 Peter 3:8-9. He has been waiting for people like *us!*]

Revelation 1:1-3 Supplementary Study Information

Verse 1

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation means "to reveal, to uncover." This book is *not* written to "hide" the truth, but to "reveal" it!

Jesus Christ is going to be revealed. The day is coming in which *every* eye shall see him - v. 7.

WHICH GOD GAVE HIM [Jesus] TO SHOW HIS SERVANTS

Jesus is the mediator ("go-between") who bridges the gap between God (as creator) and people (as created beings), and makes known to us the will and plan of God.

- Because of this, these details about God's future plans for the world and for the revelation of Jesus Christ to the world must be given through Jesus (the "go-between"). He will show these things (= make them known) to his servants.

This message is for Jesus' *servants*. Jesus is our Master (= "Lord"); we are his "slaves" (or "bond-slaves," as some translations say it). We, his servants, belong to him and are committed to serving him.

- The apostle Paul often calls himself a "slave" of Jesus. For example, most of his letters begin with, "Paul, a servant (slave) of Jesus..."

Being Jesus' servant / slave is a *lot* better than being the opposite: the devil's servant / slave!

- *We will either be the one or the other; there are no other options.*

If we are not serving Jesus, we are, by nature, serving the devil. As the devil's slaves, we may serve him by:

- going *directly against* what Jesus would have us to do, or
- *imitating* those things that Jesus would have us to do, the way a counterfeit would. (This would include doing good things for the wrong reasons.)

SOON TAKE PLACE / HAPPEN SOON

This can mean "shortly, certainly, suddenly." At times it can focus on the "nearness" of the time ("shortly"), but at other times, it can simply indicate that, *once the event begins*, it will occur rapidly ("suddenly"). [See also the word "near," in verse 3.]

- Illustration: A dam may be in danger of breaking, at any moment. That doesn't guarantee that it will do so, within the next few hours. On the other hand, when it *does* break, the devastation will take place "suddenly."

OTHER PASSAGES THAT USE THIS WORD "SOON"

1. Examples of how this word was used in daily life - things that were supposed to happen "soon" ("quickly" or "in a short time") - Acts 12:7; 22:18; 25:4.
2. Passages which use this word in connection with God / Jesus.
 - a. God's justice - Luke 18:8 (read v. 1-8).
 - b. Satan's defeat by God - Romans 16:20. [Not necessarily in reference to the end times; perhaps a general reference to victory over Satan's attacks in the lives of the readers.]
 - c. Jesus' revelation (and the things associated with it) - Revelation 1:1; 22:6.
3. [A related New Testament word] Jesus is coming "quickly" - Revelation 2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20.

**** There is a sense of urgency in this word! ****

A "DISTANT" vs. A "SOON" FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

There may be an implied contrast between Daniel's prophecy and the book of Revelation.

- Daniel spoke of things that would take place in the *future* (Daniel 2:28-29, 45); John writes about things that will take place *soon*.
- Some aspects of Daniel's prophecies were "sealed" until the end (compare to Daniel 12:9), whereas the book of Revelation was different: Although some things are "sealed" (Revelation 10:4), the primary emphasis is that the message of Revelation is *not* to be "sealed up" (Revelation 22:10).

COMMUNICATED (made clear) BY HIS ANGEL, TO JOHN

The direct communication of this message was through an angel (one of Jesus' "heavenly messengers" - the word "angel" also means "messenger").

- At times, Jesus was present when John received this revelation (example: chapters 2 - 3).
- At other times, it appears that only the angel was directly involved (example: Revelation 19:10).

The apostle John was the designated recipient or "contact point." He would then communicate this message to the rest of God's people.

Verse 2

[JOHN] TESTIFIES / GIVES WITNESS

John would testify/witness to the fact that the message he received (= everything that he wrote down) was from God. He was an *eyewitness* of these things.

Jesus Christ also testifies/witnesses to the "soon-ness" of his coming - Revelation 22:20.

WORD / TESTIMONY (= witness)

John received a "message" from God, that "testified" about Jesus. There are many details in the book of Revelation, but the main focus is Jesus.

- The book of Revelation mentions people who considered this message (the "word of God" and the "testimony of Jesus") to be so important, that they were willing to suffer or die for it - see 1:9 and 6:9. [How important is it to you?]

Verse 3

Why does God give us this message? For our good - so that we may be blessed! If we take it to heart, it will encourage us, and will be a source of joy and comfort, even in the worst of circumstances! (It is not merely for people at some unknown time in the future.)

WHAT IS MEANT BY A "BLESSING"?

The blessing God has for us goes beyond mere "happy feelings" and "nice circumstances." To its recipients belong the highest good - blessings that go beyond one's temporary circumstances or feelings. Circumstances may at times be bad - as evidenced by many of the things that happen in the book of Revelation - but these blessings look beyond those circumstances: they remain and will continue to remain forever.

- Romans 8:28 shows one of the ways that God blesses his people.
- Psalm 1 focuses on these blessings and how we can get them. If Psalm 1 describes us, we *are* blessed (regardless of circumstances); it isn't something we have to wait until later for.

- The world will not understand how we can be blessed regardless of circumstances. But neither can it understand how we can have peace in all circumstances (Philippians 4:7), or how we can rejoice when we experience trials (Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-3).

BLESSINGS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

There are three requirements:

- **THE RIGHT FOUNDATION** - Those who accept (who base their lives on) the message of this book - 1:3; 22:7.
- **THE RIGHT LIFESTYLE** - Those who are ready for Jesus' coming - and their conduct proves it (it's not merely a verbal claim) - 16:15 (alert); 22:14 (clothes washed clean, rather than dirty - compare 7:14 to 3:4).
- **THE RIGHT LOYALTY** - Those who are willing to be faithful even to the point of death, if necessary - 14:13.

The ultimate blessing belongs to such people. They are the ones who are going to be with Christ forever - 19:9; 20:6. (This is only applicable to those who have met the above three requirements.)

THE ISSUE OF TEMPORARY VS. PERMANENT BLESSINGS

- **IF WE HEAR BUT DON'T TAKE IT TO HEART...** We're blessed with the opportunity to know the truth. But if we don't go beyond that, it's only a temporary blessing. We need to pay attention to the truth and take it to heart.
- **IF WE HEAR AND TAKE IT TO HEART...** If we want the message to be of permanent value, we need the type of hearing that Jesus mentions in the parables - Matthew 13:10-17. We must let the message change us.

READ / HEAR (give ear to) / **KEEP** (take to heart, heed or treasure what this prophecy says)

The word "read" is related to the idea of "knowing" or "recognizing" what has been written. However, we must go beyond "mere knowledge" of the printed words, in order for the book of Revelation to accomplish its purpose in our lives. We must hear (give ear or pay attention to) these words and let their message find a place in our hearts. (This means we will let them influence the way we live and the way we respond to the circumstances of life.)

THE TIME

This refers to a specific "period of time," often characterized by certain features. This is in contrast to:

- 1) a very short, specific period of time, such as in the phrase, "the hour is at hand" (a different word), and
- 2) time in general (which focuses on the duration, length or progression of time). [Each of these is represented by a different word, in the New Testament Greek.]

NEAR

Focuses on the need to be in a state of preparedness. This "period of time" is ready to come at any moment.