

02-06-23b Revelation

The Word of God has to rehabilitate us. It's why we have to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, because all of us have this mind. That's why this is written for everyone.

Two million people all had the same thing. But guess what? Joshua and Caleb learned the Word of God. Joshua dwelt at the flap of the tabernacle and stayed there, listening to Moses, paying attention to what God told Moses, thinking about it.

And he got to be the next leader of Israel because of that. These things were written for our examples, to the intent that we should not want these things. Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did.

And 23,000, this is a metaphor or stands in for any kind of grievous error, where God has to take you out under the sin of death. You don't even get to die of old age wandering around. You get cut short because of your distraction.

Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted and were destroyed by serpents, another sin unto death. Nor complain, as some of them also complained and were destroyed by the destroyer. He tells us again, and when the scripture repeats itself, you know it's important.

All these things happened to them as examples. And they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. We are in the culminating age of God's plan.

There are people who would kill to be, figuratively speaking. There are Old Testament saints who would love to have been in our age, who would love to have the word of God that we had, and didn't have it. So we need to take care.

We need to pay attention. Now, why is this important to our study in Revelation? We're going to pause here and take our break. But before we do, very quickly, take a look at Revelation chapter 1, verse 1. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants, things which must shortly take place.

He sent and signified by his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all the things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads, and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things that are written in it. For the time is near.

The time is at hand. Now, most of Revelation talks about the 70th week of Daniel, which is the last seven years of the age of Israel, right? It's Old Testament saints. People that get saved and are believers in the time of Antichrist and in the time of one-third of the earth, bad things happening, the seals and the trumpets and all, the church isn't here.

So why is this book that's all about the 70th week of Daniel addressed to the church? For the

same reason that we have the Old Testament in our Bible. Why didn't we just lay it aside when Christ fulfilled the law and we went into Pentecost and the New Testament age? Why did we keep the Old Testament? All of the things in the Old Testament were written for our instruction. They are examples to us.

And guess what? We can look forward to the 70th week of Daniel just as surely and get just as much observation and interpretation and application out of things that will happen to those Old Testament saints of the future as we do looking at the Old Testament saints of the past. It has all been written for our instruction. I find it fascinating that 20 of the 22 chapters of Revelation, 19 if you want to be technical about it, 19 out of the 22 chapters concern themselves strictly with people who are not in the church.

Everything that's going to happen after the rapture and into the second coming of Christ. But the book is addressed to the church. Why? It's an example.

It's for our instruction. Upon whom the ends of the age have come. And it's like a great chiasm.

But we'll talk about that more when we come back from the break. But the main principle of our introduction this morning and our scripture reading this morning is we have an obligation. We are servants of the Lord.

We are called to run the race that is set before us. It's not optional. It's mandatory.

And we will be held accountable. We have been given everything we need to successfully run this race. God has given us these examples.

He's given us the teaching of His Word. He's given us His Spirit. There is no excuse.

Every single individual that left Egypt should have gone into the land of Canaan. And the fact that they didn't is not God's fault. It's their own.

They all came out. They were all baptized. They all had the cloud.

They all had the spiritual food. They all had Moses' leadership. What happened? Their desires did them in.

They got their eyes on things they wanted. And they didn't keep their eye on the imperishable crown. They didn't keep their eye on the promised land.

It was written for our instruction. We ought to learn from that. We ought to dedicate ourselves day by day to living in the light of the eternal future.

Let's pause and take our break. When we come back, we'll actually get into this book of the Revelation. And we're going to see the first of the seven churches, which is the church at

Ephesus.

And I have some interesting details to give you about that with regard to John. But that's what we'll look at when we come back. Let's resume our study now and turn with me to Revelation chapter 1, verse 1. Because in our special study of the letters to the seven churches, we need to have some inkling of why they are presented.

The first session this morning gave us a general overview of why the book of Revelation is addressed to the church. It is because scripture, even that doesn't pertain to us, is useful to us. It gives us, as the old King James used to say, end samples, end samples.

I like that word because we know what a sample is. A sample is the thing that you look at, but it's not the one you're going to get. You get something else, but you see the sample on display.

Or at the grocery store, they give you a little sample of a hot dog on a toothpick or something. And you try it out and say, well, that's an interesting taste. And then you decide based on the sample whether or not you're going to buy a whole package.

