

Revelation 1

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[0 : 00] It is a book that many of us have read and many of us have left it as equally confused before we started it as when we finished it. It is a book that is full of imagery, not only of certain things, but of all things.

It is a book that is filled with things that are spoken of all throughout the Old Testament, even referenced in the New Testament. And it is a book that was born out of a difficult season of the early church, written as one of the last books of the Bible by the Apostle John while in exile near the end of his life, written at the close of the century, somewhere around 90 to 95 A.D., a number of years after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, 60 years after that.

It is a book of great significance and importance, not only just for the world, but specifically for the church. So if you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God, I will read the entire first chapter of the book of Revelations.

Revelation 1, starting in verse 1, says, The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his bondservants the things which must soon take place. And he sent and communicated it by his angel to his bondservant John, who testified to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and heed the things which are written in it, for the time is near. John, to the seven churches that are in Asia, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come.

[1 : 38] And from the seven spirits who are before his throne. And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood.

And he has made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and Father. To him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him. Even those who pierce him and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. So it is to be. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance, which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet saying, Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

[2 : 43] Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me and having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the middle of the lampstands, I saw one like a son of man clothed in a robe reaching to the feet and girded across his chest with a golden sash.

His head and his hair were white like white wool, like snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze when it has been made to glow in a furnace. And his voice was like the sound of many waters.

In his right hand, he held seven stars and out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword. And his face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. And he placed his right hand on me saying, Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last and the living one. And I was dead and behold, I am alive forever. And I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Therefore, write the things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which will take place after these things. As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

[3 : 56] Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word. Lord, we pray for your wisdom and understanding. Pray that by the power and presence of your spirit that you would open up your word to us. But we thank you for giving us this divine privilege and opportunity to stand and to read it and to hear it be read.

We pray, oh God, now that we would see it as it truly is for your glory. And it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. With every book of the Bible, there is a key verse.

With every book, there is a verse that kind of captures a verse or two that kind of captures the reasoning for the book. It was Warren Weirsby who said that as far as he knew, the book of Revelation was the only book which contained its own outline.

And that outline is contained in verse 19. The outline is in three portions and it is exactly how we find the book. It says, therefore, write the things which you have seen.

The very first part of Revelation, which would be Revelation 1, speaks of the things which John had seen in the past. And the things which are. That would be Revelation 2, 3, and 4.

[5 : 03] Those are the portions of Scripture that I am familiar with and comfortable with. Revelation 2 and 3 is a letter to the seven churches. And I think that the letters to the seven churches really speak of the complete church and what the church needs to be to be full.

The number seven is repeated all throughout the book of Revelation. And seven always stands for fullness or completion or perfection in Scripture. So the first point is the things which you have seen. The second is the things which are. That is the church. And the third and final thing, the thing that often leaves us scratching our head and leaves us in confusion, is the things which will take place after these things.

It is the prophetic word speaking of future events. So that is the outline of the book of Revelation. The things which John had seen. The things which currently are. And the things which will be. But I want us to see this morning as we look at Revelation 1. The outcome of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Because we capture in this chapter not only an introduction to the book, but we see what is going to come about because of this book.

[6 : 08] We have promises connected to the book of Revelation that we do not have anywhere else. We have specific outcomes that are guaranteed to us that we do not have in any other portion of Scripture. It is very unique in its writing.

It is almost Old Testament at times in its setting. Because it speaks of the judgments and the condemnations and all these things that we would expect to find in the Old Testament.

But we are kind of confused to find it in the New Testament. But yet it is a book of very profound and important outcomes. And I want you to kind of catch an excitement, if you will, without losing the anticipation of wonderment, of not knowing all things, of seeing the outcome of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Number one, we see here that revelation gives us a word to be heeded. It is a word to be heeded. It is written by John.

You know, I told you, John, during the time of Diocletian's reign of the Roman Empire, I know I'll give you a lot of information at the beginning of every book and the beginning of every series, but we want to take it in context.

[7 : 15] Diocletian's reign of the Roman Empire was one of severe difficulty for Christians. Because it was during Diocletian's reign that the Christians really began to be persecuted and to be killed for their faith.

And he is writing to churches that are living under the reign of Diocletian. As a matter of fact, John would have served as a pastor in that region of Asia where those seven churches are located, the churches in Asia, which is modern-day Turkey.

In that region, John would have served as a pastor and was excommunicated, he says here, for his preaching of the word of Jesus Christ to the island of Patmos.

