

Rev 25-08-20a

Greetings. It is the 20th of August, 2025. We're at Grace and Truth Bible Church starting a new study in the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

It is a much discussed book. It has been controversial from the earliest days of the church, not included in some of the earliest canonical lists, but it is pertinent and relevant for us. We're going to have a short introduction and then we will begin.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and study. Father, what a privilege to spend this time looking at the truth of your word, seeking the ministry of your Holy Spirit to enable us to understand it as he leads us into the truth and helps us to see its pertinence and application in our own lives. We pray that as a result of our study, we will be edified, we will be motivated, and we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. The book of Revelation requires a little bit of introduction, especially in our day.

There has been recent history that is worth a quick review. Our position as a church, mainly because it's my position, free to understand it differently, but my particular understanding is theologically called premillennial dispensationalism. In other words, looking at the word of God, the conclusion that we draw is that God is at work at different times in different ways.

These different times are called dispensations. The different ways are the specific provisions, the specific requirements that pertain. And the two primary divisions, you can count dispensations a number of different ways, but the distinction that concerns us is that between Israel, which is God's Old Testament people, and the church, which is the Lord Jesus' New Testament people.

So in that light, we have discovered across many years of investigation and study and prayer, that scripture makes the most sense realizing that at the juxtaposition of these two peoples, these two times, you have the Lord Jesus. He is at the center of human history. He comes and engages in over three years of ministry to God's people, Israel, presenting the fact that the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God is near, and that he is the promised one who will redeem Israel, who will enable salvation and ultimate communion with God.

That message is not accepted by the bulk of the people. They are not ready. They are not interested.

They have other ideas of what the Messiah should be, and they miss the day of their visitation. Thus, the plan and purpose of God is to break out those dead branches out of his olive tree and to graft in branches that represent Gentiles and those who will accept, regardless of their history, their genealogy, their ethnic or cultural heritage, faith in Christ is the criteria. So that's in a nutshell what dispensations represent.

It is understanding that there is a difference in God's revelation, dealings, expectations, and judgment for his Old Testament people, Israel, and those who are specially called and who are united with Christ in faith to receive unique special benefits as his body and ultimately symbolized as a bride uniquely belonging to him. So the situation is different. The revelation is different.

So as church age believers, we understand that the law of Moses, which was delivered to the Old Testament people, doesn't pertain directly and literally to us. There are moral principles that are universal and timeless. Much of what is in the Ten Commandments is pertinent from Adam to the end of human history.

Murder is always wrong. Adultery is always wrong, and so on. But we have a newer, higher, and more difficult standard to meet as New Testament people.

However, we study the Old Testament scriptures because in them God reveals so many of these timeless truths, aspects of his character, fulfillment of his promises, the nature of his expectations in terms of sin and righteousness and judgment, the rewards and blessings that come with faith, the judgment, the discipline, the consequences that come from apathy, indifference, disobedience, rebellion. These are illustrated for us graphically, majestically, in great detail in the books of the Old Testament. They are extremely valuable to us in terms of observation, interpretation, and application, even though they were not addressed specifically to the New Testament church, largely composed of Gentiles in this age after the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus.

Why is this important? Because at the close of the New Testament, we have the book that we are about to study. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. As such, it is not an Old Testament book.

The Lord Jesus was not known by name. He was prophesied. He was pictured.

He was foreshadowed. There are emblems and metaphors, similes. There are wonderful aspects in the rituals that were required of the Israelites that detail redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, atonement, justification, and so on in the Old Testament.

This begins with its title, the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is manifestly a New Testament book, and it is addressed to, in verse 1 of chapter 1, the Lord Jesus' servants, His servants. They are not servants of God.

They are not servants of the law. They are not servants of Moses. They are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The recipients of this book are New Testament believers. It specifically applies to us. It was put together for us.