But the sample, these are samples. They're examples from which we are to learn. God has given them to us because the ends of the ages have come upon us.

We are in the critical period of God's plan. We have the fullness of Revelation. We have the fullness of the ministry of the Spirit in equal measure.

And it is one of the most overlooked. You know, people love a bargain and people love a good deal when they hear it or a great investment. I just heard where, is it Martha Stewart is in trouble? I think she did some insider trading or something because she had the insight.

But people love to find out something that's really, really good and get in on it. And I will tell you that the greatest thing there is is what God has prepared for those who love Him. God says, you know, I can't even express it to you.

I can't put it in the book. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard. It hasn't entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for those who love Him.

But I will tell you based on the testimony of the Word of God, there are not very many of us that are smart enough to seize that opportunity. If you want to talk about a good deal, if you want to talk about something worth investing in, worth going after, this is the ultimate, finest, greatest thing there is. It was purchased for us with the blood of Jesus Christ.

It's our, you know, people got all caught up on destiny. Star Wars, Luke, it is your destiny. You know, there really is a destiny for us.

We have been predestined. That's what predestination is all about. It's the destiny that God set

up for us in eternity past.

But you know, Darth Vader tells Luke that something is his destiny to come join him on the dark side of the force, but Luke doesn't join him, does he? If you're a Star Wars watcher, that's about as much as I know about that whole series is Luke got his hand chopped off and Darth Vader was his dad. And then I kind of lost interest after that. But I remember him saying, it is your, you know, come join me, it's your destiny.

Well, just because he says it's his destiny, he didn't do it. And guess what? God says it's our destiny to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. It's our destiny to go across the Jordan into the promised land, figuratively speaking, to lay claim to these wonderful spiritual blessings.

And it's not just all pie in the sky, by and by. Because if we begin to live this way, Jesus said, if any man wants to come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me, taking up the cross. A guy that was under sentence of death by crucifixion in the Romans, there's a lot more to it than just getting tacked onto a crossed couple of boards.

Someone who was convicted and sentenced to death by that form of execution had all of their land and property confiscated and appropriated to the Roman government. They no longer had any goods of their own. Everything was scooped up and taken to what the British would call the crown.

It all went to the emperor, to the Romans. And so when Jesus, of course, nobody, we talk about the cross and everybody knows about the crucifixion, but when Jesus said, take up your cross and follow me, nobody knew at that time that he was going to be crucified. There wasn't this great symbol of Calvary.

So what did he mean when he says, if any man wants to follow me, let him take up his cross? Well, what was understood about the cross in Jesus' day? If you were taking up the cross, that meant that all of your stuff had been given to the government and you were under orders from someone else. You had died to your old life. You left your home and you're never going back.

You left your family and you're never going back. Everything was set aside because you've been told you have to go die. And so taking up the cross is a self-sacrificial form of life where we say, there's something greater than myself.

No military battle would ever be won if people thought of themselves first. The lieutenant says, men, go take that hill. But sir, there's a machine gun nest on that hill.

Now look at those three guys that tried to go up there. They all got shot. Men, go take that hill.

Well, it's not in my personal best interest to go take the hill. I'm sorry, but I don't think you understand, sir, that there's a possibility that I could be perforated by this string of bullets that's coming back my way. I could be injured.

This could be detrimental to my future plans to be wounded or killed. You see that there's something greater than yourself. There's something more important than yourself.

Even in the secular world, when you're in the service and you're called upon to go and fight and to risk your life in the service of your country, how much more so, that's just a battle on a battlefield somewhere. And a lot of times the government doesn't even know why they call someone into battle. People went and fought and died in Vietnam.

And what do we have in Vietnam now? All of the bloody stained jungle grass of Vietnam and the thousands and thousands of young Americans who died over there. What do we have to show? Where is the Yetrone? Where's the prophet that we had to show for those 150,000 American lives? Oops, we made a mistake. Not so when we take up our cross in the plan of God.

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his douloi, his servants. A lot of us are saved and a lot of us are heaven bound, so to speak, but we're not servants. You can't call yourself a servant if you don't pay attention to the master.

You can't call yourself a servant if you don't enjoin yourself to do the master's will and be a good steward of the master's goods. This is a revelation that God gave the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father, you have the Trinity here, God the Father gave this revelation to Jesus Christ to show to his servants.