Patmos was not an island of ease and comfort. Rather, it was an island of quarries and stones and mines. And those that were excommunicated to it were sent there to work in the mines.

Now, John would have been young during the reign of Christ, or during the life of Christ. He was the youngest of the apostles. He probably would have been in his early to mid-teens while he was with Christ at the Last Supper and running with Christ.

[8 : 16] This is why it is unique when we find in the Gospel of John that John says that there were two apostles that ran to the empty tomb. And the one that went first beat Peter there. And the

reason he beat Peter is because he was young.

And Peter was an experienced, that is, old fisherman trying to keep up with this young teenager, John. But by the time John wrote this, he was no longer the young one. He was actually pretty advanced in age.

But John got to Patmos in a very unique way. History tells us, because of the word that Christ gave John at the end of the Gospel of John. Remember, Jesus says, if I will that he would live forever, what is that to you?

Or until I come again, what is that to you? John says, some have taken this to mean that that apostle, which he was writing of himself, would never die. But that's not what Jesus meant. Jesus just said, if I will, what is that to you?

It's pretty much Jesus saying, Peter, what does it matter to you what I do with everybody else? You just care about what I do with you. And that's a good word for all of us to heed, right? But because those saw that and said, oh, well, John will never die, the Roman leaders decided that they would put that to the test.

[9 : 21] So John was preaching the Gospel. Now, this is church history. And we have it recorded from the early church fathers in the early 100s. That while John was preaching, he had judgment passed on him for his preaching of the Gospel.

So they decided that they would test this fact to see if John would ever die. They took him to the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem and threw him off. He bounced on the ground and got up and walked around.

It didn't do a thing to him. So that upset them a little bit. So they decided, well, I know what we'll do. We'll take a cauldron of oil and we'll put it on fire and we'll get it bubbling. And we'll have burning and this boiling pot of oil and we'll throw him in it.

And they got a pot of oil and they got it boiling and they put John in it and he sat in it like a hot tub. And nothing happened to him. And they got so upset that they couldn't do anything to physically harm John, they sent him to the island of Patmos.

And while on exile in the island of Patmos so that he would be quiet, the Lord showed up and gave him the revelation that he would write and send to the churches. And it's not that John was eventually let off the island of Patmos and went back to Ephesus, which is where he had passed before, and he died.

[10 : 33] He died of old age and probably a little bit of a rough life. He ended up dying. Nobody really knows how. He just died. But God wasn't through with him yet while he was on the island of Patmos because he had one more word he wanted him to write.

And that word is the book of Revelation. We read here of a word to be heeded. It says the revelation of Jesus Christ. Hold on to that. We'll come back to it in a minute. Which God gave him to show to his bondservants.

Here we're introduced who this word is to. It is to his bondservants. That is, to those who have found redemption in the blood of Jesus Christ. All throughout Scripture, especially in the New Testament, those who have been saved and redeemed are referred to as the bondservants of Jesus Christ.

The things which must soon take place. And he sent and communicated it by his angel to his bondservant, John. Now, we have this temptation that when we read this, and we need to understand this from the very beginning, that John wrote in probably about A.D. 90 that these things would soon take place.

Now, the temptation is, well, we're now in 2020 and it hasn't happened yet. John must have been wrong. That's not true. The reason John is not wrong is because the word does not mean these things will happen quickly.

[11 : 45] What that word implies is something totally different. The word soon there means when these events start happening, they will happen in rapid succession.

That when it is started, when God's clock starts, there is no pause button. It is going to happen just like he said it's happened. Friend, listen.

We are still in the church age. Many of these things, well, all of these things found after Revelation chapter 4, we have not yet seen. And the reason we have not yet seen them is because the time has not yet started.

We will get to that. But John tells us that when it starts, it's going to happen quick. This is why I believe that when we read the book of Revelation and it speaks of seven years, I believe in a literal seven-year period.

And once the church is raptured, seven years to the millennial reign of Christ, and a thousand-year reign of Christ, those things will just happen in rapid succession because it will happen without stop. [12:44] And once it starts, it will happen. So we see that these things must soon take place. Revelation is a word to be heeded.

It is the only book in all of Scripture. Friend, listen to me. It is the only book in all 66 books of the Bible that tells you if you read it out loud, that's what it means, blessed are he who reads, that's to be read out loud, that if you read it out loud or if you listen to it and do it, you will be blessed. Do you know the book of Revelation is the only book in Scripture that said if you read it in a corporate setting and you listen to it in a corporate setting and you do what it says, you're going to be blessed.

