

Revelation 1:1-3 – Who is Jesus?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 May 2022

Preacher: Simon Lawrenson

[0 : 00] Good to see you. Thanks Joe and Matt for leading us so well this morning in worship. It's! It's good to bust out those old tunes, isn't it? It's like there's depth there, isn't there?

Great. So if you have a Bible, turn with me to Revelation. If you don't know where Revelation is, just go all the way to the end and then come forward half an inch and you'll be good.

If you don't have a Bible with you today and you need one, just stick up your hand where you are. We'll make sure we get you one. We are going to look at the first three verses. So, you know, we're not hitting a whole bunch of texts this morning, but, you know, we've been looking through Revelation as kind of some topical things we've been going through and we've been exploring nine ways in which the book of Revelation helps us. Mainly because we kind of felt like we had to say that because there's so many churches or ministries that you will hear about or go to see that don't touch the book of Revelation. Like, even in some denominations, it's banned from being read.

Right? So why would we read the book of Revelation?

Revelation. So today we're going to look at the final way this book helps us. But let me just give you the eight ways that we've seen already. So Revelation helps us by reminding us that God is sovereign, by showing us what proper worship is, exhorting us to live like the people of God, gaining perspective of who our real enemy is, rekindling our love for the nations. And I'm thankful to Hannah. Next week, we're going to do our praise and prayer, focusing on praying for the nations. And Hannah's going to be leading us on that. Believing again that wrong never wins. And I need to be reminded that every time I flick on the news, that wrong is not going to win in the end. It helps us to hope and it gives us strength to keep going.

So this morning, we're looking at the final way and then we're going to give you the final way and then we're just going to launch into the book. And then from here on, we're going to go verse by verse, chapter by chapter through the entire book. All right. And it's going to take a little over a year to do that. And so the final way this book helps us is by allowing us to see afresh the risen Lord Jesus. Like we want to, we want to get, um, we want to get God's perspective on Jesus, don't we? And so this book is going to help us to do that. And the theme comes right from verse one, chapter one. So John opens or we'll see in a minute. It's not John, but anyway, we, we open the verse, the revelation of Jesus Christ. So there's two ways to read that statement and both are right. So the, um, one way is to say that this verse is saying that Jesus is the subject being revealed, right? It's all about Jesus. But the other way is to see that it's Jesus doing the one revealing, right? So it's the revelation of Jesus and it's the revelation of Jesus. Okay. Um, and both are true. We, we could, we could say that is, this is Jesus's self-disclosure. All right. So, um, it is Jesus himself who is being revealed.

[3 : 45] Now that word revelation, would you notice has no S on the end. Do you notice that? Right? It's, it's, it's the revelation singular, not the revelations plural. Um, and, and it's the title that most English translators use to call this book. Uh, in other translations, you might read the apocalypse or apocalypsis, which is, um, which is the Greek, which means to, to, to remove a cover, to take away a cover. And, um, the word there, um, implies that, that, that something was once hidden and now isn't being hidden. One of the ways that word is used in the new Testament apocalypsis is news is, is used about the second coming of Jesus, uh, and, um, the events that relate to it. So for example, in first Corinthians chapter one, verse seven, Paul says this, he says, so that you are not lacking any gift as you wait for the revealing, the apocalypsis of the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Thessalonians chapter one, verse seven, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. So it's the uncovering it's, um, at one point there is a veiling and now there is an unveiling. And so this is about the unveiling of a person predominantly, also the effects that go along with the unveiling of that

person, but it's primarily about the unveiling of Jesus who has been personally hidden since his first coming. Right? So he, he came, you know, we, I was going to say he came at Christmas.

We, we celebrate it at Christmas, right? And we, we celebrate his incarnation, his first coming. And then, um, you know, Acts chapter two talks about Acts chapter one talks about how he ascended. And so he's personally been hidden since then revealed. His work has been revealed through his spirit, by his spirit, through his church, got that. But Jesus himself is being hidden. He said, I'm going away. And when I go away, I'm going to prepare a place for you. And then I'm going to come back. So right now, Jesus is, is hidden, um, doing a work, preparing a place for us. And, um, what we see then in this book is the coming again of Jesus.