God said, son, come here, I'm gonna show you a part of the future plan and you can give this to your faithful ones, to your servants. Things which must shortly take place. Now, the people that say, well, my goodness, this was written 2,000 years ago, 1,900 years ago, so how can this be wrong? He says it's gonna shortly take place.

How can you call 1,900 years shortly? Well, you can't. And there are people that have tried to change the Greek here to say that when it happens, it will happen suddenly or quickly. Now, there are good words that mean that, but this is the word, it's the same word from which we get tachometer, tachis, T-A-C-H-E-I-S, and it means soon, in the near future, coming up quickly.

It's, you know, when you're driving at 75, or 55 miles an hour down the highway and you see something on the road, it comes toward you quickly. Well, it's coming quickly. So if the word of God is true and it says these things will shortly take place, quickly come to pass, how can you call 1,900 years quick? Well, how long is your lifespan? Three score and 10, if by reason of strength, you make it to four score, well and good.

But we don't, we haven't been around for 1,900 years tapping our foot, waiting for these things to take place, have we? And for us, let's say we start right now and let's just pick an age. Let's just pick 40 out of the blue, somewhere, some of us are older than that, some of us are younger than that, we'll just pick 40. Let's say 40 is the median age.

So let's say we're all gonna live to be 70 and then die. Okay, so 30 years. For us, we're gonna see human history unfold in the next 30 years.

And if the Lord does not come back in that time, I suspect that He will, but let's say He doesn't, then we die, guess what? All of these things, the next thing we're gonna see is these things coming to pass. So for us, it's not more than 30 years away at most, under my hypothesis. You see what I mean? That for any given believer looking at these words, it is as near as the end of your life.

Now we could all say goodbye and God bless you and walk out here and get hit by a truck and it'll be today or tomorrow or the next day. This is as near as the termination of our life. And that is quick indeed.

The Bible throughout talks about the brevity of human life. So this is the idea. It's not in the historical measure, it's in the personal measure.

This encourages us to look at this as a personal message. These things, as far as you are concerned, as far as I am concerned, are near at hand, no further away than the end of my life. And I promise you, I will not last to the age of 100 or 90.

I mean, given favorable conditions, if I make it to 80, it will be a sheer act of God. It just won't happen to high mileage. I was looking at some of my ancestors and all of the whole men die in their 70s.

It just, that seems to be what happens. So, pardon? Your destiny. Yeah, it's my destiny.

But it's fine with me. God determines all of that. But anyway, it's near.

It's near at hand. This is the revelation of Jesus Christ. It belongs to him.

God the Father gave it to him. And he said, son, show this to your servants because for them, it's near at hand. They need to pay attention to it.

Now look, he says, he sent and signified it. This is backwards from the Greek. The Greek says he signified and sent.

The word signified is from semion, S-E-M-E-I-O-N, which is a Greek word for sign. It's like the sign gifts or a sign from God, the signs in the heavens. This message is a sign.

It's a symbol. It represents something. And that pretty well characterizes the whole book of Revelation, doesn't it? It's a symbolic book.

We don't go to Revelation and take everything at face value, do we? Well, look, the moon turned to a giant drop of blood. We just don't take it. We understand that this is referential language.

So he signed it. He put a sign with it. It is a signed book.

And he sent it. And sent is apostello. Apostle comes from that root.

He signified it. In a way, this is like signing it. How do we know it's from God? He put his stamp on it.

It has the signature. You know, signature is sign plus A-T-U-R-E. That's your sign.

That's your mark. God signed it and God sent it, apostello, by his angel. By whose angel? God the Father's angel.

This angel is an angelic servant of God the Father. One of his, probably one of the archangels, I would guess. One of God's, you know, we tend to think of God just kind of sitting there on his throne and there are some angels kind of painted on the walls and then we have guardian angels.

There is an angelic civilization. There is a government in heaven with levels and there are angels who occupy posts and have jobs. Do you ever think about that? Angels have jobs.

There are millions of them and they've all got a job. They don't just kind of sit around saying, boy, sure is good to be an angel. Wonder how my feathers are looking back there or, you know, let me polish my halo or something.

Hey, they don't have halos and they most likely don't have feathers. But look at human civilization. Everybody has stuff that they're engaged in and that they do.

Heaven is a busy place. It's not a fresco. It's a civilization.

This is one of God's messenger angels. The word angelos means messenger. It's like saying messenger, messenger.

