There is a common worldly kind of Christianity in this day, which many have, and think they have enough. This cheap Christianity offends nobody, requires no sacrifice, costs nothing, and is worth nothing!"
J.C. Ryle

REVELATION CHAPTER ONE
Handout Two
Prayer Study #401
First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia USA

Amplified Version
Introduction

1. ***[This is] the revelation of Jesus Christ [His unveiling of the divine mysteries]. God gave it to Him to disclose and make known to His bond servants certain things which must shortly and speedily come to pass in their entirety. And He sent and communicated it through His angel (messenger) to His bond servant John,***
2. ***Who has testified to and vouched for all that he saw [in his visions], the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.***
3. ***Blessed (happy, to be envied) is the man who reads aloud [in the assemblies] the word of this prophecy; and blessed (happy, to be envied) are those who hear [it read] and who keep themselves true to the things which are written in it [heeding them and laying them to heart], for the time [for them to be fulfilled] is near.***

J. Vernon McGee says of the person of Jesus in Revelation: [In this book] "*we see Christ in His glory and position as the Great High Priest who is in charge of His church. We see Him in absolute control. In the Gospels we find Him meek, lowly, humble, and dying upon a cross. He made Himself subject to His enemies on earth. He is not like that in the Book of Revelation. He is in control. He is still the Lamb of God, but we see the wrath of the Lamb that terrifies the earth."*

This book, as we noted last week, is the revelation of Jesus Christ, not of John the Apostle. Was it a revelation given to Jesus by God the Father or was it a revelation about Jesus Christ? The Amplified seems to lean towards the former, and J. Vernon McGee states emphatically that this is the revelation of Jesus which God gave Him. I prefer to think of this as a revelation about Jesus Christ that God gave for indeed that is what the book of Revelation is center on, i.e. a revelation of Jesus as the Great High Priest, the sacrificial Lamb, and the Mighty Warrior coming on a white stallion. Perhaps it is some of both. At any rate the whole of revelation is the unveiling of Jesus Christ. More than any other book in the Bible, He is the great, central theme. In this book He is presented as the Son of Man in

the midst of the seven churches, giving them encouragement and correction. But He is more than just that. He is Prophet, Priest, and King; the Judge of all humanity; the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is One whose manifested glory will soon redeem the world at His Second Coming.

Isaiah (11:9) and Habakkuk (2:14) tell us of a time when the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. I believe that this will exist only with the Second Coming as described in Revelation. Isaiah in Isaiah 11 and 12 gives the characteristics of this world redeemed by Jesus at His Second Coming and His Rule and Reign on the earth. I will share just a few with you:

a. All the animals will no longer eat each other or harm humans.
b. Children will no longer be afraid of wild animals and will lead them.
c. There will be no accidents or death.
d. Jesus will be the standard around which all nations will gather.
e. All men will look to Jesus for safety and deliverance.
f. There will be universal peace.
g. There will be no fear.
h. The righteous will be full of joy.
i. Jesus' Name will be exalted over all the earth.

So, the revelation is of Jesus, and it is for His bond-servants. We have talked at length in recent days about bond-servants. I believe that the Lord is given us this revelation and emphasis on this important topic because He is calling His remnant to a new position, i.e. that of being a bond slave to Christ. No doubt there will be saints of God who will be called to serve fathers and mentors of the faith, giving up their own ambitions and plans to serve, but we are to be a bond-slave to no one except Christ.

Besides the bond-slaves of Revelation-(and I hope we all become part of that company!)-several others in scripture, such as Peter, Timothy, Paul, James, John and others refer to themselves as bond-slaves for Christ. (Men of the Old Testament also considered themselves as servants of God, such as Abraham, Jacob, Caleb, Joshua, David, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and Job.) The term used is the Greek *doulos.* This is the lowest, most servile term in the whole New Testament. A bond-slave is one who had served 7 years as a slave. He was then to be set free, but certain individuals loved their masters so much that they requested to stay on as a slave. The master then took a punch and pierced their ear at the doorframe of the house. The pierced ear was a sign to all that this slave had surrendered all his rights and had devoted the rest of his life to the master to the total disregard of his own interests. These bond-slaves had no rights and were bound to the Master unto death.