And so what we see in chapter four and, and, and, and I, and I just love this book, this book of revelation. And I'm going to, I'm going to just encourage you to get into this book as much as you can over the next, um, year. But look, what we see in chapter four is God sitting on a throne with a scroll, right? Flick over the page of chapter nine. Then Jesus is described as the one worthy to take the scroll. So it's, it's, this is not just, oh, I'll have the introduction fast forward to chapter 19, where we see Jesus coming again. All of this is the unveiling of the who and the what and the how of Jesus coming again. And it starts really in chapter four. So we have God sitting on the throne with the scroll chapter five. We have Jesus described as the one worthy to take the scroll.

[7 : 14] He's described as a lion who has overcome. And so as John looks for a lion, what does he find? He finds a lamb who bore the wounds of slaughter. It's revelation. Jesus is revealed as both the lion and the lamb, the one who has redeemed mankind and reconciled us back to God. And what happens is that in that, in that realization, the whole of heaven erupts to praise Jesus because he's worthy of it.

And then in chapter six, watch this closely. The one who has been revealed is now doing the revealing. Right? So in chapter four and five in heaven, we get to see Jesus lying in the lamb. He's overcome.

He's overcome by his blood. Chapter six, we get Jesus. Now look at this verse one. Now I watched when the lamb opened one of the seals. So, um, if you're having difficulty, imagine that, you know, if you're having difficulty with the idea of a scroll, cause like my, at least in my house, we don't use scrolls much anymore. Right. Um, so, uh, we just, we don't do that, but we, we do have books. Right. I know that's like, that's still old school. Right. That we have, I know. Sorry, Joe. We have books like swipe.

Yeah. Got it. Okay. Uh, so it's imagine that there's a page being turned or we're swiping right each time that Jesus is coming along and, and, uh, he's revealing, he's opening a book and a page is being turned and he's going, check that out each time. So chapter one, he opened the seven seals turn. Turn. Verse six. He opened the second seal. Turn. Verse five. When he opened the third seal. Turn. Swipe. Whatever. Right. So he is the one doing the revealing. So, so we see Jesus in chapter six as the one who is controlling the information that is being given to John about him and about the events concerning him. And then in chapter seven and chapter 14, we see Jesus receiving the praise and adoration of all Christians from all nations, tribes and peoples and languages. And in chapter 19, we see Jesus as the true and righteous one coming again. And just look at that event. We have, um, a key title given to Jesus right at the end in verse 16, uh, but let's just pick it up from verse 11, where John says, and I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse. And the one who was sitting on is called faithful and true. And in righteousness, he makes, he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire on his head and many diadems. And he has a name written. No one knows, but himself and his clothing, a robe dipped in blood in his name, by which he is called is the word of God.

[10 : 03] And the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen and white and pure were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron and he will tread out the, the wine process of the, wine press of the fury of the wrath of almighty God. And on his, on his robe and on his thigh is a name and he's written King of Kings, Lord of Lords. Like that's a title for Jesus. It's revealing. Like you, you, you can't come away from chapter 19 without goosebumps. Can you? Right? So, and, and look, most translations and, and, and I hope that the translation you're, you, you have does this. Most translations have King of Kings and Lord of Lords in caps, right? Do you see that? And that's not just the translations being excited by this title. I mean, it could be, but it's probably not right. Um, they, they are, they are working towards this idea of the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

Actually the title that, um, is most often used and the one that Jesus most often ascribes to himself is the lamb of God. 28 times in 22 chapters. We see his majesty and his sovereignty.