God signed this and sent it by his messenger. This is his, it would be a cabinet post in our government. The press secretary for the president.

Well, this is God's messenger angel. And he took it to his servant, John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ to all the things that he saw. So John says, it was delivered to me and I'm delivering it to you just the way I got it.

I bear witness. I am a martyreos, where we get the word martyr. Martyr means witness.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep the things which are written in it for the time is near. I could go for a half hour just on that verse. Look at these.

These are present participles. The one who is reading. The one who is hearing.

How many times did Jesus say, he that has an ear to hear, let him hear. If you pay attention to the content of this prophecy and then look at this, it says, keep the things which are written in it. This is the word tereo, T-E-R-E-O in Greek.

It means to keep or to guard. It means to claim something by way of possession, to keep hold of it and not let it go. And it's a present participle, who keep on latching onto this, who keep on holding it.

If you have something in your hands, you pretty much have to pay attention to it, don't you? You've got it right there. If you're carrying a pumpkin around, it's pretty hard for you or anybody else to ignore that you've got a pumpkin in your hands. Well, this is the prophecy.

These are the words from God. And it says, you will be blessed. It's a promise of God.

Blessed are the ones who are reading and those who are hearing. This is hearing in the sense of heeding, akuo, hear in the sense of understand, and then who keep. So there's a threefold division of the process.

You read it. It's got to be out there in the open to be perspicacious, to be observed. And when you observe it, you hear it.

You pay attention to it. It enters into your soul. And then once it gets in your soul, you keep hold of it.

It's not in one ear or out the other. Five weeks ago on Sunday, what was the lesson about? Without looking at your notes, five weeks ago. Hmm, well, let's see.

What was our series? Ecclesiastes, it must have been along about chapter 12. You can't really reach out and tereo something from five weeks ago, right? In terms of the detail, what passage were we in, what were the words that were said? What is it that we really hang on to after we've heard and after we've read? It's the principles. It's the viewpoint.

Did what we heard five weeks ago change us? Did it make us more spiritually minded? Did it encourage us to, you know, it's what we become having heard and having thought about things. It's not what you can remember in the chapters and verses you can quote. It's what kind of person do you become? Are you more peaceful? Are you more patient? Are you more joyful? Are you more reminded of the fact that every time you do something, God is watching to see if you're doing it in a way that's pleasing to Him? Are you functioning as a servant or have you decided the Master's the way and you're gonna be the Master? You're gonna take charge.

You're gonna set the agenda. That's what the Word of God does for us. Blessed if we read it.

Keep on reading it. Keep on hearing it. Keep on keeping it because the time is near.

There's not much of your life left. I don't care how long you live. There's not much of it left.

There's not much of my life left. We need to live in that light. Then verse four, John to the seven churches which are in Asia.

Now this is a problem right off the bat because there are more than seven churches in Asia at the time that John writes. And he doesn't say to seven churches that are in Asia. He says the seven churches that are in Asia.

Well, dead seas of Incubus spill. Why does he say the seven churches as though there are only seven? Well, one part of me says, who cares? He's talking to these seven churches and the others lived and died and some of them we don't even have a record of. So what's the problem? These churches are representative.

When you come to the letters of the seven churches of Asia, these were chosen because they represent typical syndromes. Think about, I mentioned before the break that there's sort of a chiasm in scripture. You have the Old Testament law and the Old Testament people of God.

We have their deeds and God's dealing with them recorded in scripture. Then we have the New Testament aspect and that's us and we're in the church age. But then in the future, revelation takes us back to looking at Old Testament saints and making application of things that are going to happen to other people.

So let's think about that for a moment. The Old Testament saints, they're a group, they're a class. In the large portion of the Old Testament, it's the nation of Israel and it's God's dealing with the nation that we see.

He takes them into captivity. You go in Judges and there's these cycles of repentance and renewal and then apathy and indifference and discipline. And then the Philistines start whipping up on them and then they repent and cry out to God.

He saves them, brings them around. This vicious cycle goes on five or six times through the book of Judges. Just about the time they're about to give up hope, God sends a judge and delivers them and the cycle starts over again.