So, what do we do after the first three chapters when we begin to see that the church is not present on the earth, and everything that happens seems to pertain to the time of Jacob's

trouble? With a dispensational understanding, we believe that there are seven years left to run in the age of Israel, the 70th week of Daniel. This is necessary to bring about the things that are spoken of in Daniel chapter 9, and it pertains to Jerusalem. It pertains to the people of Daniel.

So, why on earth is this addressed to Christians? And yet, after the first three chapters, all the way up to about chapter 20 or 21, it seems to pertain exclusively to Israel. Israel is the focus when you have the battle of Armageddon. Israel is the focus when you see the symbolic representation of the dragon attacking the woman who was with child and gave birth, and so on.

You have the 144,000, 12,000 from each Israelite tribe. And this is the beginning of confusion for people who do not have a dispensational understanding. You immediately find that such folks will resort to allegory or a very fantastical, symbolical interpretation that is loosened from reality, loosened from prophetic fulfillment, and so on.

Say all of that to say this. This is a wonderful book for us to study because just like the Old Testament, it deals materially with God's people, Israel, but we observe and interpret and apply principles for us individually to live in the here and now, to live with faith and hope and love. And there is no greater book to spark those Christian virtues than the book of Revelation.

It is a wonderful, practical, missive, originating with God the Father through the Lord Jesus, as we'll see in this first verse or two. It is widely misunderstood, and people have noted the misunderstanding and have created a whole new, different, and wilder misunderstanding. We are going to endeavor to sail between Scylla and Charybdis and find the path of truth, ascertaining the purpose for which this message is directly addressed to us, and find the blessing that is promised at the beginning and at the end of this book.

Let's dive right in. The first thing to note is right here in verse one, the revelation of Jesus Christ. Anytime you see the word of, and you're translating out of Greek and even Hebrew, you have to figure out if you say the love of Christ compels us, is it our love for Christ, our love of Christ, or is it the love of Christ for us? That's the difference between a subjective and an objective genitive, the word of, as we render it in English.

So if this is the revelation of Jesus Christ, is this a revelation that Jesus is giving to us, or is it a revelation of him for us? So we need a little bit of context as we continue. The word revelation is apocalypsis. This word is used numerous times to refer to the return of the Lord Jesus to this earth.

Its core meaning is to reveal, to unveil, to uncover something that is previously hidden. And so the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him, God gave this revelation to the Lord Jesus. So if I say this is the Bible of Sam, there is a third option of the word of, which means it belongs to me.

This is the last will and testament of John Jacob Astor. It belongs to. So in the context, what is

our choice for this genitive construction? God gives this revelation to the Lord Jesus.

It is a gift. It is transferred from its source, God the Father, to the Lord Jesus. So it belongs to him.

This is possession. What is he going to do with it? The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants, servants of the Lord Jesus. Here's my question.

Are you qualified to receive this letter? It is addressed to servants of the Lord Jesus. So we ask ourselves, as the hymn says, am I a soldier of the cross? Am I a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ? What constitutes being a servant? There are several individuals in the New Testament who are specifically identified as servants of Christ. We saw this in James chapter one, verse one, where Yaakov, Jacob, James identifies himself as a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ in James 1.1. The apostle Paul is identified numerous times.

Romans 1.1, Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus. Galatians 1.10, if I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Since I am a servant of Christ, in other words, I don't live my life to please people.

Powerful message just in that short communication. Philippians 1.1, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. Timothy as a faithful communicator, Paul as an apostle, identified as servants of Christ Jesus.

Paul says the same thing in Titus chapter one, verse one, Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. 1st Timothy 4.6, Paul is exhorting Timothy to be faithful to his calling, exercise his gift, fulfill his purpose and his ministry, being trained in the words of faith and of the good doctrine, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus. Whatever our gift, whatever our calling, whatever our role, whatever our relationships, whatever our circumstances, to be trained in the words of the faith and the good doctrines, we will be good servants of Christ Jesus.

