

Rev 25-09-07a

Good morning, it is Sunday here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We are in the book of Revelation chapter 1. We are going to cover a lot of ground this morning in the text, so if you are going to take notes be sure you've got plenty of paper. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and investigation of the word and we'll begin.

Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for blessing us and giving us this opportunity to spend time together to have our souls nourished in your word. We pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate the truth for us, help us to understand it, to take it on board and remember it in a way that results in application, that bears fruit in our lives, that accomplishes the purpose for which you gave it to your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus, and transmitted it to us in this wonderful form.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Reading our text in Revelation chapter 1, the revelation of Jesus Christ, this is the revealing of which he is the content.

It is from God the Father. God gave it to him for a purpose. He gave it to his Son, not just so Jesus would know what's going to take place in future days, but that we would also know.

The intent is for it to be communicated. That's what we are doing. We are endeavoring to take this communication on board and respond accordingly.

God gave it to him to show his servants things which must shortly take place. The word here in Greek means this has to happen. It must take place.

It isn't optional. It's not conditional. This is a certain future set of developments, and it's going to take place quickly.

Everyone who has an ear, every servant of God who has come to this revelation and encountered its content has the near-term expectation that it will be fulfilled within their observation. This is not hundreds of years distant. It's not thousands of years distant.

It doesn't matter when you live. It is as close as the end of our lives. Few, if any of us, reach the age of a hundred, and so in something measured in decades or less, these things must come to pass.

It's a certainty. You will see it. Everybody is the rapture generation.

Everyone, all believers, are the rapture generation. You're just going to ascend out of the ground instead of on top of the ground. But we will all see these things unfold, and if we are qualified, we will participate.

We will be useful in the service of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ. It depends on how much we know. We saw this last time.

He sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John. Why is the word signify there? He signified it. This is something we see if you go back to John chapter 20.

Keep your finger here. Go back to the gospel of John. Same author in chapter 20 verse 30.

Truly Jesus did many other signs from the same root here, semion, in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written in order that you might believe. You encounter them. You observe them.

You hear about them, and you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and through that believing, you have life in his name. So this is purposeful. These signs have a purpose.

There are many other signs, but these are written. Turn forward one book to the book of Acts chapter 2. Acts chapter 2 verse 22. This is Peter standing with the eleven, raising his voice on the day of Pentecost, and saying, Men of Judea, you find that back in verse 14.

All who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. That is the introduction to Peter's sermon. Down in verse 22, men of Israel, hear these words.

Pay attention. Listen. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.

What is the difference in a miracle, a wonder, and a sign? Very quickly. Miracle, wonder, and sign. They are three different things.

A miracle is the actual event. The man born blind in John chapter 9 is given his sight. His sight is restored.

That is a suspension of the normal laws that we observe in the universe, physics, chemistry, biology, and so on. That is a miracle. A wonder, this focuses on the reaction that observers have to that miracle.

When a miracle is undertaken, when it is accomplished, sometimes even the clear teaching of the word of God, the revelation of God's truth, causes the hearers or the observers to wonder. It is the reaction. It is the response that takes place in the face of this supernatural event.

It can be revelation of truth. It can be dominance and authority over the normal expectations we have of how the world works. Miracle, wonder, a sign.

The sign focuses on the significance. This is where we get the word. Signify, signify.

What is the meaning? What is the takeaway? What should we understand? How should it change the way we think and live observing this miracle? It can cause wonder, but it should do more than that. It should signify a truth. Jesus was attested by God to you.

The Lord Jesus is a revelation of truth. John 14, 6, he claims, I am the way, I am the truth, I am

the life. No one comes to God but by me.

No one comes to the Father. That is his role. That is his purpose.

God communicates to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ brings us into fellowship and function before God the Father. So signifying.

We know that he is going to be charged with the things which must shortly take place, and he is charged with writing things which were, which are, and which are to come. We saw this in verse 19. We jumped ahead a little bit to see it.

Write the things which you have seen and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. These things have been impressed upon John the Apostle's heart and soul to communicate via signs. It is sent, it is transmitted and delivered, and it is signified.

Signify can often mean bring to our understanding. Notice the gospel of John. If you're still in Acts, you can flip back a few pages, but if you remember your travels through the gospel of John, that book is organized around seven major signs.

Review those real quickly. Gospel of John. Same author.

This is what he has seen. We looked at this last time looking at the introduction to 1 John, that which we have heard, that which we have seen, that which our hands have handled. This is what we testify and communicate to you.

This was what John saw, and he is to record that. It is likely that the gospel of John was written very close to the same time as this book. How do I know that? Look again at John chapter 20 and 21.