Yes. But the title he chooses to use most often is one of gentleness. And in fact, we find more titles of Jesus in revelation than the whole of the new Testament put together. Right? So, so this is about Jesus, the reeling Jesus. This is the uncovering of Jesus. But look, the other way to see this, to read that phrase, that the revelation of Jesus is to see that Jesus is the one doing the reveal and you, you read the rest of the verse. And this understanding makes absolute sense. Just check it out. Verse one, the revelation of Jesus, 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, who bore witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all he saw. So it seems that what is being covered or uncovered was revealed first to Jesus by God, the father, right? I mean, that's what the text just says. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him. And then it says that Jesus gave what was being uncovered to an angel. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant, John. So he passed it to John. And then in verse two, it says that John bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony either about Jesus or the message which Jesus gave even to all he saw. So Paul uses the same

Greek word to describe this process of giving a message. Check out Romans 16 verse 25. It says, Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery. Elsewhere in the book, Jesus is called the faithful witness.

Revelation 1.5. Jesus Christ, the faithful witness. Revelation 3.14. To the angel of the church, let us hear right. The words of the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

[13:30] So the plain fact is that Jesus functions in this book as the revealer on a number of occasions throughout the book. Not least when we get there in chapter two, Jesus is writing to the church.

Like he's revealing stuff. All right. In chapter five, we see him opening the scrolls. But then in chapter six, we see six references to Jesus revealing the contents of the scrolls that we just looked at.

So obviously it's true to say that Jesus is both the subject of the revelation and the one doing the revealing. So this is Jesus's great self-disclosure. And revelation helps us to see that Jesus, and this is the key takeaway, that Jesus is alive right now. Right?

So we get the privilege of seeing the glorified Christ in heaven and the fulfillment of his sovereign purposes in the world. And so we should remember that this book is primarily the revelation of Jesus, not the revelation of future events. It reminds us that actually Jesus is alive today.

So whatever we do with this book and the studies that we'll be in, make sure that whatever we take away, we are getting to know the risen Lord Jesus Christ better. Right? This is not for us to draw charts about and to argue about. It's for us to draw close to Jesus about. Right? And so this is where we're going.

[15:08] So this is verse one, the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants, the things that must soon take place. And he made it known by sending his angel to the servant John.

So notice that the first three verses speak of John in the third person. What does that mean? It means that John's not writing this. Right? News to you? So John's not writing as we're reading these three verses. This is someone else writing this. And he made it known by sending, this is what it says, he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John. Most of us don't write like that, do we? About ourselves. Okay? So this is suggesting that these three verses were written by either a scribe rather than John. Or there were some editorial remarks made later on. Right?

And look, that shouldn't be a surprise to us because that happens a lot in the New Testament.

Okay? And for example, at the end of John's gospel in chapter 1 verse 20, chapter 21 verse 24, we read this.

This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things and who has written these things. And we know that his testimony is true. Well, who's writing that? John the apostle's not writing that. That would be a super weird way to end a letter, wouldn't it? Right?

So, clearly written by someone other than John. But we're kind of left to guess who they are. In contrast to Paul's letters where the scribe would often sign their name at the end of a letter.

[16:55] Right? You know, so this is whoever. Say hi to those people who read, you know, just saying hi. Or sometimes Paul would go, would give them a shout out for writing. Yeah?

So, Romans chapter 16 verse 1, we read about Phoebe. Right? Phoebe is the one carrying the letter. So, Paul's like, hey, when Phoebe arrives, make her feel welcome.

Alright? So, there's sometimes a shout out for their service. But notice this, the text apart from these verses were written by John. Now, what does that mean?

Well, it means that we can trust what we're going to read. We can trust what we are going to read. And it should be included in the canon of Scripture. Like, there is a debate raging right now about whether apocalyptic literature like this should be included in the canon.

[18:00] It is still raging. I mean, it was settled in the 4th century. And it goes round, comes round, goes round again. And now it's back raging.

So, let me just kind of weigh into that kind of conversation. Some of the most important questions that we can ask about whether Revelation should be in the Bible. Or whether the Bible...