That's why we're here on a weekday night, looking at the word of truth, endeavoring to understand it and see its pertinence in our own lives. We want to be good servants of Christ. Here is a letter that is written to servants of Christ, a book full of imagery, full of content, full of communication.

God the Father wanted us to have this information. There is a chain of custody. Think about it.

God the Father on the throne of glory in the heavenly tabernacle, holy of holies, has crafted this message. It is heretofore not revealed. These details, these sequences, these truths have not been previously revealed.

It is a revelation. It is an unfolding of the forward progress of God's plan. It is going to illuminate the past.

It is going to motivate people in the present. And it is going to give promise and hope for the

future. And we're going to see this motif of past, present, and future over and over again, referenced in the book.

So you have a few other individuals like Epaphras and Peter, Simon Peter, 2 Peter 1.1, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James in the first verse of his short letter. James, I already mentioned.

But we are all encouraged to be servants of Jesus Christ. Romans 6.22. Think about Romans 6.23, the preceding verse, now that you have been set free from sin and have become servants of God. So if we wanted to write down, okay, what does it mean to be a servant? Is it just a title or does it have some traction? Does it have some practical aspect? Well, the first is to exploit being liberated from sin.

We have been freed from the yoke of bondage to our fallen nature. So Romans 6.22, now that you have been set free from sin, you have become servants of God. So the fruit that you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

This isn't just, where do I go when I die? We've so often seen that eternal life is a reference to life in its quality, in its potential, in its future opportunities for service and function and reflecting God's glory. It is eternal in its quality. It is eternal as it partakes of God.

So being servants of Christ, servants of God, one thing that ought to characterize us is abandoning pattern sin. We'll never be fully free, but we are no longer enslaved. It isn't as though we can do nothing else.

Now we have a choice and it is up to us to make conscious choices to leave sin behind. You've been set free from sin. You have become servants of God.

We are no longer slaves to sin, Paul says elsewhere in Romans. He goes in Romans 12.11 to say, do not be slothful in your zeal. Don't get lazy.

Don't become apathetic. Don't be slothful in zeal. Be fervent in your spirit.

Serve the Lord. There ought to be some enthusiasm. Where can I help? You know, when you're around someone that you love and you see that they're in the middle of something, you look for ways to try to be helpful.

When you're in the midst of a group and some activity, something productive, something that is beneficial is going on, motivated people will look for a way to pitch in, a way to assist, a way to put a shoulder under the load. That's what Paul says as a result of over 11 chapters of doctrinal information in Romans is don't be lazy, be zealous, be fervent in your spirit. This is along the lines of watch and pray, be alert, don't get deceived, don't fall victim to the enemy, roaming and seeking whom he may devour.

Serve the Lord. Watch for opportunities to be of service. It's a wonderful quality in general and

especially in our spiritual life.

In the first Corinthian letter, Paul in chapter seven is talking about the earthly circumstance of some people being masters and other people being slaves. We experience this. Some of us are bosses.

Some of us are workers. There's administration and there's underlings. There are those who are enlisted and those who are officers.

There are those who are hewers of wood and haulers of water and those who are coordinating their efforts and planning and supervising and being accountable and responsible to owners and so on. We occupy different layers. And so in first Corinthians 7.22, Paul says, look, if you were called in the Lord as a slave, and remember, most of the population of Rome was slaves.

A majority of people were in some form of slavery. If you were called in the Lord as a slave, you're a freed man of the Lord. Slavery does not define you.

Being in the Lord defines you. This is so important to remember in terms of people who struggle with insecurity or self-esteem or feeling inadequate, even depression or give up-itis. We are in the Lord.

It goes back to the fervent spirit that we are called to. We have such a rare and special status in Christ. So if you're called in the Lord as a slave, look at yourself as the Lord's freed man.

We've seen this in James 1, that the poor man ought to glory in his exaltation and the rich man ought to glory in his diminishment. So called in the Lord as a slave, you're a freedman of the Lord. Likewise, he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ.