We saw in our study of The Last Days that God's time is not our time, i.e. a day may equal a year (Ezekiel 4:6) or a day may equal a thousand years (2nd Peter 3:8). I do think, however, that the better word for *shortly* in verse 1 is, as the Greek word often is translated in other scriptures, *swiftly*. Thus, what John is saying is not that all the events of Revelation were about to happen in the 1st Century, but rather this: Once Last Days' judgments begin on the earth, the culmination of Last Days' events, ending with the Second Coming, will take place quickly.

This Revelation of Jesus was sent by Jesus through an angel messenger to John. This angel messenger is not named. The only two angels named specifically in scripture are Michael (Jude 9), who is the only archangel, and Gabriel, God's messenger angel, who is mentioned four times in scripture (Daniel 8:16; Daniel 9:21; Luke 1:9; Luke 1:26). (This is not to say that they are the only angels in scripture.) For such an important assignment, perhaps Gabriel was sent to John in this first chapter, but we have no way of proving or even knowing that. At any rate we do know that the Lord sends angels to earth to bring messages and to minister to the saints.

It is very unusual for the Apostle John to mention himself in his writings. We learned from the study of the book of John the incredible fact that John never uses his name in the Gospel of John. His refer to himself is always the disciple that Jesus loves or another disciple. In fact, because *his servant John* is found in the 1st verse and his name appears in other places in this book, many don't believe the Apostle John wrote this book. I find their position based on weak scholarship and feel certain that the Apostle John was the writer. There is an amazing amount of historical records pointing to Apostle John as the author of Revelation.

John assures us that he was not just told about these things that happen in the book of Revelation, but he was an eye witness to the visions. He watched all of these things much like we would watch a movie in a theater except for the fact that he was a participant while we would just sit and watch. There is nothing that can refute personal testimony. We can call the speaker or writer a liar and disbelieve what he says, but he knows that he knows what he has seen, and to him it is truth even if others don't receive it.

As we have previously noted, Revelation is the only book in the Bible that starts and ends with a promise of a blessing to the reader or hearer. This is the first of seven beatitudes in Revelation. Notice that the blessing comes from three things: reading, hearing, and keeping the words of this prophetic book.

For the time is at hand does not mean that the events of Revelation would come forth in John's day. It does, however, indicate that the time is at hand for the *beginning* of Jesus' ministry to the Church from His heavenly place, i.e. seated at the right hand of God the Father.

Message to the Seven Churches

4. ***John to the seven assemblies (churches) that are in Asia: May grace (God's unmerited favor) be granted to you and spiritual peace (the peace of Christ's kingdom) from Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come, and from the seven Spirits [the sevenfold Holy Spirit] before His throne,***
5. ***And from Jesus Christ the faithful and trustworthy Witness, the Firstborn of the dead [first to be brought back to life] and the Prince (Ruler) of the kings of the earth. To Him Who ever loves us and has once [for all] loosed and freed us from our sins by His own blood,***
6. ***And formed us into a kingdom (a royal race), priests to His God and Father-to Him be the glory and the power and the majesty and the dominion throughout the ages and forever and ever. Amen (so be it).***
7. ***Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall gaze upon Him and beat their breasts and mourn and lament over Him. Even so [must it be]. Amen [so be it].***
8. ***I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning, and the end, says the Lord God, He Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty (the Ruler of all).***

John's letter is to the seven churches in Asia. There were more churches in Asia which are mentioned in Scripture. The church at Corinth, Colosse, Hierapolis, Troas, Miletus, Magnesia and Tralles are some of the other churches. Perhaps the seven churches-Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea-were the centers of the different church districts or maybe they were specific churches where John was the overseer. At any rate it is thought that this letter was circulated among all of the churches and was intended for all churches down through the generations.

Perhaps no other scripture in the Bible lays out so well what Jesus did for us as John's writings of Revelation 1:4-8. We see Jesus as the grantor of God's grace and peace, the Faithful One and Firstborn from the dead and Prince over all the kings of the earth who has given to us His perpetual love and freedom from sins and bondage, and who is coming back for us. He is the Witness from heaven itself and God's throne. As the Firstborn, He inherited His father's power and honor and thus deserves the first place of honor.