Why is that important? It's important because then it's authoritative. Right? So, when we open the Bible... When we open Revelation... And let's just be honest. There's not a huge amount of commands in the book of Revelation for us.

You know, there's not like you turn to chapter 6 and it goes, do this. And you're like, oh, that's something I've got to do. You're not going to find that a huge amount in the book of Revelation. So, the question is, at what point does the book of Revelation become authoritative to me?

So, when it does give me a command, do I have the liberty to go, I'm going to judge whether I should do that or not? Right? This is what we're talking about with authority.

[19:05] So, how do I know that the book of Revelation is authoritative? Why is that important?

Well, look. One of the most important questions that you can ask is about authorship, is about textual variance, and it's about earliest date.

So, just mark those three down. I haven't put it on the screen, but just mark those three down.

Authorship, variance, earliest date. Right? Super massive important. If you want to understand whether the text is authoritative, whether you can trust what you're reading, or whether you should obey, if you're looking for loopholes, what you're reading.

Number one, who wrote it? Number two, how many different variants exist? And number three, when was it written? All right? One of the most common arguments of Islamic as well as Catholic apologists is that we can't trust the Bible because we can't be sure who wrote it.

Okay? So, the Catholic Church has something called ex cathedra, which is this idea that actually, you know, we have the Bible, but then we also have church tradition as laid down by the Pope, and that is authoritative.

Okay? So, both Islamic and Catholic apologists argue that we can't trust our canon, our Protestant canon, if you like, because we can't be sure who wrote it.

[20:27] And even if we are sure, how do we know it hasn't been changed? Okay, so make note of this. And I'm saying this because I want you to open your Bibles tomorrow morning and read Revelation and go, this is from God to me.

Right? So, there are, the book of Revelation that you hold is made up of 300 manuscripts. Either directly or indirectly, mainly 95.

95 manuscripts. They're the main ones. The ones that we have more than one copy of are almost identical. Now, you might go, oh, almost identical.

There surely must be a loophole there. Well, look at it like this. There are 9,667 Greek words in this book. And among the manuscripts, there is a word-for-word accuracy of 98.7%.

Now, I can see that hasn't amazed you. So, let me break that down. If you took all of the fragments, all of the manuscripts, and laid them out on a table, of those 9,667 words, you would find 127 words that were different among all of them.

[21:43] Okay? But none of them have any significance whatsoever. Let me give you two examples. In Revelation 1, verse 6.

Just check it out. Revelation 1, verse 6. Here's two of them. Here's two of the differences. Our Bibles read, And made us kingdom priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen. Right? Now, we go, well, that's a pretty important verse. Maybe the variant is about God the Father. Maybe one says, God isn't our Father. Maybe one is about, actually, he's not made us a

kingdom of priests.

He's made us a little community of followers. None of that. Do you know what the difference is? Forever and ever. The difference is, some say forever and ever, and some say forever.

That's two differences out of 127. You want another one? In Revelation 2, verse 22. So, 2, verse 22.

[22 : 50] It says, Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her, I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works.

Now, what do you reckon the difference is? Repentance? Judgment? No. The difference is between sickbed and bed. That's another one of the 127.

So, look, I think that out of nearly 10,000 words, like, that's hardly enough for us to dismiss this book.

Agreed? What I'm suggesting is that, of the 300 manuscript fragments, even though there are differences, the differences only affect 127 words, of nearly 10,000 words, and none of them are significant at all.

And so, when was Revelation 1, that we have in our hands, written? Okay, so, Revelation 1 comes, in part, part, from what we called, what, so what, what, what is called Papyrus, or Papyrus 98, or P98, for short.

[24 : 09] It is currently in the Museum of Archaeology in Cairo. You can go and see it, if they let you. And it was made in around AD 150.

Now, this is, if you get this, this is going to blow your mind. Okay? So, it was, the copy, was made in 150 AD. Now, we don't know, how the original, or the copy, got to be in Egypt.