But it's God dealing with the nation, dealing with them as a group. We look at Israel, the nation, being formed, being birthed in Egypt, coming out under the redemption of the Passover Lamb's blood, the baptism through the Red Sea and all of their national experiences are metaphorical and teach us principles about individual believers' lives. Can we go into the Meribah and complain? Can we say, you've brought me out here to die in this wilderness when the water is right there from an unlikely source, the rock? All of these things are written for our instruction.

The nation, the group, teaches us things about individual believers' lives. Well, guess what? These seven churches, even though they are groups of believers, tell us things about individual believers' lives. The descriptions we're going to get in these churches of good things and bad things are mixtures that we find in our own soul individually.

People have tried to take these and say that they stand for different phases of church history, that the church at Ephesus was the early church and then, you know, smearing on down. No, because who writes church history? Well, the Catholics wrote the first half of it and there is a lot of church history that never made it to pages. Is any church history going to record our church? No.

Are we ever going to be in a book? No. Do you think there have been little groups and strands of faithful believers doing things other than what the Catholics saw and did for the first 1,500 years? Of course there were and they're not in history. So it's always a superficial analysis to try to take the ups and downs of the Catholic church and shoehorn it into these seven letters.

These are typical in any generation. That's why he said, you that are reading and hearing, he doesn't say, well, if you're in 1,500 or if you're in 1,900, you can ignore those three churches and just concentrate on the one that applies to you. All of these are potentially applicable to each of us.

So then he says in verse four, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come. Now, think about this in English. If I'm talking about existentialism, if I'm talking about the state of being, what would I say in English? I am today, past I was, and future is what? I will be.

So why doesn't God say grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who will be? He doesn't use the verb to be. It's *Erechromi*, the one who is to come. Because the emphasis is not on God as a static wall painting in heaven.

The emphatic place is in the front. He is now. He always was, and he's coming.

He's coming in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that should motivate us. It's not that God, well, he is, he was, and he will be off in some far off place.

He is and he was, and he's going to be here, is what *Erechromi* means. Come means he's going to be here. And this is designed to motivate us, to wake us up a little bit and say, well, he's not just the God who is and was.

He's coming. It's like Zacchaeus. I am coming to your house today.

Well, Zacchaeus went home and whipped the servants into a froth and got the meal ready because the Lord was coming. *Erechromi* is designed to do the same thing. He who is and was and who is to come.

Now, here's a crux interpretatum, meaning a hard thing to figure out. And from the seven spirits who are before his throne. Seven spirits? Well, what does this do to my Trinity deal? So there's the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and the Spirit, and the Spirit, and the Spirit, and the Spirit, and the Spirit, and the Spirit, and the Spirit.

There's no way around it in Greek. It says hepta pneumatias. You can't shy away from it.

You can't say, well, they made a mistake. It doesn't say sevenfold spirit. Some people say, well, he's a sevenfold spirit.

You go back to like Isaiah 11 or something where it's a spirit of wisdom, and knowledge, and prophecy, and this, that, and the other. It doesn't say sevenfold spirit. It says seven spirits, plural.

Well, who are these seven spirits? Is this the Holy Spirit? And if so, how did he go from being one spirit to being seven spirits? Well, without going through all the stuff that's ever been written on this, and it would just bog you down and depress you to tell you all the wild theories that have been concocted on this, let's just look at the passage. Grace to you and peace from the one who was, and is, and is to come. Well, this is obviously God, and one or more of the persons of the deity, right? One of the Trinity.

And from the seven spirits who are before his throne. Now, grace to you and peace from, now, who is the source of grace? And who is the source of peace? Some people have speculated that these are angels, that these are, one of these may have been the messenger angel, and the other six hung around waiting for him to come back. Do angels impart grace and peace? Do human beings impart grace? Does Paul ever say grace and peace to you from me and Timothy and Barnabas? How does Paul start all of his epistles? Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all blessings in heavenly places.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, over and over and over again. The apostles always indicate that the source of grace and the source of peace is God alone. So, however you want to deal with this, and I can't give you a full-bodied answer because I can't find it in the word of God, but these seven spirits are God, the Holy Spirit, and sevenfold may not be a bad way.

You can look at Isaiah 11, we're not gonna go there because we don't have time, but God says, when my servant comes, I will put on him my spirit, the spirit of wisdom and of this and of that, and there is a sevenfold description of the spirit that God is gonna put on his servant, of course, which is the Lord Jesus. This says the seven spirits which are before his throne. Seven is the number of completion and perfection.