In verse 4 John tells us that Jesus is and was and is to come. This is one of many affirmations in scripture to the divinity and eternal existence of Jesus, God the Son. The thing that separates genuine Christianity from cults such as Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons is this central point: Genuine Christianity recognize that

Jesus is God! The Mormons believe that Jesus was a resurrected, glorified man who was not begotten by the Holy Spirit but was the product of Adam who came and had sexual relations with Mary. The Jehovah Witnesses believe that Jesus was in reality the archangel Michael, a created being. They believe Jesus is not God, nor is He equal with God. Another way of saying that Jesus *is and was and is to come* is found in Hebrews: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). Dr. Ironside tells us that "Jehovah" is a compound formed from three words. The first word means *He is;* the second word means *He was;* and the third word means *He will be* or *He will come.*

The Holy Spirit is *one* person. The seven Spirits, who are before His throne are the seven aspects or virtues or characteristics of the One Holy Spirit. They are listed in Isaiah 11:1-2:

1. The Spirit of the Lord
2. The Spirit of Wisdom
3. The Spirit of Understanding
4. The Spirit of Counsel
5. The Spirit of Might
6. The Spirit of Knowledge
7. The Spirit of Fear of the Lord

Verse 6 of this passage reminds me of the words of John's best friend, apart from Jesus, Simon Peter in his 1st epistle, 1st Peter 2:9-10: *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; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.* John Wesley believe in the priesthood of all believers. All of us have a ministry and a calling, and even now, we are part of the Kingdom of God, although we are not walking in the fullness and really won't until Jesus comes. Still, we are priests to God and should be walking in the power that He has given us through the Holy Spirit.

Verse 7 contains the theme of the whole book of Revelation: *He is coming!* I believe His coming is nearer than most believe, but we must not be like the foolish virgins of Matthew 25. They were foolish because they did not take enough oil for their lamps. Lamps stand for our witness and oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Thus, their witness faltered because they were not walking in the Spirit. They did not carry enough oil because they thought the Bridegroom was coming sooner than He did.

John had a phenomenal understanding and memory of the Old Testament. Verse 7 contains one of many (we learned last week that there are over 800) allusions or references to the Old Testament. Zechariah 12:10b: …*then they will*

look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

In Verse 8 John directly quotes the first words of Jesus that appear in Revelation. *Alpha* is the first letter of the Greek Alphabet. *Omega* is the last letter. This whole verse speaks of Jesus as Eternal God. The word for *Almighty*, according to William Barclay is *pantokrator.* This word is one that John uses several times in Revelation. It means *one who has dominion over all things.*

Revelation of Christ: The Patmos Vision

9. I, John, your brother and companion (sharer and participator) with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patient endurance [which are] in Jesus Christ, was on the isle called Patmos, [banished] on account of [my witnessing to] the Word of God and the testimony (the proof, the evidence) for Jesus Christ.
10. I was in the Spirit [rapt in His power] on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a great voice like the calling of a war trumpet,
11. Saying, **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. Write promptly what you see (your vision) in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia-to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.**
12. Then I turned to see [whose was] the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,
13. And in the midst of the lampstands [One] like a Son of Man, clothed with a robe which reached to His feet and with a girdle of gold about His breast.
14. His head and His hair were white like white wool, [as white] as snow, and His eyes [flashed] like a flame of fire.
15. His feet glowed like burnished (bright) bronze as it is refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.
16. In His right hand He held seven stars, and from His mouth there came forth a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining in full power at midday.
17. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if dead. But he laid His right hand on me and said, **Do not be afraid! I am the First and the Last.**
18. **And the Ever-living One [I am living in the eternity of the eternities]. I died, but see, I am alive forevermore; and I possess the keys of death and Hades (the realm of the dead).**
19. **Write therefore the things you see, what they are [and signify] and what is to take place hereafter.**

20. As to the hidden meaning (the mystery) of the seven stars which you saw on My right hand and the seven lampstands of gold: the seven stars are the seven angels (messengers) of the seven assemblies (churches) and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

John was the youngest of the disciples. His godly parents were probably cousins of Jesus, and John was their youngest son. As we shared earlier, the Apostle John was a very humble man, never even putting his name in the Gospel account that he wrote. He was *the disciple whom Jesus loved,* and only the Apostle Paul, and perhaps Solomon, have written as beautifully on love as this man.