So, but at some point, it did. All right? So, the origin is 150, Egypt. So, what that means is, P98 is old. Right? That's, I mean, that's older than old.

All right? I know some of you woke up this morning, feeling like, I'm old. P98 is old. Okay? And so, when you think that John, the author, died probably around the end of Emperor Chajun's reign, about 110 AD.

All right? Somewhere around there. What that means is that maybe 40 years between the author's death and P98 is what you're holding.

[25 : 21] Okay? That's crazy significant. Now, add to that, that John had a close disciple who you may have heard of.

If you've read Fox's Book of Martyrs, you probably would have heard of him. His name's Polycarp. He was John's disciple. And, he was the Bishop of Smyrna.

And, uh, he ended up being bound and, uh, burned at the stake. And Fox's Book of Martyrs says that, um, sorry to gross you out, but he, he wouldn't die.

So, he almost like just refused to die at the stake with the fire. So, they stabbed him to death and his blood put out the fire. Um, anyway, uh, so, that happened in 155 AD.

Which means that the earliest manuscript that we have of Revelation chapter 1, dates within Polycarp's lifetime.

[26 : 28] And maybe only 40 years after the death of John the Apostle. And here's why that's important. The text that you have in your hand, is more than 98.7% the text that John the Apostle wrote.

No change. No alterations over the last 2,000 years. Which means that, even more important, check out verse 2, even more important than that, because we don't really care what John the Apostle has to say.

Right? Verse 2 tells us that Jesus made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, which means that you are holding more than 98.7% the text that John received from Jesus.

That's why it's significant. That's why it's authoritative. And look, uh, let me just say this other thing. It's supposed to be understood.

Like, God's not playing with our minds. Like, like God hasn't given us, like one of those questions that we get in the exam, and it's like, oh, this will catch him out.

[27 : 40] Do you know those questions? This, this must be like a red herring. Right? Or a trick question. Like God's not in the business of stumbling us. Right?

So, so it's supposed to be understood. Let's do away with this nonsense, that revelation, that you can't understand revelation. It's a closed book. It's a sealed book. How do we know that?

Revelation itself says it's not. Right? So, do you remember back in Daniel chapter 12, uh, the verse is coming on the screen, but God told Daniel in Daniel 12 to seal up the words of that book. Right? But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal this book until the end, until the end. What does that mean? Well, until the end, you're not going to understand the book of revelation. Now, obviously your definition of when the end is might change that.

And certainly I, I would argue that we're, we're, we're there, but look, the point is that at some point, God says to Daniel, shut this book up.

[28 : 40] You're not going to get, you're not going to understand this book. Right? Uh, you know, the triumphal entry, the, the, the, the, the amount of days from, um, the giving of the command to Jesus coming.

People didn't understand that. Why? Because it was, it was locked up until Jesus came. Right? So, but the book of revelation is supposed to be opened. The text says God gave him to show his servant, not hide.

It says that Jesus made it known. Revelation 22, skip to the end, which I always love to do. Right? Like I, I can never do path, um, crossword puzzles and stuff with the ones with the answers in the back.

I'm just going straight to the back. I'm just filling it out. Right? Like it's just patterns to me. Um, revelation 22 verse 10. He said to me, do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is near.

Right? Let's open it. Let's understand it. Yes. It's hard work. Right? But we're not lazy Christians. Now, I look, I don't think we can grasp everything that is going on in this book.

[29 : 58] Like to the minutiae detail, but let's approach it with reverence. Let's take it seriously as the word of God. And let's trust it.

And let's obey it. All right. Verse three. Time is almost gone. Verse three. Wow. So verse three, then we read this, um, this promise.

And this is the promise. 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. So blessed is the one. Now, look, we've, we've spent some time over this last six months looking at, um, the sermon on the Mount.

And you will recognize this word blessed. It's my carios in the Greek. And you remember that when we looked at that, um, we, um, we're talking about how it's rooted in this old Testament tradition of making an observation about a certain way of living and then inviting you to join that way of life.