Our perspective on whatever our circumstance is, freed man or slave, should be viewed through the lens of who we are in Christ. This is true in every aspect, physical, emotional, mental, to define ourselves as those who are blood-bought, who are in Christ. If slavery is oppressing us, look at the freedom we have in Christ.

If freedom is drawing us away, remember that we are bond slaves of the Lord Jesus. Our spiritual understanding, our spiritual perspective keeps us balanced, keeps us centered. Let your moderation be known unto all.

We don't think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. We don't think more humbly of ourselves than we ought to think. We have balance.

We've got our center of gravity over our feet and we've got our knees slightly flexed. We've got our feet shoulder width apart. We are ready to serve.

We are capable in Christ. That's 1 Corinthians 7.22. In 1 Corinthians 9.19, Paul says, I am free from all, but I have made myself a servant to all so that I can win more of them. I could claim some sort of circumstantial or physical privilege, but I'm defined by my apostolic gift.

I'm defined by who I am in Christ. And that means that I will pursue humility. We just saw this in James, receive with meekness the implanted word to be objective.

We have to look at people and circumstances and ourselves, but to obsess, to focus, to overweight those things is to be subjective as we know. Ephesians 6.6, we should serve not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but as servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart, not to be seen, not to be better thought of, not to impress, not to try to be a conscious model for someone. I'm going to model good behavior so that person will act better.

We need to not be involved with what is apparent to the eye, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. We understand why it is so important for us to have the word of God hidden in our hearts so that we might not sin, so that the Holy Spirit can activate it and enable the power of God so that our lives count. Today counts.

Isn't it great if we can sit here at this moment, look back over this preceding day and say, I did what I did heartily as unto the Lord, not unto men. I wasn't just motivated because I didn't want to look bad in the eyes of onlookers, not eye service, not as people pleasers. In my heart, I realize this is an opportunity from God and I want to exploit it.

I want to fulfill it. I'm a servant of Christ. Colossians 3, verse 24.

If you read the context of Colossians 3, you are serving the Lord Christ. This ought to define us. Whatever we're doing, sitting still, thinking, talking, engaging in activity, you are serving the Lord Christ.

Paul tells the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1, 9, you are well known, you have a reputation throughout the area, how you turned to God from idols, from distractions, from depending on things in your environment and people who are wedded to those things, who believe in those things, who operate on the basis of those things. Idols can be way more than little images. You turn to God from idols, from false gods to serve the living and true God, to serve.

Same thing in Hebrews 9, verse 14. So the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants, this is going to be misconstrued, misunderstood, misapplied, mishandled and corrupted, perverted, distorted by people who are not servants of Christ. It is like a trigonometry book given to someone who's only gotten as far as fifth grade math.

They're going to look at it and inevitably misunderstand it, take out the parts they don't like, emphasize the parts that they do. More about that momentarily. To show his servants things which must shortly take place.

Things which must shortly take place. This has been a difficulty because most people believe that John wrote this letter in the reign of Domitian, which was from 80 something to 96 AD, 80 something to 96. Forget the beginning year, but it's the reign of Domitian.

And it was a time of great persecution for the church. The alternative view is to see it 30 years earlier in the reign of Nero. And I'm sure you've seen references to the mark of the B666 and they parse out the name of Caesar and find it in there.

But the reign of Domitian is almost universally recognized as being the time of writing. So how long ago was that? Take 2025, subtract 100 years from it, and you get 1925. So over 1900 years, how in any way, shape, or form can these trumpets and seals and bowls and angels and events and happenings and a third of this getting crisp and a third of that turning to blood, how can all of that be said to be taking place shortly? The word is takus, same word we saw in James, when James encourages us to be quick to hear.

Take, takus, we get the word tachometer, speedy, sudden, immediate is the idea. How can that apply? Here is my thought. This is just me.