This is not name-it-and-claim-it theology. This is Jesus telling John the truth. This is a word to be heeded. And I was rebuked. Your pastor was rebuked by the Spirit this past week because I said, I've never publicly read the book of Revelation.

But I've always asked God to bless the church I was pastoring. But if I haven't done what he told me to do for the church to be blessed, why should I expect the blessings to fall?

[14:09] He says if you read it, my ambition, I do not know that I can do 22 chapters in 52 weeks because it's going to take us seven weeks to do two chapters once we get to Revelation 2 and 3.

I would love for 2020 to be the year we read publicly the book of Revelation. That's my ambition. Whether or not we get through it in a year, I don't know.

But that is my big ambition. Why? Because I want it to be a year of God's blessings falling on us. And it tells us here, this is why this book is so important.

Is it scary? Absolutely. Is it confusing? You better believe it. Are there going to be things that when I get through preaching and I'm shaking your hand at the back door, and you say, Pastor, what about? And you look at me and I'm going to go, I don't know.

You better be sure that's going to happen because I'm not just going to make something up if I don't know. There's all these things of the beast and the two-headed monsters and all these crazy things that are in there.

[15:03] But friend, listen to me. It is a word to be heeded because the Bible tells us that if we read it or if we listen to it and we heed it, then he will bless us. It also says in Revelation 22 that if you take away from it or add to it, you're going to be cursed.

It says that if you add to the book of Revelation, that's why I'm going to tell you, if I don't know, I'm going to say I don't know because I do not want to add my opinion to it. It says in Revelation 22, starting in verse 16, I believe it, it says that if I add to the book of Revelation, he will add to the curses of my life and your life.

It says in Revelation 22, 16 that if I take away, just because it makes me scratch my head, if I take away, then he will take away my rights to the tree of the fruit of life.

Friend, listen to me. All the word of God is a word to be heeded, but the book of Revelation has specifically told us that it needs to be heeded. It is very, very important.

We need to know what it says. We need to ask the Lord to show us and to open our eyes and our hearts and our minds. It is a word to be heeded. We see this over and over again. It says in verse 11, saying, this is Jesus sending his angels, saying to John, this is Jesus saying to John on the island, it says in verse 11, write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches.

[16:26] We're not going to take time to go to the seven churches. We'll get to that. But it says, send it to the seven churches. If you know your Bibles, you know that you can go to the book of Daniel and you can read of someone else who saw things to come.

And you can read in the book of Daniel when Daniel received in the night a vision of things to come, things that were not yet, but things to come. I really believe that Daniel saw the very same thing that John sees here.

And it says that Daniel saw these things and they upset him so much they made him physically sick. And he was so confused about them. And the angel came and gave him understanding. And Daniel was getting ready to write down the things which he saw, things to come.

And the Spirit told Daniel to seal up the vision that it was not time for it to be shared. Daniel received a vision to be sealed for no one else to know. We do not know what Daniel saw because God said, don't write it, Daniel.

It's not for you to write it. I'll let you see it, but you're not going to write it. Daniel received a vision to be sealed while John received a vision to be sent. Friends, friend, if God said it's time for that to be sent, then my friend, it is time that the church begins to heed the word of God.

[17 : 40] Because we find in here great comfort. We also find in here great rebuke. We find great confusion. We also find here, listen, it is not easy to sit on the fence in the book of Revelation. It's not easy to be a halfway believer in the book of Revelation.

You're either all the way with the king or you're all the way not. It is a book that will scare the pants off of you. It is a book. I'm not wanting it to be as a scare tactic.

I'm not in a scare tactic. That's not my game. I'm not a hellfire and brimstone who want to scare you into heaven. Because there's a Savior who loves you and cares for you enough to die for you in your place.

But the reality is these things will come about and Jesus spoke of them. And he spoke of them to John. It is a word to be heeded. Number two, not only does the book of Revelation contain a word to be heeded, it contains a king to be exalted.

A king to be exalted. Unfortunately, most of the individuals in the church have the same view of Jesus Christ as the world.

[18 : 40] This is why we see many of the problems that the world suffers, the people inside the church suffer from it as well. We see that certain things that the world deals with, certain what we would call weaknesses or fears or temptations or all these struggles that are present outside the world are equally as present inside the world.

And I really believe that it's because the church, while they may love being together and they may love seeing someone work themselves up into a sweat, they may love seeing songs being sung or may even love standing up because all people were created for fellowship, believers and non-believers alike.