[31 : 16] Do you remember? We talked about that. And this is actually one of seven blessed statements or beatitudes that come in, uh, the book of revelation. And we saw when we looked at Matthew and I'll remind you again today that, that this is rooted in Psalm one and Psalm two.

Right? So just turn back there to Psalm one and Psalm two, because they set the standard for how the idea of blessed or makarios is used elsewhere in the Bible.

And so you remember Psalm chapter one starts blessed is the man who walks not in the council of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers. What does that mean? Does it mean that this man is blessed so that he doesn't walk that way?

Or is it an observation of the way he walks drawing a conclusion about the fact that he's blessed?

You see, what the writer intends us to see is that this is, is the way of the, it was the way of the man to observe his life.

What does he do? What does he not do? So, so when you, when, when, when we do that, we see a man who has gone out of his way to live a life that is completely different to those around him.

[32 : 35] That's what, that's what we read when we read Psalm one. To live a completely different ethic, according to different, completely different morals. And then, and then we conclude that that type of life that he has is a good one.

It's a blessed one. But the observation is being made so that we will join in that way of life. Right? This is, this is old Testament FOMO, fear of missing out.

Right? It's like, here's a great life. You want that life? That's the question. Well, who is he? Who, he, who is this blessed man?

Well, look, he's the same blessed man. As we read in chapter two, who has kissed the son and taken refuge in him. Chapter two, verse 12, kiss the son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are those who take refuge in him. Psalm one, some, some to go together. This is what the blessed life looks like. And we're invited to join in that way of life.

[33 : 39] And so here in Revelation chapter one, the writers is drawing on that old Testament principle of, this is what this blessed life looks like.

You want some, you want, you want to walk in that, you want that kind of life. And so he reflects on two things that the blessed person does.

Two things that come to the blessed person. They read aloud the words of this prophecy and hear. That's the first one. So they read aloud the words of this prophecy and they hear. So this is, of course, you know, reflects the, the Jewish practice of, of reading the scriptures aloud in the synagogue.

Right? Um, that later became part of the early Christian, uh, practice in the church to read aloud the scriptures. And it did.

[34 : 45] So why? Well, it did so because writing materials were expensive, scarce, and so were copies of the old Testament. Like you couldn't just rock up and go, you know, new Testament, Amazon, whatever it was called back then and go, I'll, I'll take, I'll take a Bible.

By the way, the ESV, John, what's it called? The ESV journal Bible on revelation, four pound 50 from Amazon. Great, great choice. If you can, right.

Um, John, do you have a copy? Great. See John, he'll show you a copy. Um, uh, not on you. He's got one, but he's not bringing it to church.

So, um, uh, you couldn't do that in the new Testament, right? Um, you, you didn't have the ability to do that. Even more hard to get hold of were the letters that were circulating in the news, in the first century, right?

No, that's why we have so many variants of the new Testament. Variants are a good thing, right? Don't, don't people say, Oh, you've got so many, so many different manuscripts, like 27,300 manuscripts of the new Testament.

[35 : 56] That's a bad thing. That's a great thing. It's a really, really good thing, right? If you want to know why I'll tell you another time, but, um, you couldn't just, you, if you were traveling to Ephesus, right?

Uh, and you were on business walking through Ephesus, you might go to the church elders. Hey, I heard Paul wrote to you. Do you mind if I copy what you've got?

And they'd be like, yeah, sure. Right? That's going to, I mean, six chapters to write out in, in Greek. I don't know how long that takes, but I'm saying it's a work, right? But you can't, you can't, you can't just photocopy these things.

Right? So, um, difficult to get. So public reading allowed was the only way Christians had for becoming familiar with the contents of these books.

Now, of course, today we don't have that problem. You might argue we have bigger problems, but we don't have the problem. Why?

[36 : 55] Because many of us have more than one Bible, don't we? And we have our fingertips, dozens of Bibles through our phones, don't we? Like, um, you know, some of you use Logos Bible software or another piece of software for your computer.