Closing of that gospel, there is a conversation with Peter in chapter 21. It is beginning at verse 15. Simon, do you love me more than these? You have this threefold exchange.

And in verse 18, Jesus says, Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished. But when you are old, Peter, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish. Look at verse 19, John 21 19.

This he spoke signifying by what death he, Peter, would glorify God. So was the gospel of John written after the death of Peter? It seems so. Unless you take this as a prophecy, which would not necessarily be clear at the time.

But in retrospect, so often John says his disciples did not understand at the time, but later they remembered his words. I would submit to you that the gospel of John was completed, this is the last part of the last chapter, after the death of Peter, which puts it after AD 60. Peter is, according to church tradition, lasts into the same general timeframe as the Apostle Paul.

And so sometime after that, this gospel is set down. Interestingly, in light of our current study, if you continue, Peter turning around saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following. This is our author, the Apostle John, who leaned on his breast at the supper and said, Lord, who is the one who betrays you? Peter, seeing him, seeing John following behind, says to Jesus, Lord, what about this man? You would understand that Peter, James, and John, as the inner circle, the advanced class in Jesus' disciples, had a care and concern for one another.

They fished together in the Sea of Galilee. And Peter is curious, what about John? Jesus says, if I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow me. This puts us in mind of the transfiguration, where Jesus said earlier on, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

And you would think, well, people are just going to live for centuries until Jesus comes back and establishes the millennial kingdom. But within a few days, these men, Peter, and John, and James, are on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they see the revelation of Jesus in his kingdom glory, with Moses on one side and Elijah on the other. And to see it, or to experience it, to be transported, if you will, almost via time travel, to experience a thing is not unprecedented.

So when Jesus says, if I will that he remain till I come, what's going to happen? The Apostle John is going to live into the 90s, AD 90s, and is going to see the coming of the Lord Jesus in detail. And he will remain until he sees that vision, until he is transported into that area where he can observe and report on all of the events that are a part of the coming of the Lord Jesus. And this is the content of our book, The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

But don't worry so much about others. You follow me. And this is good advice for all of us.

We can speculate on what is going to happen to those who seem near, those who seem far away, those who have one understanding or another. Our primary responsibility is to follow the Lord Jesus faithfully. This saying went out among the brethren, that this disciple John would not die.

Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but if I will that he remain till I come. Did the Apostle John remain until Jesus came? In John's perception, in John's observation, he saw the whole thing. He saw the lead-up to it.

He saw the event itself and he saw the aftermath all the way into the new heavens and the new earth. So in that sense, much as the transfiguration and other somewhat cryptic sayings of the Lord Jesus, you have to have your spiritual sensitivity fine-tuned to grasp the import. But in this Gospel of John, which he wrote, it is organized, as you remember, around seven signs.

The first was in John 2, verses 1-11. Sign number one, that was the turning of water to wine at the wedding feast of Cana. And he says in verse 11, this was the first of the signs that Jesus did.

He labels it. It's a sign. The message is sent and signified, given by means of sign.

The second one in John the Gospel is in chapter 4, verses 46-54. Sign number two, John 4, 46-54. This is the healing of the nobleman's son.

The first sign took place in Cana of Galilee. The second one takes place in Capernaum, also in Galilee. The third sign was in John 5, verses 1-15.

This was the healing of the paralytic, the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda. The pool of Bethesda is down in Jerusalem. So you go from Cana, north to Capernaum, north and east, then down to Jerusalem.

John 5, 1-15, healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda. Number four was in John 6, verses 5-14. One of the most recognizable and well-known of the signs that Jesus performed, and this is the feeding of the 5,000.

This is on a mountain near the Sea of Galilee, crossing the Sea of Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee. John 6, 5-14. The fifth sign is in the next chapter, John 6, 16-24.

This is on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus walks upon it, walking on water. Fifth sign, John 6, 16-24. The sixth sign that is the spine, the organizing principle in John's gospel, what he saw, what he witnessed at first hand, is in John 9, verses 1-7.

This is the healing of the aforementioned man born blind. Wonderful chapter. Entertaining, always brings a smile to my face to read the subsequent dialogue between the man and his family and the religious leaders.

This again takes place in Jerusalem. John 9, 1-7, the sixth sign. The seventh sign is, of course, in John 11.

Easy to remember, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. John 11, 35, shortest verse in the English Bible. Jesus wept.

Jesus wept at the inability of even his closest disciples to understand who he was, what he represented, to grasp that spiritual import of his words. Jesus wept. John 11, 1-45, the raising of Lazarus.

This, of course, is in Bethany, east of Jerusalem, the other side of the Mount of Olives. Raising of Lazarus. Here's a new thought for you.

It's a new thought for me. It doesn't matter how long you study. You study, you look, you observe, you learn new things.