You can take it with all the salt you can manage. But in the past, I have offered my thought on the way death for a church age believer works, really death for anyone in history. At the point of death, we fall asleep.

You can sleep in the dust of the earth. You can sleep in Jesus. These are phrases from scripture.

Daniel 12, when Michael stands up and issues the command, many who sleep in the dust will awake. Paul talks more than once about those who sleep in Jesus. So then people say, oh, so you believe in soul sleep.

There's a whole room full, vast warehouse full of countless hundreds of millions of souls that are all just snoring away their comatose, their somnambulant. My belief, as most of you know, is that at the point of death, a human being immediately leaves time and reenters it at the point of their judgment. For Old Testament saints, it will be those who are believers, because they're saints.

They will come to the judgment of the rod. Are they qualified to enter the interior of the millennial kingdom and occupy a place in the tribal allotments? Will they be citizens of the Jerusalem that will exist at that time? Others will be in the darkness, which is outside. But they are not existing in some suspended state of waiting.

Church age believers will immediately go to the rapture that Paul describes in Thessalonians. The dead in Christ will rise first. We who are alive and remain caught up together with them in the clouds.

So shall we ever be with the Lord. It doesn't say, well, they'll be with the Lord. Then they'll come back down here, jump out of the ground, and then go back to be with the Lord.

There is a direct transfer. It's hard for the human mind. We are so used to traveling through time.

We think it's a needle in the groove of a vinyl record. And if you start at the beginning, you've got to travel every loop until you get to the exit mode, the one that triggers the return mechanism on your turntable. God just picks up the needle and moves it to the next song that needs to play for you.

So you play the first song, lift up the needle, set it back down, and you've skipped all of the intervening time. And as far as we know, absent from the body is to be face to face with the Lord, which is exactly what scripture says. In that view, and this is one of the passages that somewhat supports this in my own military mind, how close is the end of time for us, for anyone who is a servant of Christ and is reading this book? At most, if you're in your 20s and you're going to live to your 80s, it's a few decades away.

The time of the end is as long away as whatever remains to us in this life. Some of us, it's getting closer by the minute. For all of us, it's getting closer.

But as far as we are concerned, every day is a gift. And the imminency of the future unfolding of these events is tacus. It is near.

It will be sudden. It will be soon. None of us, nobody experiences the centuries of human history.

We can read about it, but no one lives through it. We have a life that is three score and 10. And if by reason of strength, it's 80, we're doing really well.

According to scripture, that's near. When you look at the sweep of history across the millennia, the centuries, a few decades, that's near. This is my view.

These things will soon take place in the experience of every single servant of Christ who studies this book. We need to be ready. I could walk out here and get hit by an Amazon delivery truck.

It's better than beer. They're a lot more frequent around here. And suddenly, here are the unfolding events on earth.

Will I understand it? Will I be able to participate? Will I be ready to serve? Will I be read into the picture? Have I seen the five paragraph order? Can I parse and participate in the ongoing unfolding plan and purpose of God through Christ? I want to be ready. And in the meantime, knowing these things, just as I know the Old Testament, I have principles and promises and doctrines that motivate me and encourage me and enable me individually to live a wonderful life. So is this an important book to study? It is from God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then He is going to send and signify it by His angel to His servant, John. The chain of custody is God the Father, God the Son, an angel, and the apostle John. We have four individuals involved in originating and transferring this message.

And all of them are awe-inspiring. God the Father, beyond imagination. The Lord Jesus, beyond imagination.

Angels, we have difficulty understanding. The apostle John, the longest lived of the 12 that Jesus chose. His brother James, and he bracket the apostolic age.

James was the first to go to glory. John is the last. He's on the Isle of Patmos receiving this by way of custodianship.

And as the angel shows it to him, he shows it to us. What a wonderful opportunity to have a revelation that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, directly addressed to us, handed to us. This is the study we undertake.

We'll continue it when we come back from the break.