That's why there are seven churches, seven seals, seven judgments, seven bowls, seven trumpets. Revelation is full of the number seven. It is the number of perfection.

So, all I can tell you is these seven spirits, if you can believe that the Trinity is one God in three persons, then you can believe that the one spirit is seven spirits. That's all I can tell you. It says seven spirits, it's the word of God, you just have to take it as it lays.

So, grace and peace come from he who was and is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ. Now, you have a nice layout of the Trinity here. God the Father was, is, and is to come, sevenfold spirit or the seven spirits which are the Holy Spirit, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth, king of kings and Lord of lords.

To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and has made us kings and priests. Did you feel like a king and a priest when you woke up this morning? Looked in the mirror, or avoided looking in the mirror? He has made us kings and priests in what sense? We are kings and priests to his God and Father. When God looks at us, he sees Christ.

Christ is the king, Christ is the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, and we are kings and we are priests because we are in Christ. Any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. He has made us kings and priests to his God and Father.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever, amen. I would love to dwell on that, but again, we don't have time. Behold, he is coming, you have Erchmi again, with clouds, and every eye will see him.

This is the man, Jesus Christ is the manifestation of the Father. When it says the Father is the one who is and was and who is to come, God the Father is coming in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. There's a lot of Trinitarianism here that we could go into.

Christ is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him, even they who pierced him. This tells you that the people who put up the crucifixion plot were believers, because unbelievers are not resurrected until after the Millennial Kingdom is over. And people say, oh, that's impossible.

How could somebody crucify Christ and be a believer? Judas was a believer, the Pharisees who plotted against Christ were believers, Peter who denied Christ three times was a believer, Abel was a believer, Cain was a believer, Balaam was a believer, pretty much everybody you see in the Bible was a believer. And people just go into shock, oh, a believer could never do that. Yes, we can.

Don't think that because you're a believer you can't do vile, filthy, evil things. We can get down there with the worst unbeliever that ever lived when it came to sin. So I'm here to tell you, they who pierced him are going to be resurrected and see Jesus coming.

This is the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. All the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him. This of course is going to be developed later on in the book.

I am the Alpha and the Omega. These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. He, if he was speaking English, he would say, I'm the A and the Z. The beginning and the end says the Lord who is and who was and who is to come the Almighty.

And of course, here's Jesus giving himself the same description as the Father. I and the Father are one, he said. Now verse nine, I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Who is the author of this book? The big question is, is it John the Apostle? The answer is, I don't know. There are arguments pro and con. I will give them to you very quickly.

This book is not explicitly attributed to John the Apostle. This is not like Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes says, I, Kohelet, was son of David, king in Jerusalem.

There's only one man that fits that description and that's Solomon. There were several men named John. There was John the Elder, John the Presbyter, John the Apostle, John the Baptist.

There have been people who even thought John the Baptist wrote this. People thought John Mark wrote it. Yohanan, which means Yahweh is gracious.

Yohanan, Y-O-C-H-A-N-A-N, Yohanan, which we translate John, was a common name and belonged to John Chrysostom. Chrysostom was a nickname he was given that means golden tongue. But there were many Johns.

This book does not explicitly claim John the Apostle authorship. Here are the reasons why I think it's the Apostle John. A, others are unlikely to have had the authority to put out the word that is in this book as the testimony of God from Jesus Christ without giving any bona fides, without saying who they are.

The guy says, I'm John and I've got a word from you that came straight from God the Father through Jesus Christ and His angel. Well, if you're not John the Apostle and you come to me and say, hey, I just got a big package from the Lord I've got for you. You're gonna say, well, John who? Who died and made you the keeper of the flame of eternal wisdom and divine revelation? Why were you favored? Because John the Apostle is still alive at the time that this book is written.

So if John the Apostle is alive, why did he not get it and some other anonymous John did? Secondly, there is the testimony. It's indirect and it's not to die for, but Jesus' words to Peter in John chapter 21, verse 23, when he says, feed my lambs, feed my sheep. And he says, one of these days, somebody's gonna take you where you don't wanna go and you're gonna be, you know.

And then Peter, they're walking along and he looks behind him and he says, well, what about this

guy? Talking about John walking behind him. And Jesus says, what is it to you if he tarry until I come? Very cryptic statement by the Lord. What is it to you if John tarries until I come? So people got the idea and it says in scripture, people got the idea that John would never die until the Lord came back.