And while the church loves the fellowship, too many times the church has the same view of Jesus as the rest of the world. We have no problem, and neither does the world, with Jesus as a baby laying in a manger because everybody likes Christmas.

Who doesn't love a baby? Babies are precious, babies are sweet, and they're containable. I know they cry, and I know they fuss, but you give them what they need, and they're usually content, right? And besides, it's a lot easier to tote a two-month-old around than it is a 16-year-old around.

And they're about the same mind frame sometimes. I mean, let's just be honest. It's a lot easier dealing with something in a small package and carrying it where you want it to go as opposed to dealing with one in a large body who's not sure where he wants to do or what she wants to do.

[20 : 02] Everybody loves a baby. And the world has no problem with Jesus in the cradle. The world has no problem with the Savior who hung on the cross because everybody loves a good story.

Everybody loves someone sacrificing their life. We see it on the movie screen. He has no problem with a great moral teacher who lived a great standard of life to be modeled if possible.

But unfortunately, this is usually where the view of Jesus Christ stops in the church. He came. He lived a perfect life. He died on the cross. He rose again. The world has no problem with that.

He loves us. God is love. I understand that. But when we meet Jesus in the book of Revelation, we meet Jesus as he is, not as he was.

We don't meet him coming in a humble form of a child through the womb of Mary to be born in the lowliest of places. Rather, we meet him as he is in his throne, sitting in his kingdom, reigning on high as he is presently today.

[21 : 03] As a matter of fact, we see John here. Now, keep in mind, this is John. This is not just somebody else. This is John. This is John who leaned upon his bosom at the Last Supper.

This was John, the only one that they thought was close enough to the Savior to ask him who it was that was going to betray him. This was John who said, who is it that's going to betray you? This is John who was on the Mount of Transfiguration.

He was part of the inner circle, Peter, James, and John. Remember that? How this was John who was with Christ from the very beginning of his ministry. This was John who was the first one to the

empty tomb. This is John who was the one who knew the political leaders enough to go into when they had Jesus on trial.

This was John who was so close, who gives a description of Jesus that was so magnificent. John said, I loved him so much. I lived with him so much. I've seen him in resurrected form.

But when he turned and saw him, he says, I fell down like a dead man. It terrified him. How many of you, when you see a dear friend, someone you've known so long, maybe you've known them over 60 years.

[22 : 07] How many of you, as soon as you see them, you turn around and fall down like a dead person because of who they are? This is what John did. Why? Because when he turned and saw his Savior, he didn't turn and see a humble servant washing people's feet.

Though he is that, that's a model for the jerk. He didn't turn and see a lowly person who had nowhere to lay his head. What did he turn and see? He said, then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me.

And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands. We'll get to that in just a minute. In the middle of the lampstand, I saw one like a son of man. And that bodily form, that should all of a sudden go back to the book of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Clothed in a robe reaching to his feet and girded across his chest with a golden sash. His head and his hair were white, like white wool, like snow.

And his eyes were like a flame of fire. And his feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace. And his voice was like the sound of many waters.

[23 : 12] And in his right hand, he held seven stars. He's holding stars in his hand. And out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword. And his face was like the sun, shining in its strength.

This is as Jesus is. Presently. If he was seen in that light in A.D. 90, how much more so does he still reign in that light today?

Notice that the book of Revelation is not a revelation of things to come. You say, sure it is. It's a book of prophecy. It tells us all about things to come. No, what does it say?

It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. If we read this book hoping to figure out what's going to come in the future, we will miss the point.

Because this book is given to us so that we can maybe get a glimpse of the king who sits on the throne, who happens to be our savior, who is Jesus Christ. It is a revelation that is a revealing, a pulling back of Jesus Christ.

[24 : 21] It is he alone that can open the seals. It is he alone that can bring down the condemnation. It is he alone who can speak the judgments. It is he alone that is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

It is he alone that all of the elders proclaim, holy, holy, holy, worthy is the lamb. It is he alone that all the hosts of heaven rejoice. It is he alone that can stand and scare to death someone who knew him personally for over 60 years.

In the book of Revelation, we find Jesus as he is, my friend. Listen, I love the fact that he is my savior. I love the fact that he walked on the face of the earth in the humblest of circumstances. I love the fact that he wore plain, ordinary clothing, that he lived among men, dwelt among men, that he healed the disease and he cured the afflicted and he raised up the dead.

I love all of those. But if he was just a good man who lived a great life, who lived a model life, and then he died and came back to life, okay, that's good. He still has no authority or no power. He is all of those things and then some.