Yet John was not always a man of love. Mark tells us of John's intolerance when John forbade someone who he said *did not follow us* from casting out demons in Jesus' Name (Mark 9:38). Luke writes of his vindictiveness in Luke 9:54. John wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samarians who rejected Christ. Mark also writes of John's prideful ambition in Mark 10:35-37 when James and John asked Jesus to let them sit at his right and left hand in His Glory.

But John was changed, I believe, by three things: First, by following Jesus devotedly, loyally, and without compromise and observing His ministry and heeding His words during Jesus' three years of ministry. John, unlike Peter, did not follow Jesus from afar off (Luke 22:54) and is the only disciple who is mentioned as being at the cross. Secondly, John was in the Upper Room and received the *dunamis* power of the Holy Spirit, along around 120 others (Acts 1:15). And finally, John learned by the things he suffered for the Lord. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 119: *It is good that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.*

Here again John shows his genuine and deep humility, calling himself a brother and companion in tribulation rather than head overseer of the then Christian Church and the last of the original Disciples. He could have bragged about many things that he had done with Jesus and had accomplished with his life.

According to Rick Renner, "The Early Church called patience the 'queen of virtues' for good reason. They knew that as long as they had this character quality working in their lives, it wasn't a question of *if* they would win their battles-it was only a question of *when* they would win their battles." Renner tells us that this *patient endurance* comes from the word *hupomeno.* In verse 1:9 Renner says that John is writing about the patience of Jesus. Jesus denmonstrated this patient endurance during His trial, scourging, and crucifixion. *Hupomeno* is "that attitude that hangs in there, never giving up, refusing to surrender to obstacles, and turning down every opportunity to quit."

We have already taken a good bit of time talking about Patmos in Lesson One of this study. I will only ask you to think about the words of Dr. Ironside:

"…we see that the Devil really overreached himself when Domitian banished John to the isle of Patmos; if John had remained ministering the Word to the saints and preaching to the unsaved, he might not have been able to write the book of Revelation, and we might not have the visions that this book gives us. But there on that lonely isle, with him shut off from all his service, the veil was rolled back, enabling him to give us this wonderful record of the unveiling of Jesus Christ." This is another example where scripture proves Romans 8:28: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* We must learn to trust Jesus and His divine purposes no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

Jerome, one of the early church fathers, says that John was banished in the fourteenth year after Nero and was liberated on the death of Domitian. This would mean that he was on Patmos from about AD 94 to AD 96. The crescent-shaped island is ten miles long and five miles wide.

The Lord's Day can be interpreted two different ways. First, the early Church in recognition of the Resurrection of Jesus began to meet on Sundays, the first day of the week, rather than on Saturday, the Sabbath. I will also point out that the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out took place on Sunday. Paul addresses this issue somewhat in Colossians 2:16-17: *So let no one judge you in food or in drink or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.* We have looked at scriptures, which show the early Church meeting on Sundays. (There has been a push-back from Messianic believers and Gentiles who have joined their ranks, and I have no issue with having church on Saturday or any other day of the week.) Biblical scholars overwhelming believe that the Lord's Day refers to Sunday and that John had this vision on Sunday.

A different interpretation is one that some lean towards because of the content of the vision that John had, i.e. events that will happen in the Day of the Lord. Thus, John is saying that he was in the Spirit and caught up in a prophetic vision of the future coming *Day of the Lord* and was seeing a time yet to be. *The Prophet's Dictionary* defines this day: "A generally apocalyptic term that speaks to the times in human history and cosmogony when Creator God interjects His wrath, His will, or a scheduled event that is ordained to interact with or overrun the normal course of earthly affairs….In visions and dreams it is seen as violent cosmic wars, catastrophic weather, or earthly calamities such as plagues, famine, pestilence, or drought. (Isaiah 2:12, 13:6 & 9; Amos 5:18-20; 1st Thessalonians 5:2; 2nd Peter 3:10; 1st Corinthians 5:5; 2nd Peter 3:8; Jeremiah 46:10)" (Also **see Isaiah 13:6-9 & Rev. 6:15-17**) Perhaps the *Lord's Day* is meant to convey both interpretations, i.e. that the vision was on Sunday and the vision was about the Day of the Lord.