But compare this to Luke 9, 27. Remember in Luke 9, we had the transfiguration and Jesus said, are there many standing here who will not see death until they have seen the son of man coming in his glory? Who was standing there? Peter, James and John. Three days later, they went up on the Mount of Transfiguration and they saw the Lord coming in his glory, as it were, Moses and Elijah and all of that.

It was a prefiguring of a vision that they would see, something that would be revealed to them. So Jesus telling Peter, what is it to you if he tarry until I come? Where is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ any better revealed than in the book of Revelation? And John was the last apostle by all accounts to die. So he tarried until he got this revelation showing the Lord.

So I think that you also have the general principle of apostolic authorship in the New Testament. The books are either written by an apostle or someone closely associated. It is somewhat counter to John the apostle that in chapter one, when Jesus appears, there's no sign of recognition.

He doesn't say, hey Lord, good to see you. And Jesus doesn't say, John, beloved disciple. It's very formal.

But the purpose of the book is different. It's not a personal visit. So that's not a killer argument either.

People claim vast differences in the Greek between the epistles of John, the gospel of John and Revelation. The Greek is radically different. The theology is different.

The emphasis and the content is completely different. If you just lay them side by side, you would think, I don't think the same guy wrote these. And so a lot of Greek scholars say this had to be some other John.

It just doesn't have the earmarks of Johannine authorship. And this to me is one of the stronger arguments. But let me ask you this.

Let's say I give you a copy of Moonlight Sonata and I play that for you. And then I play the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. If that's all the Beethoven you'd ever heard, would you think the same guy wrote the Fifth Symphony? You know, da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da, and it goes on and on and on.

And then you got this, da-da-da-da, on and on and on. In Moonlight Sonata, they seem radically different. Well, they had a different purpose.

It's a different form, but they're by the same guy. The Apocalypse is a completely different genre of writing. And it's going to have different vocabulary, different style.

And it's also probably written several decades after the epistles and the gospel were written. Do people's writing styles change? Yes, they do. So here's the point.

The Bible does not emphasize who the author is. It's just like the book of Hebrews. Nobody can say for sure who wrote Hebrews.

The Bible does not emphasize the author's identity and neither should we. John is a witness to the church of this message. He is an observer on behalf of the church of this vision and all of these truths.

It is not the man, it is the message. Remember 1 Corinthians 1, people saying, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, I'm of Peter. Oh, I'm of Christ.

I'm above you all, I'm of Christ. People laying claim to a messenger instead of the message is wrong. In fact, turn right quick to Revelation 22.8. We're going to have to close with this thought.

Look at Revelation 22.8. John himself makes this mistake. I, John, saw and heard these things. This is the epilogue of the vision.

I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed these things to me. Then the angel said, see that you do not do that.

I am your fellow doulos. I am a servant just like you and of your brethren the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.

It's not the messenger. Don't get down and worship the messenger. It's the message.

So even John himself, you know, people say, well, I wonder who wrote the book and I can't tell for sure. Look, the book is inspired, it's from God. A man named John saw it and delivered it to us.

I think it was the apostle. But even if it wasn't, who cares? It's clearly from God. And John himself started getting his eyes on the angel and wanting to make much over the messenger.

And the angel said, don't do that. You need to focus your attention on God and what God has revealed about himself. And that's what we need to do here.

So you, if you do any reading at all on Revelation, you'll run into people who disparage the authorship. Don't let them throw you for a loop. This book has been given with authority.

It was given by God to Jesus Christ to show to his servants about what would shortly come to

pass and it has been sent through the Lord God's messenger angel. The content of this book is explicitly claimed to be both the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. So the things that we're going to see in these next two chapters, when we look at the letters to the seven churches are from God, they're for us, and they're for now.

It's not preparation in case we're wrong about the rapture and we go into the tribulation. It's to be studied and meditated on and applied now. So that will constitute our introduction to this study of Christ's letters to the seven churches.

And when we resume next week, we'll begin with the letter to the Ephesians and we'll see some interesting things that I promised you this time, but you have to wait till next time. Preview of coming attractions. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we do thank you for the privilege of studying your word together. We thank you that you have provided it for us, preserved it for us. You have enabled us through it to live the life you have called us to.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will take these things and minister them to our hearts. We pray that we will live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We pray it in his name.

Amen.