There is an eighth sign in the gospel of John. You look at any outline of the gospel of John, they will give you the seven signs. I would submit to you that there are eight.

Turn with me to John chapter 2. This is important, by the way, for our understanding of the book of Revelation, as you will see shortly. John chapter 2. Right after the turning of water to

wine, verse 11, this beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

These are written that you might believe. Jesus does this sign. His disciples believe.

Their faith is affirmed. Some of them have been following him previously down by the Jordan with John the Baptist. And they began, they came up with him.

At this time, the full number has not yet been called. But this is the beginning of signs. Look at the next verse.

After this, he went down to Capernaum. He went down, he, his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they did not stay there many days. Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and he found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves and the money changers doing business.

When he had made a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep, the oxen, poured the changers' money, overturned the tables, said to those who sold doves, take these things away. Do not make my father's house a house of merchandise. A warning to those who market materials for profit related to the study of scripture, Christian ministry, and so on.

I'm not saying it shouldn't take place, but it's a warning. If merchandising takes the place of edification, if that becomes the purpose, there is trouble coming. Then, verse 17, his disciples remembered that it was written, zeal for your house has eaten me up.

The Jews answered and said to him, John 2, 18, what sign do you show to us since you do these things? What sign do you show to us? Jesus answered and said to them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Jesus said, you want to see a sign? The Jews said, it's been 46 years to build this temple. Will you raise it in three days? But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

Therefore, when he had risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this to them and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said. This sign was given and fulfilled and it had the same effect. The intention of the signs is to encourage and bolster and sustain faith.

So, what would you say? I say that's an eighth sign and you find it fulfilled in the latter chapters of this gospel, the detailed account of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, his post-resurrection appearances, the conversation that we just saw in chapter 21, the appearance of Thomas in chapter 20, and so on. So, there are formally seven signs, but there is this sort of special sign, a mystery sign that is foreshadowed at the beginning and then is fleshed out at the end. What do you know about Bible numbers? In a previous pass through Revelation, we took a few sessions to look at the significance of Bible numbers.

You should remember some of the basics. Seven is the number of perfection and completion,

right? What is the number eight? When were baby boys circumcised in Israel? When was a cleansed leper re-entered into the fellowship of the community on the eighth day? The eighth day is the day of renewal. You look at the broad sweep of human history, and if you think of it somewhat metaphorically as 4,000 years from Adam to Christ, 2,000 years from Christ to the millennium, and then the millennium as the seventh thousand-year period, the Sabbath rest, if you will.

Then you have the kingdom of the Father, the new heavens, the new earth, the new creation. It's the eighth day, and it is the day that extends into the indefinite eternal future. Back to Revelation, this is something that is going to be addressed to the seven churches.

Put a sticky note next to the fact that John's earlier effort, writing about the things which you have seen, the things which were, was organized around seven primary signs, but there is an eighth that is foreshadowed at the beginning and comes back to fruition and fulfillment at the end. We are going to see something similar in the book of Revelation. So, we find the blessing.

This message has been sent and signified via an angelic messenger to God's servant, the Lord Jesus' servant, John, who bore witness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ. We saw last time that's the reason that John is exiled on Patmos. This is what he does.

You see that in verse 9. I was on the isle that is called Patmos for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. To him who has, more will be given. John isn't just an average Joe and God randomly chooses him through Christ and the angel to be the recipient and bearer of this message.

He is a tried and true witness. He has already put his life on the line for the Word and the testimony of Jesus Christ. When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth? Are there good and faithful servants who, when the Master returns, finds them faithfully serving, faithfully dedicated to the will, the commands, the words of the Master? To him who has, more is given.

John is a classic example. He has already been bearing witness to the Word and the testimony. Somewhere not far from this time, he has written the Gospel of John or he is going to write it.

It's possible in my mind that the first thing he did after this vision of the Lord Jesus, speaking to him and telling him to write what he has seen, is he may well have set down the Gospel of John at that time. He is going to be released from exile in Patmos after the death of Domitian in 96 and is going to return to Ephesus and to the area where these churches are. And it is well possible that he wrote his epistles at that time.

We don't know the exact timing. I can tell you with confidence that his writing is a direct response as a bearer of testimony and faithfulness to the Word, as expressed here. Verse 2, bore witness to the Word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Notice these two things are linked here. They are linked in verse 9. They are linked over and

over again. It isn't enough to have the Word.

That Word should result in our lives being a testimony to Jesus Christ. Let your light so shine before men that they see that the work that takes place in your life, the thoughts, the actions, the conversations, are a reflection of the presence and the power of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit and the Word. There has been, and many of you know this, a lot of you have had experience similar to mine.