Like, so I use Logos, but I have 466 different Bibles. I use five. Like, and I've never opened most of the others. Right?

But if I wanted to, I could. Um, and so all of those are indexed. All of those give me, you know, they do all these kind of funky things. I don't really know. I don't know how to use it, if I'm honest.

Right? Um, the complete, you know, did you know that the New Testament has been translated into 1,551 languages? Right?

That's, when you think about it, that's crazy. That's just the New Testament. Um, and of course, there's still much to do on that front. We still have 171 million people in, the world that don't have a copy of the New Testament in their first language.

[38 : 03] Okay? Um, and, uh, people like the Bible Society and, uh, Wycliffe's and, uh, organizations like that are saying that by 2038, that work would have started to make sure every language in the world has a New Testament in that, in that language, which is, which is amazing.

But, for us, we can't claim to have access issues when it comes to the Word of God. Like, if, if you say to me today, Simon, I don't have a Bible, look, I'll take you to a box.

We have a box of Bibles. I'll give you a Bible. No problem whatsoever. You know, we don't have, we don't have an access with, with the Word of God today, do we?

So, how do we read this reading aloud the text and hearing? Can I give you a recommendation?

Um, I've given you this recommendation before. I don't often give recommendations on stuff from the front. I said that last week. I'm doing the same thing this week. If you've got a phone, how many people have got a phone, a smartphone?

[39 : 15] Smartphones don't make you smarter. You know that. Um, so, like, and if you're like, you're older, just get your kids to tell you how to use it or see John or someone, Jeff.

Um, don't see Joe because he'll mock you if you've got an iPhone. But, um, if you've got a phone, my recommendation is that you find an app on the phone that's going to read the Bible to you.

Okay? So, so, um, like, we, we, we've got this one called Dwell. We used one called Dwell. Um, on, on iPhone. And, um, you can, you can hear the book of Revelation being read to you in an hour and 18 minutes.

Normal speed. You can even have it. I saw this yesterday because I checked. You can have it even read to you by a guy called Simon. He sounds nothing like me, but, um, uh, my favorite is Felix.

And, uh, some of you are like, oh yeah, Felix. Yeah, Felix from Kenya. It's great. And so, that's on normal speed. Double speed, you can get it done in 40 minutes. Like, how many of you commute 40 minutes to work?

[40 : 31] I bet some of you do. You can read, you can listen to the book of Revelation being read to you every single day on your way to work. Like, I, like, I don't know. That's crazy.

Right? Um, so, um, that's called dwell. And, um, I kid you not, listening to that a few times a week will give you a, give a new meaning to this word blessed.

But, of course, that's not the only thing that a writer says about the nature of being blessed or the blessed person because they are the person who not only hears, but they also, it says in verse, in verse 3, blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it.

That little word and is important because it connects those two statements. This is not a group of listeners and a group of obedient ones. Right? Uh, that, that doesn't exist.

To walk into the blessed life, every individual has to combine hearing with obeying. Right?

[41 : 40] So, James chapter 1, verse 22, we know it off by heart, we know it well, but I bet we all struggle with it. Be doers of the word, not only hearers deceiving yourselves.

That's lowered the tone, hasn't it? As soon as you start talking about obeying, it's like that, that requires effort because listen, I can download my dwell app and I can put it on double speed.

I can get through the New Testament in a week. But I've got to obey. Alright? You know, I can listen to Felix from Kenya with ambient background music and I can get goosebumps listening to a brother who is reading the scriptures from another continent.

But unless I'm obeying, I'm not living a blessed life. Right? So, it is a sad reflection of our time, isn't it?

And it's probably a sad reflection of the state of our own hearts, probably, that there are plenty of people who like to hear, but not so many people who like to obey. And one of the prayers should be, God, give us, give us the joy of obeying.