He is the king to be exalted because if that happened so many years ago, if he is not really the king on the throne, he can't do anything for me or you today. But he is that king.

[25 : 26] And the book of Revelation shows us what he is. He is the king of kings. As a matter of fact, he says he is the king over all kings. He is the king of all. He says that he is the one who was and who is and who is to come.

He is the one who was dead but is alive and is alive forevermore. We see here that it is all about the king. Why are there so many different things in the book of Revelation?

Why are there so many plagues, so many bowls of judgment, so many horses, so many all these things? To show us that the king is in charge of it all. And it ends. The book of Revelation ends with what?

Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Come. Come. Because if this is who you are, I need you now.

So many people fail to yield their lives completely to Jesus Christ because they think that he was a good man who did a great deed. Our friend, listen to me. He is the king that wants control of your life. Unless we give him complete control and we fall down like dead men and women in his presence, then he will never touch us with his right hand and raise us up to use us for his glory.

[26 : 38] We see him as he is. And I'm thankful. He is almost inapproachable. He stands in all the glory and holiness and you say, Pastor, why does this matter?

Because if that's who he is and yet his word tells you he loves you, it's a whole lot better to be loved by the king overall than to be loved by anyone else.

And if he tells you if you trust me, I'll redeem you, I'll take him at his word. You know why? Because the book of Revelation shows me there's nothing that can overcome him. There's things in here that would kill me in an instance.

There's things in here. It says in the book of Revelation, I think it's Revelation chapter 6, men are begging to die. The things are so bad. They're crying out to the mountains.

Oh, mountains fall on us. This is horrible. And Jesus says, I'm not going to let you die yet. So if he tells me if I'll trust in him, he'll call me to his presence. If he can keep man from dying, surely he can keep man alive.

[27 : 41] He is the king of kings and lord of lords. And we see here not just a savior to be praised while he is, not just a servant to follow while he is. He is also a king to be exalted.

And I'm so thankful for the book of Revelation because it shows us as he is today. Third and finally, we see that the outcome of the book of Revelation is not just a word to be heeded.

It is not just about a king to be exalted. Listen to me, my friend. Number three is about a church being encouraged. It is a book for the church to be encouraged.

It says here that John received this revelation, and he received this revelation very specifically. It says in verse 9, I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation.

Now, that doesn't mean the seven-year tribulation period. We'll get to that later. That just means the struggle, the battle, the sufferings, the displeasure, the discomfort, all of the things that are coming about. He says your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance, which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

[28 : 50] What is he saying? He says, church, I'm writing to a church right now that many of you, he says some of them exist among the synagogue of Satan. Now, some of us may think we've been in the presence of Satan, but he says you're hanging out with the synagogue of Satan.

That's pretty blunt language for that. That's a pretty rough area to be living in, right? And he says, I know it's hard. I know it's difficult. I know it's a trying time. I know it's all those things because I'm taking part in it too.

You're dying for your faith. You're suffering. You're being imprisoned. You're being persecuted. It's a trying time, and I understand this. He said, but I've got a word for you. I've got a word for you.

It says, write in the book, verse 11, Jesus told him to write in the book what you see and send it to the seven churches. He didn't just say send it to believers. Remember, I've told you this before.

Every promise in the New Testament is directly connected to what?

A local church. And here we see that if you were not part of the seven churches that are listed here, you didn't get this encouragement. Now, these seven churches are represented throughout the region of Asia, which would have been kind of this circle, this counterclockwise circle throughout the regions of Asia where Ephesus is located as well.

[29 : 56] And we see this here, that the church would have spread out. It would have been kind of a hub for the spreading out of the word. But Jesus is saying, this is for the church. The church needs this. And the church needs to understand why.

Because the church is living in difficult days. And you know something that we find in Scripture. Jesus told us elsewhere in Scripture, do not expect times to get better, but times are going to get worse.

And if times were bad for the church in A.D. 90, times are really not that great for the church in A.D. 2020. Because if we tell ourselves things have gotten better, it's only because the church has gotten weaker.

And what do you mean, Pastor? Because Jesus said that times degrade as the years go by. As they were in the days of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah, but as they were in the days of Noah, so

they will be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.

We're not on an upward climb as far as manhood, you know, as kind of his population goes. So we're on a downward spiral. We are going down.

[31 : 13] And it's a difficult day to be the true church. It is. It's harder today to be the true church, to be the real church, to be the genuine church, to live out your faith each and every day than it was just 10 years ago, 15 years ago, 20 years ago.