Some of you have been in some of the same churches and same places as I have in past years. And we call them doctrinal churches, ice churches, strong on teaching, isagogic categories, exegesis, dig into the Word. We're going to know the Word.

We've got a leg up on others who haven't really studied their Bible carefully. This is, as you know, essential. We love it.

We're a Bible church, but it is only half of the equation. We have to be spiritual people, people characterized by the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit that activates that Word, that makes it flame and live and breathe. It's the hammer that breaks the rocks in our soul in pieces, and we become living witnesses, living testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Circle it in your Bible. Bear witness to the Word of God. This is what it says.

This is what it means. And the testimony of Jesus Christ, He is the living one. We're going to see Him introduced here in verse 5, the firstborn from the dead.

He is going to talk about Himself as He who was dead but is now alive forevermore. He is a living Lord, and we should have a living witness. The Word is not doing its job if we do not have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

So important. Blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy. Blessed is the one who reads it, but blessed are they who keep it.

You've got the words, and it has a result. It has an effect. How tragic to find the truth of God's Word through faithful teachers.

We have such wonderful sources, infinite resources. If you are curious about the Word of God, what it says and what it means, never in history has there been the kind of access that we have today. What is the fruit? What is the result? Knowledge puffs up.

Love, which is the purpose and the outworking and the first and foremost fruit of the Spirit, builds up. Love, joy, peace, grace, and peace. We saw this last time in verse 4. John, to the seven churches which are in Asia.

In the Gospel of John, he never names himself. He says the disciple whom Jesus loved, the beloved disciple. He who leaned in his breast and asked, who is the one who betrays you? He identifies himself indirectly in the Gospel.

He wants the focus to be on the signs. And he who reports them is a true witness. And he makes that claim.

Here in this letter, this book, John is going to identify himself four times. Two of them are here in this chapter. John, to the seven churches, verse 4. I, John, verse 9. And we'll see it again in the close of the book.

There are two stamps of authorship in the first chapter. There are two stamps of authorship in the last chapter. John, to the seven churches which are in Asia.

He does not address Judea. He does not address Samaria. He does not address Antioch.

He doesn't address areas that are closer to Jerusalem. I would submit to you that those who want to construe this book as early in the days of Nero and a warning about the impending destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and Israel in general in A.D. 70 can't explain why Jerusalem isn't one of the churches addressed. If Jerusalem is standing and the church is still there, why on earth would Jesus not give them the kind of warnings he gives in Matthew chapter 24? When you see the abomination flee to the hills.

There are many who claim that in the destruction of Jerusalem, there are few, if any, records of Christians being swept up and killed in those days when the legions of Titus marched in and thousands of Jews died. But there are no significant reports of Christians dying in that incursion. And the thought is the Christians may have heeded the words of the Lord Jesus.

When you see Jerusalem encompassed about, leave. Get out. Jesus is the one who warned.

Flee the city when you see it surrounded by armies. Those Christians who heeded his words survived to become part of the diaspora, to scatter, and to be ambassadors and to spread the word. Having the word and acting on it, paying attention to it, keeping it.

Grace you in peace, verse 4, from him who is, who was, and who is to come. Who is, who was, and who is to come. Who is that? If you keep reading and it says, and from Jesus Christ, we say, well, this has to be God the Father.

If there's any doubt, look down at verse 8. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end says the Lord who is, and who was, and who is to come the Almighty. You have that in red ink in your red letter edition, King James or New King James, but this is God the Father speaking. He is the Almighty and he is the one who is, who was, and who is to come.

And from the seven spirits who are before his throne. Who are these seven spirits? We'll see this, we'll pick up here when we come back from the break, but bear in mind, this entire book, the entirety of this revelation of Jesus Christ is sent to the seven churches, which are in Asia. They are representative of all believers, all church throughout this age.

They're in Asia, not in Judea or Jerusalem, because the church is not defined by Israel, not

defined by the 12 tribes. This is a Gentile area. This is Southwestern Turkey today.

We'll see on a map that this is a relatively small area. You can start at Ephesus, you can go North and West and then turn East and then start heading South and East and hook back around. It's kind of a flattened circle.

All of these churches are within 40 to 60 miles of each other, going from one to the next. It's not a long journey. It's a very focused area.

They are representative. This message is for all the servants of God, but these will be the convenient foil, the first recipients from whom all the rest of us will learn. So important.

It is not far from John. He's 24 miles off the coast. These cities are inland a bit, but it's an easy shot and John is actually going to return to them.

But it is to the churches, it is to us. So important for us to be those who have His words and keep them. What will this study of Revelation do in our daily lives? We'll continue to prosecute that question when we come back from the break.