[42 : 59] Lead me to love to obey as much as I love all of these other things. Maybe sometimes it's just easier to hear than it is to obey.

We have to confront things that we don't really want to confront. We're good at skirting around the outside, aren't we? Much harder to put them into practice.

And so, the blessed life, what does it look like? Well, the blessed life has confronted the difficult realities of life and our own sinful hearts and we've heard the word of God, Jesus speak to an angel, to John, to us and we've said, that's got to change.

God, help me to change. Help me to love obeying you. for, the text says, so here is the reason we are being exhorted to obey is because the time is near.

The time, the time, not a time, is near. So, we are to obey simply because of the nearness of the things predicted in this book.

[44 : 25] book. Well, you might say it's been 2,000 years and we're still waiting for the return of Jesus and of course that is true. So, what sense do we make of those two phrases in here about time?

Because there's two phrases in these three verses that refer to time. Look back at verse 1. It says, the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show to his disciples the things that must soon take place.

So, that's a reference to time. Alright? And here at the end of verse 3, the second reference to time, the time is near. So, what does the writer mean? Whoever the writer is writing this? Well, simply that, when these things take place, they're going to take place quickly.

When it starts, it will be over and soon done with. The word soon in verse 1 is takos. Excuse me. It's takos. It's used eight times in the New Testament.

But, all but one of those is in reference to something being done speedily. Or something happening quickly.

[45 : 32] Rather than kind of the event taking place soon. Like, tomorrow. But don't be discouraged by this. These things will happen in God's time and not ours.

James said, you also be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Or the coming of the Lord is approaching.

The doctrine of imminency is that Jesus could come back at any moment. And the instruction from James is not to draw charts and predict when he's going to come back.

Look at the moons and decide that Jesus must be coming back when the moons align or when Jupiter passes in front of Mars. Or when whatever craziness is out there.

James says, the reaction to you knowing that the coming of the Lord is approaching is to establish your hearts. To be confident that Jesus is your Lord and Savior.

[46 : 48] To be walking with him daily. To be listening to his voice, hearing and obeying what he has to say. Establish.

So be ready. Be ready. And so John, John, then in verse 4 through to the end of the chapter, is going to give us a vision of the Son of Man, of Jesus.

And I want to encourage you this week to slowly and carefully and repeatedly read chapter 1. I mean, if you can go further, great.

But from verse 9 through to the end of the chapter, you get the revealing of Jesus in all of his glory as a prologue to what is coming.

And so may the Lord help us to hear his voice and to love his commands. Be filled with the Spirit so that we may actually live and establish our hearts in grace.

[48 : 05] Let's pray together. Father, thank you so much for your word. Lord, thank you that you know that we need to hear from you. Thank you that you're not silent.

Thank you that you're a God who speaks today. Why? Because Jesus is alive. Thank you that you are alive and you're working. You're not asleep.

you're working for our good and your glory. You're working to bring about all of these things that will result one day are standing before you in white robes, praising you and glorifying you because you're worthy.

And we pray, Lord, that as we journey through this book, Lord, as you take us by your hand and show us these things, you are showing us yourself.

And Lord, we do pray that you would help us not to just make our Bible study a Sunday morning thing, but an everyday thing.

[49 : 14] Help us to utilize, Lord, the technology that you've allowed to be created in our time. Lord, we thank you that we live in our time so that we can explore all of these different wonderful ways that we can hear your word.

Lord, but we know that we hear your word. We read your word each and every day, each and every week, month on, year out, and much harder is to obey.

And Lord, would you create in us, Lord, not just a desire to obey, but a joy to obey. Lord, would it be our thing to obey you?

Lord, would we just get a, like, I don't know how else to say it, but Lord, a spiritual trip out of just obeying what you say. Lord, just enjoying meeting your commands.

Lord, would we look at the blessed life, which is surely your life, life, and would we be able to say, I want to live that life.

[50 : 29] So, Lord, give us ears to hear. Give us more of your spirit that we may obey. Lord, we ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.