Frequently in Scripture the voice of the Lord is compared to a trumpet. Also, a trumpet is sounded before some powerful Biblical event takes place (Matthew 24:31; 1st Corinthians 15:52; Exodus 19:16) and can be a call to war. In addition, a trumpet in Scripture often symbolizes prophetic utterance. When the Lord returns, 1st Thessalonians 4:16 tells us: *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.*

Most likely John recognized the voice of the Lord. He turned to *see* the voice. Jesus was very different in appearance from the time John saw Him on earth, and yet John recognized that voice that had spoken to him so many times. Here Jesus is dressed in the garments of the High Priest (Exodus 28:2-4). His appearance as a man with white hair recalls Daniel's description in Daniel 7:9-13 where Daniel describes the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New. His eyes flash like a flame of fire (*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*-Hebrews 4:13).

Jesus is in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. Each golden lampstand stands for the seven churches which are the lights for Jesus in this world while Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father and until He comes again.

He has feet of bronze. In scripture bronze is a symbol of judgment. Bronze can stand the fire, and the world will know the fire of His judgment as He puts His feet on everything that is contrary to righteousness and truth. His voice is one of power, like the roaring of the oceans (***The hour is come and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live***-John 5:25). He is in the midst of His Church, and the seven stars are His messengers or pastors or their ministry to the saints (*They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever*-Daniel 12:3). His mouth has a two-edged sword which represents the Word of God, both the Old and the New Testaments (*For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*-Hebrews 4:12).

When John saw Jesus, he fell at His feet as one who was dead. This is a case when someone was genuinely "slain in the Spirit" by the awesomeness of the Glory and Holiness of God. Jesus lays on John the right hand of blessing and says, **"Be not afraid!"**

What follows is a beautiful affirmation of who Jesus is as the Ever-living One who has the keys to death and Hell and a command to John to write what he sees. This writing will have three divisions: *The things which you see* make up chapter 1 of Revelation; *the things which are* include chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, and they are the history and condition of the church in seven distinct

periods. Finally, he is to write of *what is to take place hereafter* which tell of the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, the Kingdom, and the eternal state.

Finally, Jesus explains the symbolism of the seven stars and seven lampstands as being the seven messengers or leaders of the seven churches.

Revelation is one of the most symbolic books of the Bible. To help you in your understanding of the book I am including some of Kevin Conner's interpretation of the symbols:

Revelation	
1:10, 4:11	**TRUMPET**-prophetic utterance (Isaiah 58:1, Numbers 10:1-10)
1:11	**BOOK**-written inspired records (2nd Kings 22:8-13; Neh 8:1-17)
1:12-13	**GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS**-seven local churches (Rev 1:20)
1:13	**GARMENT TO FOOT**-priestly clothing (Ex 28:2)
1:13, 15:6	**GOLDEN GIRDLES**-priestly service (Ex 28:40, 41)
1:14	**HAIR WHITE AS WOOL**-wisdom, Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9)
1:14	**EYES AS FLAME OF FIRE**-searching, penetrating insight (Dan 10:6)
1:15	**FEET AS FINE BRASS**-judgment against sin (Deut 28:23)
1:15	**VOICE-MANY WATERS**-majestic, awe-inspiring (Ezek 43:2)
1:16	**THE SEVEN STARS**-seven church ministers (Rev 1:20)
1:16; 19:15	**TWO-EDGED SWORD**-word of God by the Spirit (Eph 6:17)
1:16	**GLORY OF THE SUN**-glory of God the Father (Matt 13:43)
1:18	**KEYS OF HELL AND DEATH**-authority over spirit realm (Matt 16:19)

TELL THE MOUNTAIN
Collingsworth Family

Verse 1
In the foothills of sorrow
Looking up from the valley of fear
You can see doubt off in the distance
And you're about to lose heart right here
But don't ever give in don't ever give up
God is with you and you'll overcome

Chorus
The mountain will tell you
That you can't make it over
It will try to convince that it's way too high
Though you feel defeated
Know that God keeps his promise
So, you tell the mountain
Just how big your God is

Verse 2
Just try to remember
All the trials he's brought you through
And when his power gave you strength for the journey
The very hour you needed it to
So, don't be discouraged
Cause time after time
Cause God's never failed you
Go on and climb

Chorus
The mountain will tell you
That you can't make it over
It will try to convince that it's way too high
Don't you feel defeated
Know that God keeps his promise
So, you tell the mountain
Just how big your God is

Ending
Though you feel defeated
Know that God keeps his promise
So, you tell the mountain
Just how big your God is