It's hard. You have so many things pulling at you, so many things tempting you, so many things discouraging you, so many people coming against you. And you say, well, I don't feel any persecution.

Yeah, you do. You feel it right. You need to be quiet. You maybe don't need to speak up. You don't want somebody judging you. You don't want somebody looking at you this way. You've got so much pulling at your time and your attention. You would really like to serve more, but you can't because you have no more time.

You would love to get in your word more, but you can't because you just don't have time. And all of those things make it hard to be in the church. Each and every one of them. You know, I've mentioned the persecution that's going on worldwide around the church.

We see these things, and they're real. But Jesus is writing here to the church. He said, God, send it to the church that's living in a difficult day. Why?

[32 : 11] It says here in verse 20, As for the mystery of the seven stars, now I don't think that I'm going to go for myself here at all. I'm not trying to. But we see here he's writing to the church. He's got seven churches.

And John says, I saw this man, this is Jesus, standing in the center of seven golden lampstands and holding in his hand seven stars. Right? He says, As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.

Now there are two ways of interpreting this. Some people have interpreted that the angels are literally heavenly beings, that God has assigned an angel, a heavenly being to every church. But the most literal interpretation of this, and one that I adhere to, is the word angel there literally means messenger.

So he says, The seven messengers of the churches. He is speaking of the pastors of these churches. He is saying, I'm holding the pastors in my hand. The messenger of the seven churches. Tell the church at Ephesus, I have your pastor in my hand. Tell the church at Thyatira, I have your pastor in my hand. Tell the church at Sardis, I have your pastor in my hand. What is this showing? I am in control.

[33 : 19] Okay? I have him. Which means if I want to move him, I'll move him. If I want him to stay, he'll stay. Now this is not me calling, I told you your pastor was an angel. That's not what I'm saying.

Not at all. All we're trying to say here is, the comfort comes to the church, when we realize that the head of the church, is always in control. I've spoke recently to a brother in Christ, who serves at a church.

The church no longer, their pastor has recently resigned. I asked him how things were going, their first Sunday without him present. He goes, You know what? Some people walked in, and they were in confusion. He said, I looked at them, and told them, the good news is, when I walked into the church this morning, he who was head of the church, was still in charge.

I said, You're right. Because even though that man may be moved, the head of the church is still in charge. He holds the messenger of the church in his hand. That's comforting. It's comforting for a body.

But then he says here, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. What he's saying, I'm in the presence, in the midst of the churches. I am there. In the midst of your confusion, in the midst of your suffering, in the midst of your difficult days, in the midst of all the trials you face, I'm there, and I'm in control.

[34 : 29] Revelation 22, again, let's go back, so that you see this, and I'll read this one to you. Revelation 22, when this book ends, so that you can again see this, in verse 16, Revelation 22 says this, I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things, what does it say?

There's one word, there's one phrase there I have underlined, these things for the churches. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things for the churches.

I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright and morning star. The spirit and the bride say come. Let the one who hears say come. Let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wishes to take the water of life without cost.

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, yes, I am coming quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

[35 : 41] Amen. Jesus said, I gave this prophecy and I testified to these things. Why? For the churches. This book is to be an encouragement to the church.

That while days are difficult and trials are certain, and it really is hard to be faithful. In the end, he's in control. And before, here's where I get my best encouragement, but also my best motivation. The church is gone before most of this takes place. Before it gets real bad, he calls his bride home. He calls his people to himself. And then he reigns over this. That is encouragement to me. That before this world gets as bad as it's going to get, I'm going to have this exodus called the rapture. If anyone ever tells you the word rapture is not in the church, yes, it is. I've told you that before. First Thessalonians chapter five, it is there. And we see that. He calls us to himself. He's in charge.

[36 : 49] He's in control. He will not let us go through stuff that we cannot handle. So if he's left us here, guess what? He's here with us and he wants us here. That's encouragement. But also find my greatest motivation.

Because once the church is gone, you have to pardon my language on this, but all hell breaks loose. And woe be to those who remain.

And some of those who remain are people I know and you know. So the church is encouraged to remain faithful, but the church is encouraged to remain diligent and to begin truly proclaiming his word.

The outcomes of the book of Revelation, we see it as a word to be heeded. We see that it's a king to be exalted. And we see that it's a church to be encouraged.

And I'm so excited to see what it is he's going to do with us. Let's pray. Lord, thank you so much for this day. God, I thank you for your faith.

[37 : 51] Lord, I understand that as we gather here, there may be some who really never, God, Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[40 : 29] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[42 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you.